

Christopher S. Celenza

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The Italian Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern
Humanities:
Lorenzo Valla, Philology, and Emotion

Drawing on his new book, *The Italian Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern Humanities*, Christopher S. Celenza argues that Lorenzo Valla adumbrated a tension characteristic of the modern humanities: that between scholarship as a dispassionate and aggregative collecting of facts, on one hand, and, on the other, humanities scholarship as needing to engage with the contemporary world. The first, with pretenses toward certainty, can seem dry and unengaging and thus destined for self-annihilation; the other, with an intention to act in and change the world, can seem too time bound. With examples drawn from Valla's *Elegances of the Latin Language*, his treatise on the Donation of Constantine, and his biblical philology, Celenza suggests that understanding Valla means incorporating emotions into how we write history, both those of our protagonists and our own.

Date and Venue:
Tuesday, 3rd June 2021, 4:30pm
Zoom: [Link](#)