

## **Matter of Contention: Relics of the Biblical Past Between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity**

**Speaker:** Ra'anan Boustan, University of California, Los Angeles

**Host Department:** Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies (EIHS)

**Date:** 01/29/2015

**Time:** 4:00 pm

**Location:** 1014 Tisch Hall

### **Description:**

*Abstract:* During the period of late antiquity (ca. 200–800 CE), Jews and Christians in the Mediterranean world were fascinated by the fate of artifacts associated with sacrificial cult of the Jerusalem Temple and the royal house of ancient Israel. The presence of such objects—as word, image, relic, or replica—had the capacity to imbue people, places, and ritual practices with authority and even sanctity. This paper explores how such “biblical” artifacts were recruited into a variety of often competing religious or ideological projects, but also how they helped to generate shared idioms of power that crossed religious and social boundaries. Contestation between Jews and Christian over the ownership, function, or meaning of these objects also illuminates how religious communities shape each other’s understandings of sacred matter and even of materiality itself.

Ra’anan Boustan is an Associate Professor in the Ancient and Jewish history fields in the Department of History at UCLA. Boustan is a historian of religion whose research and teaching focus on the dynamic intersections between Judaism and other Mediterranean religious traditions, with a special interest in the impact of Romanization and Christianization on Jewish culture and society in late antiquity. Boustan is the author of *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism* (2005), has published widely in leading journals such as *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, and *Medieval Encounters*. He has also co-edited eight volumes, most recently a special issue of the journal *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* on “Authoritative Traditions and Ritual Power in the Ancient World” (forthcoming 2015). He is currently writing a book entitled *The Holy Remains: Tokens of Cult and Kingship between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, which traces the history of sacred objects associated with the ancient Israelite past within Jewish and Christian cultures in late antiquity.

Free and open to the public.

This lecture is part of the Thursday Series of the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies. It is made possible by a generous contribution from Kenneth and Frances Aftel Eisenberg.