Since the path-breaking work of the cultural historian Carl Schorske in 1979, much attention has been given to the culture of Vienna around 1900, and how it was one of the main sources of modernism in all the arts and culture. Though Schorske did discuss the rise of antisemitism and the founding of the modern Zionist movement by the Viennese Theodor Herzl, he viewed the culture as one shaped by the political and social upheavals of the time, rather than by religion or ethnicity. In the years since, several historians, notably Steven Beller, have given greater emphasis to the Jewish element, some even claiming that the culture was fundamentally Jewish. This lecture will examine various aspects of the culture and discuss the issue of “Jewishness” and how it is defined in the light of this culture.

Dr. Thomas Kovach is Professor of German Studies and an affiliated faculty in the Center for Judaic Studies. A main focus of his teaching at The University of Arizona has been in German-Jewish Studies — both the writings of German Jews, and the ways in which Jews and Judaism have been portrayed in German texts from 1500 to the present. His research interests range widely over German and Comparative Literature from the mid-eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries.