This talk offers a nuanced overview of antisemitism in Greece in the 19th and 20th centuries, arguing that Judeophobia was (and still is) an integral part of imagining the Greek nation and building the modern state. The paper argues that Judeophobia was not a side-story but intimately linked to the formation and transformation of Greek national ideology and to the constitution and reconstitution of the Modern Greek state. In the early 19th century, the image of the Jew informed the first imaginings of a European and civilized Greek body politic; in the late 19th century it interwove with Greek irredentism, the “Great Idea” of expanding the boundaries of the Greek nation-state deep into the Ottoman lands; in the interwar period, once this dream was shuttered, the close monitoring of Zionist Jews legitimized the setting of surveillance mechanisms and the establishment of a police state. Finally, during the recent financial crisis, while sarcastic allusions to antiquity abound in the international press’s coverage of Modern Greece, metaphorical uses of the Holocaust in Greek political discourse have been one of the most prominent tropes in Greece proper. Greek antisemitism might not have been particularly violent, but it was neither just a negligible echo in the European periphery, nor a remnant of the Ottoman past refusing to die. Rather, in its manifold, but always discreet manifestations, it informed nation-state building in positive ways. Antisemitism was not just destructive for the Jews, but also productive for the Greek Christians.

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Monday, February 26, 2018
4:30 p.m.
Scheide Caldwell House, Room 103

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