“The Politics of Secularism in France”
Nov 6, 2015, 7-9pm, Environmental and Natural Resources 2 RM S107
1064 E. Lowell St

Joan Wallach Scott is Professor Emerita in the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study and Adjunct Professor of History at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her work has challenged the foundations of conventional historical practice and she has been recognized for her work in the fields of French history, women’s and gender history, and feminist theory. Her many works include Gender and the Politics of History (1988), The Politics of the Veil (2007), and The Fantasy of Feminist History (2011).

The lecture will provide a historical perspective on the contemporary insistence that French laïcité requires the suppression of all forms of visible religious identification, especially the headscarves and face-coverings worn by women. It will look at the history of the concept of laïcité, arguing that current policies depend on a new interpretation of it. And it will ask why women are the particular targets for objection not only to the hijab and niqab, but also to Islam more broadly.