

## “VWI goes to The Department of Contemporary History of the University of Vienna“

Thursday, 15 March 2018, 12.00 pm  
Seminarraum 1  
Institut für Zeitgeschichte  
Universitätscampus  
Spitalgasse 2-4/Hof 1, 1090 Wien

**Judith Szapor**

### The Numerus Clausus in Hungary: Gender, Race, and the Jewish Family Lecture and Book Presentation

The talk will focus on the impact of the so-called *numerus clausus* law on young Hungarian Jewish women in the early interwar period. Introduced in September 1920, the law, the first antisemitic legislation of the post-war era, limited the admission of Jewish students at Hungarian universities at six per cent, the percentage of Jews in the general population. Jewish women were disproportionately affected by it because of the *de facto* ban on women's enrolment at some universities until 1926 and the previous high ratio of female Jewish students at Hungarian universities.

The legal and political history of the law had been well covered by older studies. More recent studies have also established the law's far-reaching impact – namely, that by normalising the breach of the principle of equal citizenship, it prepared the ground for the openly racial anti-Jewish laws and the Holocaust in Hungary. Research has also been emerging on the so-called *numerus clausus* exiles, Jewish students who left Hungary to study at universities in Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Italy. Yet, no study has explored women students' specific experience or even established their approximate numbers. The talk will highlight the law's previously neglected family and gender historical aspects, the factors that affected personal and family decisions, and explore the potential, long-term impact of the law on women's emancipation, Jewish assimilation, and, ultimately, the choice between tradition and modernity.

Judith Szapor is currently Senior Fellow at VWI. She teaches European history at McGill University, Montreal. Her publications include *Hungarian Women's Activism in the Wake of the First World War; From Rights to Revanche*, published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2018 and *Jewish Intellectual Women in Central Europe* (edited with Andrea Pető, Maura Hametz, and Marina Calloni, Edwin Mellen Press, 2012).

