

Rhetoric of Ecology in Visual Culture

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SPRAWOZDANIE/REPORT

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Sprawozdanie/Report: The International Conference *Media in America, America in Media* (March 25-26, 2021) and the Polish Rhetoric Society International Doctoral Workshop (March 22, 2021), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland

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This year, for the third time, the Polish Rhetoric Society took patronage over the international scientific conference *Media in America. America in Media*, which took place on March 25-26, 2021, this time in virtual space. The subject of the conference emerged from the joint research passions of dr Anna Bendrat and dr Elżbieta Pawlak-Hejno representing the Department of English and American Studies and the Department of Media Communication at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.

The organization of conferences in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic presents many challenges for the scientific community, yet, at the same time, it also creates new opportunities to achieve a more international profile. This year's online edition of the event was possible thanks to Anna Oleszczuk, Agata Waszkiewicz and Lidia Książ-Hunek, the doctoral candidates at MCSU who had previously developed an on-line conference model while creating *At the Crossroads* project (September 24-25, 2020). Their remarkable creativity and excellent technology skills made it possible to set up an event connecting researchers from all over the world.

The conference *Media in America. America in Media* gathered 49 participants representing 25 universities from 19 countries located in 10 time zones. Reconciling so many geographical differences was possible thanks to the conference format. The presentations had been prepared by the speakers prior to the event and published on the conference website in the form of videos or texts. The presentations were available to the participants and the audience during the conference week

as well as after the event. They are still available at the conference website <https://mediainamericaconference.wordpress.com>, which contributes to the lasting legacy of the conference and to the ongoing promotion of the global research on the American media. The discussions about each presentation took place in real time according to the program on the Discord platform. However, participants had the opportunity to ask and answer questions throughout the entire conference week. Discord replaced in this case not only the traditional format of discussions, but also proved very useful for networking.

The three main goals of the *Media in America* conference were: promoting interdisciplinarity, supporting early career scholars and establishing international cooperation. As for the interdisciplinary character of the conference, its purpose was to provide a space and the opportunity for the scholars representing a wide spectrum of media studies to share, analyze, and provide feedback on the changing media landscape of America.

The speakers' presentations concerned various identity, political, social and cultural problems raised in literature, in cultural texts and in the media. During the first day of the conference, the participants addressed several areas of media studies within the American context, including cinematographic perspectives on America, representations of America in foreign media, trends in new and social media platforms and rhetoric of American exceptionalism.

The keynote lecture was delivered by Jim A. Kuypers, Professor of Communication at Virginia Tech University, who is also the author, editor, and co-author of 15 books, including *Purpose, Practice, and Pedagogy in Rhetorical Criticism* (winner of the Everett Lee Hunt Award for Outstanding Scholarship) and *Partisan Journalism: A History of Media Bias in the United States* (a Choice Outstanding Academic Title for 2014).

Among the presentations during the second day of the conference related to persuasion in various types of media, a few leading topics can be mentioned in order to highlight that communication science is indeed a multidisciplinary study. The presentations ranged from influencing people's behavior through reality television or political memes to representing trauma through Black Lives Matter movement' depictions in cinema. There were reflections on political leaders' communication skills and on the artistic visions of America reproduced by various arts, such as photography and drama.

The keynote lectures were given by dr Sabina Klimek, a diplomat and scholar, Consul in the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Istanbul and Assistant Professor at Warsaw School of Economics, co-founder and Vice President of Polish-American Chamber of Commerce North-East ("The role of the Polish media in the USA in integrating the Polish community") and Marcin Stachyra,

an Executive and Creative Director of Bona Notitia Foundation, operating globally in the Polish diaspora media sector (“Local Media, Tech Giants and the Freedom of Speech in the Eyes of the Outsider”).

One of the main ideas of the *Media in America* conference was to create space for the academic development of doctoral students. Therefore, the conference was preceded by a workshop for early career scholars from 5 countries (USA, Bangladesh, South Korea, Germany and Poland), which took place on March 22, 2021 under the supervision of tutors from Virginia Tech School of Communication, professors Jim A. Kuypers and Mike Horning, as well as scholars from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. The workshop’s design aimed at providing a comfortable amount of time and space for academic interaction. Each Ph.D. student had 45 minutes to present their project and answer the questions asked by the moderators and other participants through an online form distributed prior to the workshop, and those asked during the presentation. The workshop provided a great opportunity to practice public speaking and discuss research projects with media specialists. In September, a follow-up meeting is planned so that everyone can share how the project was developing and whether the feedback from the workshop was useful in a longer research perspective.

The conference, and in particular the workshop for doctoral students, were organized with the support of the US Embassy, which funded grants for Keynote Speakers, Prof. Jim A. Kuypers and Prof. Michael Horning from Virginia Tech University in the USA, and was actively involved in promoting the event on its social media platforms.

It is worth noting that the online format of the 3rd international conference *Media in America. America in Media* has proved successful since it allowed the researchers across the globe to participate in the lively online discussions with many media scholars who otherwise would find it difficult to arrive at a stationary conference held in Lublin. In reference to the title of the conference, the participants considered the impact that the constantly evolving media engagement frameworks have had on both: America’s media landscape (*Media in America*) and the media portrayals of the United States (*America in Media*). With the hope of the continued development and proliferation of cutting-edge technologies used by American media, we cordially invite you to the next edition of the event to be held in 2023.