

[The SS Officer's Armchair: In Search of a Hidden Life](#)

Announcement published by Sara Ben-Isaac on Thursday, May 13, 2021

Type:

Lecture

Date:

May 20, 2021

Location:

United Kingdom

Subject Fields:

Contemporary History, German History / Studies, Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, Humanities, Jewish History / Studies

Talk by Daniel Lee (QMC) in conversation with Michael Berkowitz (UCL)

It began with an armchair. It began with the surprise discovery of a stash of personal documents covered in swastikas sewn into its cushion. *The SS Officer's Armchair* is the story of what happened next. Daniel Lee follows the trail of cold calls, documents, coincidences and family secrets, to uncover the life of one Dr Robert Griesinger from Stuttgart. Who was he? What had his life been – and how had it ended? Lee reveals the strange life of a man whose ambition propelled him to become part of the Nazi machinery of terror. He discovers his unexpected ancestral roots, untold stories of SS life and family fragmentation. As he delves deeper, Griesinger's responsibility as an active participant in Nazi crimes becomes clearer. Dr Robert Griesinger's name is not infamous. But to understand the inner workings of the Third Reich, we need to know not just its leaders, but the ordinary Nazis who made up its ranks. Revealing how Griesinger's choices reverberate into present-day Germany, and among descendants of perpetrators, Lee raises potent questions about blame, manipulation and responsibility. A historical detective story and a gripping account of one historian's hunt for answers, *The SS Officer's Armchair* is at once a unique addition to our understanding of Nazi Germany and a chilling reminder of how such regimes are made not by monsters, but by ordinary people.

Daniel Lee is a historian of the Second World War and a specialist in the history of Jews in France and North Africa during the Holocaust. He is a Senior Lecturer in modern history at Queen Mary, University of London, and the author of *Pétain's Jewish Children* (2014). As a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Thinker, Lee is a regular broadcaster on radio. He lives in north London.

Contact Info:

The Institute of Jewish Studies UCL

Contact Email:

ijs@ucl.ac.uk

URL:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/146764924841>