



AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

CENTER FOR ARAB  
& MIDDLE EASTERN  
STUDIES

# MARXIAN CRITIQUE OF THE JEWISH QUESTION AND THE DEBATE ON ANTISEMITISM

## Speaker

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## Discussant

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## ABSTRACT

Karl Marx's 1843 essay *On the Jewish Question* has been the subject of controversy, with accusations ranging from antisemitism to claims of a non-Marxist character in this early text. Despite his own Jewish origins, Marx's main concern was not to analyze the Jewish religion or history. His essay was a reflection on political emancipation, the modern state, and civil society. Marx critiqued the limitations of political emancipation, which, in his view, would never eliminate antisemitism.

Today, debates on antisemitism include new and complex dimensions, yet they have not overcome those raised by Marx in 19th-century Europe. Some scholars, such as Elias Khoury, argue that Islamophobia has taken on many of the same conspiratorial characteristics as pre-World War II antisemitism. This talk will examine these debates historically and in relation to contemporary realities.

## BIO

**Arlene Elizabeth Clemesha** is a Brazilian historian and professor of contemporary Arab history at the University of São Paulo (USP). She specializes in Palestine, Arab–Jewish relations, Marxism, and memory studies. Clemesha has translated Edward Said into Portuguese and published widely in multiple languages. She also served on the UN International Coordinating Network on Palestine (2005–2015). Currently, she directs the Center for Arab Studies at USP and contributes to debates on Middle Eastern politics and culture.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER, 6, 2025 | 5:00–6:30 PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM, 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, ISSAM FARES INSTITUTE, AUB**

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