



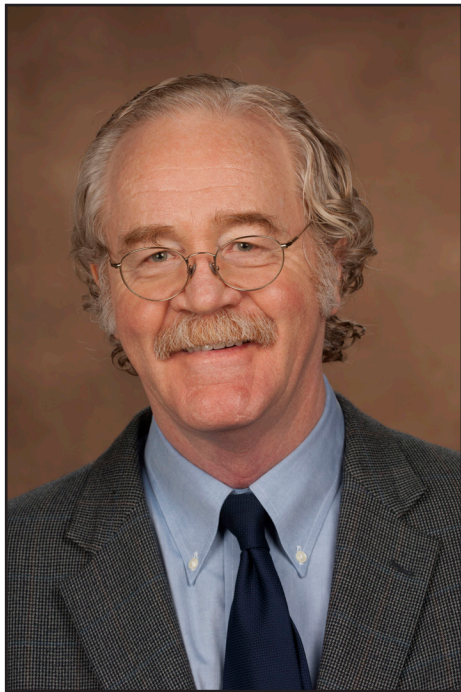
CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

presents

# A CENTURY OF WAR:

1914 and Beyond

## *Bare Death: The Failing Sacrifice of the Great War*



**THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2015**

**7:30 P.M.,**

**JOE ROSENFELD '25 CENTER, ROOM 101**

## **Vincent Sherry**

**Howard Nemerov Professor in the Humanities,  
Professor of English, Washington University, St. Louis**

Professor Sherry teaches and writes about modernist literatures. He is the author of numerous books, Editor of the forthcoming Cambridge History of Modernism, and is currently working on A Literary History of the European War of 1914-1918.

Professor Sherry's talk will consider the fate of "sacrifice" as a category of value in the political, military, and personal experience of the Great War of 1914-1918. There was an exorbitant reliance on sacrifice in the political rhetoric of the war: "sacrifice" provided a tonic and resolving note, it offered a way to explain and absolve the millions of deaths being undergone, it became increasingly clear, for no overt purpose. The talk will reconstruct the cultural understanding of sacrifice before the war and following the fate of this established understanding through the course of the conflict, concentrating mainly on the prose fiction of combat. The implications of this development for the future will be considered, through engagement in particular with Giorgio Agamben's much discussed work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Professor Sherry will show how the atrocities of mid-century begin in the circumstances of the Great War, where the value of life essential to the value of sacrifice is undone.

This event is open to the public.

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