Prof. Gendzier will re-examine US policy and the Israeli-Arab conflict between 1945 and 1949. There was an “oil connection,” US officials feared that Jewish statehood would alienate Arab oil producers thus jeopardize oil supplies. There was also an appreciation of Israel’s military potential that led to its ranking as the second most powerful military in the Middle East after Turkey. In addition, the State Department and the Defense Department reassessed that the new state could be useful in US policy in the Middle East. This position held even as US officials insisted on the urgency of Palestinian refugee repatriation as a prerequisite for the resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. In conclusion, US officials had a clear vision of the nature of the conflict, the uneven nature of the forces, the role of force in the determination of boundaries, the fate of Jerusalem and the future of Palestinian refugees. Indeed, Washington understood the sources of conflict that emerged then and that remain central today.

Craig Daigle (History, CCNY and Graduate Center) and Simon Davis (Bronx Community and Graduate Center) will offer comments