

Polish Association for American Studies 32nd Annual Conference

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Darkness in Paradise:
American Declarations, Disillusions, and Disasters**

December 9-11, 2021

University of Rzeszów, Poland

The Statue of Liberty is an iconic symbol whose image is known across the globe, a visible manifestation of America's self-professed values of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. In the wake of the 9-11 attacks, the 2007 financial crisis and the Trump presidency, alternative views of American values have rooted themselves ever more deeply in the psyche of American culture, and ever more widely in the globalized communities, whose fates – for better or worse – are inseparable from the American Dream. Has the American Dream become a nightmare? Was it a nightmare all along?

Now that the United States' global hegemony is under threat – be it from the rise of other national powers, the expansion of corporate governance, or from internal decay – alternative ideologies are already challenging the long-familiar slogans of Americanism. Those ideologies may be found in new economic models, in vigorous ecological demands, and in diversifying stories of what constitutes human society.

The mainstreamization of authoritarian politics, economic crises, and – most recently – the COVID pandemic have impacted all countries in varying measures, but their negative aura seems to be – however subjectively – particularly corrosive in the United States, a country founded on the rhetoric of renewal. To explore this tension, our conference will focus on the many contrasts between ideals and their degeneration, the will to perfection and the inability to achieve it. American history has witnessed many visionary slogans turn into dust; the recent years maybe even more so. To what extent has its Eutopia disintegrated into Dystopia? What has happened to the widespread belief in progress? Why is the end of the world easier to imagine than the end of western capitalism?

We would like to encourage reflection upon the chasm between the ideal and the real, upon the dark years in remote and recent American history, recorded in various texts of culture, taking into consideration a variety of topics, including, but not limited to:

- American ideals and disillusionments
- the concept of Paradise in American history
- paradoxes of Paradise
- concepts of failure and disaster
- from “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” to “Making America Great Again”
- political extremism
- Trumpism and (post)Trump identity crisis
- pandemic and civil rights
- “Nature State” and contemporary environmental problems
- migration and refugee crisis
- oppressive canons, critical limitations, and textual constraints
- “old darkness - new hopes” or “new darkness – old hopes”?
- writing, teaching, protesting in the dark times
- dystopian narratives

Participants are invited to submit proposals for **15-minute** paper presentations. Other formats are also encouraged, including pre-formed paper sessions (3 papers), presentations for speed panels (5 slides x 5 minutes), pre-formed speed panels (5 presentations x 5 slides x 5 minutes), and roundtables.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be submitted by **September 30, 2021 (deadline extension: October 10, 2021)**, to **2021paas@gmail.com**. Pre-formed paper sessions should be submitted in one proposal. All proposals should include information about the participants’ academic affiliations, and - for the reasons stated below - doctoral students have to identify themselves as such. All proposals will be reviewed by the organizing committee and participants will be notified of acceptance by **October 15, 2021**.

This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the Fulbright Program. To commemorate it as well as over 60 years of presence in Poland, the Polish-U.S. Fulbright Commission has kindly agreed to contribute to the conference by offering two training seminars (most likely organized on Thursday, December 9, morning) for doctoral students as well as supporting their conference attendance.

Conference fee

The regular conference fee (excluding the costs of accommodation) is **450 PLN**. **Courtesy of the Polish-U.S. Fulbright Commission, the reduced fee for doctoral students is 100 PLN**. The deadline for payment is **November 10, 2021**.

Conference website: www.paas2021.ur.edu.pl



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The conference is planned as an in-person event held at the Rejtana Campus of the University of Rzeszów.

Organising Committee:

dr hab. Elżbieta Rokosz, prof. UR
dr hab. Małgorzata Martynuska, prof. UR
dr Patrycja Austin
dr Sławomir Koziół

Conference Secretary

mgr Paula Wieczorek