

International Conference
American Studies Center, Warsaw University
November 22-23, 2013 in Warsaw, Poland

CALL FOR PAPERS

DECONSTRUCTING THE KENNEDY MYSTIQUE – JFK AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

The 50th anniversary of president Kennedy's death seems like a good moment to ask questions about his legacy and the meaning(s) of his life. The organizers of the conference would like to invite scholars who may offer a realistic and critical evaluation of his presidency and its aftermath. The task is not easy as through the years JFK became much more than just a former president. He became a pop icon, a mythical leader, a popular hero. His "ask not ..." and "New Frontier" have become points of reference for baby boomer's collective memory. Since 1963 scores of historians and social scientists have engaged in defining him and his leadership. Politicians of all persuasions have used JFK: his deeds and words, in legitimizing their actions. Remember the Republican VP candidate Dan Quayle in 1988? Still others make use of the things which President Kennedy never did but, in their opinion, would have certainly done had his tenure not been suddenly terminated. Kennedy's opponents sail against this tide of hagiographic and sentimental narratives and encourage us to look at Kennedy and his presidency through facts and facts only. In their mind, Kennedy, in order to be realistically evaluated and given a proper place in the history of American democracy, must be stripped of his symbolic qualities. Doubts about the assassination itself and the Warren Report ushered a new era of conspiratorial thinking about political phenomena.

Between heroic legends and critical deconstruction is the space where we hope to fit in conference presentations. Let us not forget about Kennedy's afterlife – the uses of his true and imagined accomplishments by all those who claim to either have known him or who have decided to carry his torch to the next generations. **We hope that our conference will become a venue where Kennedy apologists and his detractors can engage in academic discussions that will allow us to better understand JFK not so much as a political leader but as a cultural phenomenon.** There must be an explanation why a president who ranks in the middle of the pack (#19 in the Chicago Sun times poll in 2000) as far as domestic and foreign policy, impact on history, character and integrity, are concerned would consistently be so vividly present in the (sub)consciousness of the American people. We are encouraging scholars from fields so divergent as: history, political science; sociology, psychology culture studies, anthropology, or media and art to offer their own "Kennedy angle" for the conference.

For whom? we are interested in capturing the richness of Kennedy scholarship, reaching well beyond the political aspects of his life therefore we hope to invite scholars specializing in: social history; collective memory; rhetoric; public policy; leadership; social conflicts; communication

and media studies; race and gender relations; religion; cultural and political anthropology; political psychology; international relations; cold war history; presidential studies, criminology or even literature and film.

Here is a list of possible issues or “Kennedy angles” that should help you better understand the directions in which we would like our discussions to go:

Kennedy and the fear factor in politics
Kennedy and political erotics
Kennedy and the myth of new beginning
Kennedy and the power of words
Kennedy and American exceptionalism
Kennedy and political taboos
Kennedy and the Camelot
Kennedy as public good
Kennedy and the Moon
Kennedy and innovation
Kennedy as Hemingway
Kennedy as a TV celebrity
Kennedy as a popular obsession
Kennedy and the day the world stood still for Americans
Kennedy in literary narratives
Kennedy as a model American politician
Kennedy as a fantasy
Kennedy and American folk tradition
Kennedy representation in art and movies
Kennedy and collective memory
Kennedy and political trauma
Kennedy as the Voice
Kennedy as placebo
Kennedy as a Kennedy
Kennedy as Jack

And many other REPRESENTATIONS AND USES of John Fitzgerald Kennedy that can be approached with critical eye 50 years after his death.

Dates: November 22-23, 2013 (Friday -Saturday)

Venue: American Studies Center, Warsaw University. Al. Niepodleglosci 22, Warsaw, Poland

Conference costs: €120/\$150 or 500 PLN which covers: registration fee; conference materials; coffee breaks: snacks, soft drinks; Friday evening dinner and entertainment; and publication of selected texts in a book while other texts will be considered for a special issue of *The Americanist* . For doctoral students and/or those not wishing to have their text considered for publication the fee is €75/\$100 or 330 PLN. Organizers may assist interested participants in finding adequately priced lodging in Warsaw.

Deadline for submissions: September 15, 2013. Please send an abstract of your presentation (up to 600 characters) together with a one paragraph long personal information about your scholarship and affiliation. Organizers also welcome suggestions of whole panels (up to three participants). Notification of acceptance will be sent no later than September 30.

Contact: kennedyconference@yahoo.pl

Conference website: <http://asc.uw.edu.pl/kennedyconference/>

Organizing committee: prof. Bohdan Szklarski (chair)

Manager of the conference office: Mr. Piotr Szyja