

## Argumentation in rhetoric Argumentacja w retoryce

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### SPRAWOZDANIE / REPORT

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### Report/Sprawozdanie: *The International Conference Media in America, America in Media (March 23-24, 2023, UMCS/online)*

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## **Report/Sprawozdanie: The International Conference *Media in America, America in Media* (March 23-24, 2023, UMCS/online)**

The fourth edition of the *Media in America, America in Media* conference, held on March 23-24, 2023, through the MS Teams platform, once again brought together researchers from various fields who examine the central theme of the conference from diverse scientific perspectives. Since 2017 the goal of the conference has remained unchanged: to generate a cross-disciplinary debate that brings together divergent yet complementary voices reflecting on American media environment and America's portrayals in media across the globe.

However, this edition of the conference aimed to go beyond the usual exploration of the conference theme. The world finds itself amidst a turbulent period marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, economic crises, and escalating climate issues. These factors have collectively contributed to a sense of destabilization and widespread social anxiety. In recognition of the prevailing circumstances, the word "permacrisis" was chosen as Collins Dictionary's word of the year in November 2022, underscoring the urgency and relevance of the conference discussions.

Therefore, the participants were invited to share their perspective on how contemporary media conceptualize the human condition in 21<sup>st</sup> century and how media rethink traditional attitudes to cognitive, mental, physical and emotional responses to rapidly changing human environments. The established theme of the conference was *Earth, Body and Mind*. An important point of the debate was an attempt to assess the persuasive influence of the media on public discourse and the audience, which is why the Polish Rhetoric Society took the honorary patronage of the event.

The conference was attended by 45 scientists representing 26 universities from around the world. This impressive turnout demonstrated the international reach and appeal of the conference. Notably, an interesting observation is that the attendees spanned diverse time zones, with the greatest time difference among

guests amounting to 14 hours. The online format, which was practiced during the pandemic, allowed for maintaining the global reach of the meeting and overcoming other barriers related to the organization of international events.

The keynote speaker at the conference was a pioneer in research in the area of affect studies in environmental culture, Alexa Weik von Mossner from the University of Klagenfurt. She is the author of *Cosmopolitan Minds* (U of Texas P 2014) and *Affective Ecologies* (Ohio State UP 2017), the editor of *Moving Environments* (Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014), and the co-editor of *The Anticipation of Catastrophe* (Winter 2014), *Ethnic American Literatures and Critical Race Narratology* (Routledge 2022), and *Empirical Ecocriticism* (U of Minnesota P, 2023). She recently published her first novel, *Fragile* (Elzwhere 2023).

Alexa Weik von Mossner delivered a lecture *Growing Hope: Narratives of Food Justice in American Media*. The talk considered a selection of food justice narratives in contemporary American media: stories about community gardening, food sovereignty, and vegan food justice. It showed that there is common ground between these movements which is part of a larger narrative about mind, body, and earth, and about growing hope for a better and more equitable future. In the United States, this is especially true for food justice narratives told by people of color and their historically marginalized communities

The debate on the first day of the conference began with papers addressing issues related to contemporary crises and media responses to recent world events. There were also lectures addressing the problem of fear and insecurity expressed by pop culture, as well as threads related to gender identity and social memory. It is worth noting that more than 110 listeners attended the last session of the first day.

The second day of the *Media in America, America in Media* conference featured thought-provoking papers and presentations, delving into a diverse range of topics. One notable focus of the day was multimodal communications, with researchers shedding light on the intricate interplay between various forms of media and communication channels. This exploration highlighted the evolving nature of media in contemporary society and its impact on our understanding and interaction with the world.

In addition to the examination of multimodal communications, significant attention was devoted to exploring vital political and social issues. Scholars presented compelling research on subjects such as American diplomacy, geopolitics, and economy, examining the dynamic relationships between media, power structures, and global affairs. These discussions provided valuable insights into the role of media in shaping public opinion, influencing policy decisions, and fostering international cooperation.

Another prominent area of focus in the 2023 edition was the issue of neurodiversity. Researchers brought attention to this important topic, emphasizing the growing recognition and public discourse surrounding this issue. The exploration of neurodiversity within the context of media highlighted the need for inclusive representation, accurate portrayals, and increased awareness in the media landscape. The emphasis on neurodiversity aligns with the conference's objective of examining "mind, body and Earth" and promoting informed dialogue on these crucial topics.

It is worth noting that the unwavering commitment to diversity is precisely the greatest value of the conference project *Media in America. America in Media*. The conference teaches openness to new points of view and reveals how familiar topics are interpreted in different cultural environments. Moreover, researchers actively strive to counteract various forms of discrimination, making the conference a platform for promoting inclusivity and equality. As we navigate an increasingly interconnected and complex world, the conference recognizes that addressing societal challenges requires us to value and respect diverse voices. Therefore, it can be concluded that creating a space conducive to the exchange of ideas on the American media landscape serves as a powerful tool of alleviating the sense of insecurity that accompanies people in the 21st century.

Building on the success of the previous editions, we are excited to announce the forthcoming 5th edition of the Media in America conference series. Scheduled to take place in 2025, this upcoming conference will continue the tradition of bringing together scholars, researchers, and experts from around the world to engage in vibrant discussions and share their insights on the evolving media landscape and America's portrayal in media.

We cordially invite all those who share our commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and the exchange of ideas to join us for this landmark event. Together, we can further enrich our understanding of the complex interplay between media, society, and culture, and contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable world.

Let us meet in 2025!

To learn more about previous editions of the conference, please visit the website:

<https://mediaameryka.wixsite.com/umcs>