

POLISH ASSOCIATION FOR AMERICAN STUDIES 2022 Annual Conference

held and hosted by the Department of British and American Studies,
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland

19-21 October 2022

Our Brand is Crisis: American Downfalls, Hopes, and Renewals

In his timely article “How America Fractured into Four Parts,” published in the July/August 2021 issue of *The Atlantic*, George Packer argues that “people in the United States no longer agree on the nation’s purpose, values, history, or meaning.” This observation prompts him to wonder whether, under such circumstances, reconciliation of the divisions and reintegration of them into a cohesive body politic is at all possible. In *Last Best Hope: America in Crisis and Renewal* (2021), Packer provides a provocative and substantive diagnostic survey of the current state of crisis – or rather, more accurately, the multiple crises – Americans face in the early 2020s.

And yet, when viewed through the lens of history, the current debacles and associated worries hardly seem exceptional given that the potential for fragmentation and the possibility of collapse have been present in the United States since its inception. The country has coped with many crises during the course of its history, some of which significantly helped forge the nation’s character. From the Revolution and the War of 1812, to the divisive Civil War and the problematic Reconstruction that followed, through the Great Depression, and on to the Vietnam War, the social and cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s and everything else mentioned in Billy Joel’s weirdly comprehensive song “We Didn’t Start the Fire,” American nadirs exposed the nation’s weaknesses, while successfully surviving them fostered American confidence and instilled pride.

The most recent sense of crisis, triggered by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, poses a new and difficult challenge for an America whose aspirational sense of unity, expressed in its motto *e pluribus unum*, has been seriously undermined by the divisive character of several presidencies. A series of events – channeled through spontaneous and organized responses to such dramatic developments as George Floyd’s killing, expressed via and encouraged by Donald Trump’s contentious rhetoric, seen in the growth of right-wing extremism, and evident in the devastating effects of the coronavirus pandemic – has shaken the conviction of many in America’s continued ability to triumph over crises and always emerge from its trials and tribulations as an even “More Perfect Union.”

The focus of the 2022 Polish Association for American Studies conference is inquiry into and interrogation of American crises past and present. We invite presentations related, but not limited, to the following topics and approaches:

- dystopian nightmares and utopian hopes
- American losses: of cohesion, of confidence, of faith and reason, of innocence
- challenges to American hegemony
- conspiracy theories
- crisis and religion/spirituality
- crisis and risk management
- crisis as a catalyst
- crisis of dominant (meta-)narratives
- fake news and crisis of truth
- crises of democracy and governance
- domestic rebellions, riots, and protests
- economic crises, inflation, recessions, and depressions
- environmental crisis and the Anthropocene
- ethics in times of crisis
- health in crisis
- mental health crisis
- migration and border crises
- narrating crises in literature and media
- racial inequity in the United States
- the crisis of justice
- representational crisis and failures of imagination
- American wars

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Prof. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland

Prof. Ana M^a Manzanas Calvo, University of Salamanca, Spain

Website: <https://www.umcs.pl/en/paas.htm>

- ✓ Please send paper abstracts (250 words) or panel proposals together with a short bio (up to 100 words) to **paas2022@mail.umcs.pl** by **June 15, 2022**.
- ✓ Notification of acceptance will be sent by **June 30, 2022**.
- ✓ Conference fee 450 PLN/100 EUR/ 100 USD. Reduced fee of 300 PLN/65 EUR/65 USD for doctoral students. The conference fee covers conference materials, coffee breaks, and a conference reception.
- ✓ Deadline for registration and payment of the conference fee: **September 15, 2022**.

Conference venue: **Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland.**

We are planning to have an in-person event, but reserve the right to move to a hybrid/online format should the pandemic or military situation require it, given our location close to the border with Ukraine. In the case of an online event, the conference fee will be lowered to 100PLN/25EUR/25USD for all participants.

Organizing Committee:

Ewa Antoszek

Anna Bendrat

Edyta Frelik

Izabella Kimak

Lidia Kniaź-Hunek

Julia Nikiel

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We would like to express special thanks to our colleagues, Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis from The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin and Robert Westerfelhaus from The College of Charleston for their suggestions to this CFP.