LECTURE DESCRIPTION:
Marranos were Spanish and Portuguese Jews who converted to Christianity at the time of the Inquisition to avoid being massacred or forced to flee. But most of them continued to practice Judaism in secret. Victims of political violence and religious intolerance, unassimilable despite forced baptism, persecuted by the first racist laws, forced into interior emigration, no longer Jews, but not even Christians, the Marranos become the other of the other. Doubly excluded, doubly estranged, condemned to a life of existential duplicity with no way out, they were spurned by both Christians and Jews, unable to belong to either community. The lacerating split, the existential duplicity brought them to discover their self, to explore their interiority. The results are disparate: they range from Teresa of Ávila’s mysticism to Kabbalah’s “great myth of exile”, from Menasseh ben Israel’s messianism to Baruch Spinoza’s concept of freedom. Having survived thanks to clandestinity, to the resistance of memory, to the secret of memory, which over time became the memory of a secret, Marranos cannot be consigned to the archive.
Dissidents out of necessity, they inaugurated modernity with their ambivalence and their split self. Their history – which is not over – can be seen as a prism through which to grasp the features of modernity.

BIO:
Professor Donatella Di Cesare is full professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy of the Sapienza University of Rome, where she is a member of the Doctoral College, and at the Sapienza School of Advanced Studies (SSAS). Her thought is located within continental philosophy (hermeneutics, deconstruction — Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida), delving into the themes of truth and understanding. Her work has focused on the connection between time and language (Walter Benjamin), considering the ethical and political issues of the other and otherness (Emmanuel Levinas). The Shoah has become central to her reflection (If Auschwitz is Nothing, 2023). Having already contributed many studies on this subject, in the aftermath of the publication of Heidegger's Black Notebooks she questioned philosophy’s own responsibility towards the extermination (Heidegger, the Jews and the Shoah. The “Black Notebooks, 2016). She has repeatedly examined the relationship with the figure of the stranger and the foreigner (Marranos. The Other of Other, 2019), also including the question of migration (Resident Foreigners. Philosophy of Migration, 2020). On the borderline between biopolitics and political theology, she has analyzed sovereignty and forms of domination (Spinoza). The challenges of violence, both visible and invisible, from totalitarianism (Arendt) to its contemporary forms (terror, torture, war), pushed her to rethink bare life and human rights. She has called for philosophy to return to the pólis, by outlining the possibility of a radical thought capable of combining existence and community (The Political Vocation of Philosophy 2021). In recent years, she has articulated a critique of state politics, contributing to a reworking of the concept of democracy (Democracy and Anarchy, 2024).