

Select Abstracts for 2015 Humanities Fair

Jacob M. Held, Ph.D.

UCA Philosophy and Religion

Title: “We’ve Always Been at War with Eastasia:” Perpetual War in an Age of Terror.

Abstract: The topic “War and Peace” may be a misnomer. There is a real question about whether “Peace” is a practical possibility, or whether it’s simply what we call the lull in between wars, or rather the time when we don’t notice or feel the effects of the violence that forever plagues our planet. Historically we, or someone else on the planet, have always been at war; at war with other nations or an amorphous group, terrorists, insurgents, revolutionaries, freedom fighters, or even organized crime. Perhaps “War” is definitive of the human condition, in the same way violence may be an inevitable result of living among humans. Whenever reason breaks down, whenever some fail to respond to argument, or empathy, then barring passivism and allowing oneself to be stepped on, abused, or destroyed by such irrational agents we must respond with force. To be sure we should debate and discuss when to use violence and against whom. Just War Theory, the discussion about when military force is justified, against whom, and to what extent focuses extensively on these questions. But what about cases where war is seen as inevitable, when it is no longer a matter of debating whether or not we will fight? What happens when we are in a state of perpetual war, when we are and have always been at war with Eastasia, or rather terrorism. Once we recognize that violence is a fact of our shared condition, then we can start to focus on how we conduct ourselves when violence is necessary. I would like to briefly cover the rationale for and against using military force to combat terrorism, the problems with defining terrorism and the fact that we are in a state of perpetual war. But I’d also like to focus on the question of how we should conduct ourselves in this war. This aspect of just war theory is often called “jus in bello.” It is about humanitarian principles, dignity, honor, and how we relate to our fellow human beings when we are most aggrieved and they are most vulnerable. How we conduct ourselves in war is definitive of what kind of a people we are and we aspire to be. Too often it is us against them, good versus evil, and we fail to recognize that it is not simply about who we fight, but how we fight. If war is about a conflict of values and interests when reason breaks down, then we have to ask for what do we fight, and is it worth it? So in this lecture I plan to phrase these questions in a way that help the audience ask fundamental questions about violence, war, values, and our personal and national identity, bringing to bear on this topic insights from various disciplines in the Humanities, from History and Political Science, to Philosophy, English, and Sociology.

Phillip Spivey, M.A.

U.C.A. Philosophy and Religion

Title: Repairing a Redeemable World: Jewish Visions of War and Peace

Abstract: Throughout 4,000 years of history, the Jewish People have been no strangers to periods of war and peace. Jewish views of war and peace have changed over time, but one theme persists: Tikkun Olam (Hebrew: "Healing the World"). By living an ethical life inspired by the worship of one God, the Jewish People take to heart the biblical passage to "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:3-4). Yet, to everything there is a season: "A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time for peace" (Ecclesiastes 3:8). What does it mean to "heal a world" that is filled with hate and bloodshed? Peace is essential to a good life, but is there ever an appropriate time for war? Come find out how Jewish ethical teachings always takes into account the historical situation and the needs of the community when navigating through the perilous waters of war and peace.

Dr. Jesse Butler, Ph.D.

UCA Philosophy and Religion

Who Am I? War and Peace Within

Abstract: We humans have long sought to understand ourselves, developing a diverse range of viewpoints on the nature of our own existence across cultures throughout history. Among many of these viewpoints, we are regarded as beings divided by competing elements of the self: Mind vs Body; Spirit vs Flesh; Reason vs Emotion; Inner Self vs Outer Appearance. Considering these divisions, the question emerges: Are we fundamentally at war with ourselves, caught between conflicting elements battling each other to shape our identities? Or, alternatively, might we achieve peace within ourselves, harmoniously reconciling the differing aspects of our identities? This talk will introduce some basic theories of the self, exploring the possibility and value of cultivating a harmonious understanding of oneself.

Conrad Schumaker, Ph.D.

UCA English

Title: Crashing Planes, Boiled Parakeets, and the Road to Peace in Sherman Alexie's *Flight*

Abstract: Sherman Alexie's novel, *Flight*, is a provocative and often disturbing look at violence and war—the causes, the implications and consequences, and ultimately what might put an end to them. This presentation will take the students through Alexie's fictional depiction of an adolescent boy's violent response to racism and injustice and his subsequent travels through time to experience a variety of violent conflicts. Then it will ask them to consider the way the novel finally insists that stories and the compassion they teach us are the best way out of a cycle of violence and the foundation of real peace.

Sonya Sawyer Fritz, Ph.D.

UCA English Department

Child Fighters in Fantastical Wars: Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* Trilogy and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Books

Abstract: This presentation will focus on representations of war between good and evil in two children's fantasy series: Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels. It addresses the crucial role that young people play in the conflict, exploring how each author treats questions of children's political awareness and personal power, as well as persistent ideals regarding childhood innocence and purity.

Glenn Jellenick, Ph.D.

UCA English

Title: "Representing, Rehearsing, and Processing War and Peace in Literature and Film"

Abstract: Obviously, a consideration of the subject of war and peace is central to many disciplines in the Humanities (history, philosophy, sociology). While "War and Peace" is a topic, it is also the name of a literary text. Central to the idea of literary and film studies is that our texts simultaneously reflect and drive the culture that produces and consumes them. Thus, they function as both cultural windows and mirrors. My presentation would work through a brief history of narrative representation of war (and peace) in Western culture, and more importantly, it would work through the discipline-specific ways that literary and film scholars understand and process those narrative representations of war (and peace).

Jayme Milshap Stone, Ph.D.

Title: Justice on the Grass: Making Peace in Rwanda after the Genocide

Abstract: In 1994, roughly 800,000 people were murdered by their neighbors, co-workers, priests, and (in some cases) family. Once civil unrest had been restored, the questions became: what does a small African country the size of Maryland do with 100,000 criminals? How does society heal from such betrayal? The answer became gacaca~justice on the grass. Based on restorative justice, the gacaca system of justice sought to restore and rebuild communities by reintegrating those who killed with those who were left behind to mourn.