AMERICA 250 SYMPOSIUM

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS AND PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Csaba Lévai (University of Debrecen)

The Declaration of Independence— Authorship and Historical Fame

The original rough draft of the Declaration of Independence was produced by Thomas Jefferson, but the Committee of Five and Congress altered the text considerably. The first debates about the authorship of the document shifted into a nationwide controversy during the 1820s. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams remained the only surviving founders by that time, who could provide eyewitness accounts about the drafting of the Declaration. Jefferson, supported by the Democratic-Republican Party, claimed the sole authorship of the document, while Adams and the Federalists were trying to depict the later as an equal drafting partner of the former. These debates inspired and contributed to the emergence of the cult of the Declaration, which promoted the development of modern American national identity. The keynote lecture proposes to examine how the first reproductions of the Declaration of Independence, and some other works of art, contributed to the emerging cult of the document, and how they mirrored the debates about the authorship of the Declaration.

Csaba Lévai is a full professor of history at the University of Debrecen. His research interests include the history of the British colonies in North America, the history of the American Revolution, and the history of slavery in British North America and the United States of America. His latest book is *"The Execrable Commerce." Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Emergence of the Slave Systems in British North America* published by L'Harmattan in 2020 in Hungarian. Currently, he is working on a monograph about the problem of slavery and James Madison. He was a two-time Fulbright visiting fellow at the University of Virginia (1999, 2018), and he was also a research fellow at the International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello, Virginia in 1998 and 2010), and at the Fred W. Smith Library for the Study of George Washington (Mount Vernon, Virginia in 2015). His works have been published in seven countries (Hungary, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany) in Hungarian as well as in English.

PRESENTATIONS

Ashley Johnson Bavery (Fulbright László Országh Distinguished Chair in American Studies, University of Debrecen; Eastern Michigan University)
250 Years of an Immigrant Nation

The United States is an immigrant nation. In fact, 250 years ago, the Declaration of Independence explicitly lists King George's efforts to obstruct the migration and naturalization of foreigners to the American colonies as a key grievance against imperial Britain. Upon independence, immigrants from across the globe began to build America's economy and key infrastructure. Immigrants tilled the soil, laid the tracks for the transcontinental railroad, and toiled in the factories that built the nation's power. Yet even in its earliest days, American policymakers endeavored to restrict who could settle within the nation's borders. This talk will reflect on America's origins as an immigrant nation to understand the origins of migration, gatekeeping, and borders that were established in its earliest days.

Ashley Johnson Bavery is an Associate Professor of History at Eastern Michigan University and a scholar of US immigration policy and European migration to the United States. She is currently serving as a Fulbright László Országh Distinguished Chair in American Studies at the University of Debrecen in Hungary. Her book, *Bootlegged Aliens: Immigration Politics on America's Northern Border* won the best first book award from the Immigration and Ethnic History Society for its treatment of unauthorized European immigration across the US-Canada border. Her work has been published in journals including the *Journal of American History*, *the Journal of Urban History,* and *The American Historian*. She is currently writing a book about Muslim immigration to the United States that examines the interplay of race and religion in industrial America throughout the 20th century.

Tibor Glant (University of Debrecen)
America and the World

From a loose alliance of rebellious British colonies in North America the United States has become the dominant great power in 250 years. In this paper we review and evaluate the evolution of American empire, going beyond the continental-great-super-hyper power narrative and the consensus vs. conflict paradigms of traditional history writing. Our focus is on the unique nature of American empire and empire building and on the role of the United States in international relations (geopolitics), especially from

Woodrow Wilson to Donald J. Trump. By way of conclusion, we discuss the significance of the US and American democracy in Hungary, for Hungarians, from Bölöni Farkas in the 1830s to the present.

Tibor Glant is an associate professor at the North American Studies Department, University of Debrecen and research professor at the John Lukacs Institute of the Ludovika University of Public Service, Budapest. He has a combined BA and MA in history and English from KLTE, Debrecen (1991), and an MA (1993) and PhD (1996) in history from the University of Warwick, UK. He has published eight books on World War I and the Trianon Treaty, American peace preparations during World War I, Hungarian travel writing on the US, 1956 in American memory, and the American adventures and return of the Holy Crown (1944–78). He is also author of numerous scholarly articles on US-Hungarian relations and US foreign policy as well as on film and travel writing.

Zoltán Peterecz (Eszterházy Károly Catholic University)

Manifest Destiny: Race, Conquest, Modernity, and Destiny in the United States in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

Manifest Destiny as a political slogan with heavy cultural underpinnings cannot be separated from the notion of American exceptionalism. During the first half of the nineteenth century, more and more Americans moved westward on the continent claiming newer and newer tracts of land. This was possible due to successful diplomacy, military strength, and fortunate geographic and geopolitical circumstances. As a culmination of these factors, the idea of Manifest Destiny easily took on a physical and abstract meaning promoting the special status of the United States and Americans, leaving certain realities out of the conversation. The presentation introduces the concept of the abovementioned ideas, their historical surroundings and relevance, and the significance of this "destiny-ridden" period played in US history.

Zoltán Peterecz is an associate professor at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary. He earned his Ph.D. in American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University in 2010. He was a Fulbright research fellow in the 2014–15 academic year at Yale University. His main fields of research include American history, American foreign affairs, and American Hungarian relations in the first half of the twentieth century, on which subjects he regularly publishes books and articles. His latest monographs

respectively introduced the career of Nicholas Roosevelt, American minister to Hungary in the early 1930s, the work of the American minsters accredited to Hungary in the interwar years, and the four hundred years of history of American exceptionalism. He is also the editor-in-chief of Pro&Contra, an online English-language journal for Ph.D. students and young academics.

Eric Beckett Weaver (University of Debrecen)
The Export of Democracy: Assumptions, Successes, and Failures

American foreign policy's vacillation between isolationism, intervention, and the promotion of democracy abroad has a long and variegated history, related to Americans' varying ideas of their place in the world, and the value and applicability of their political system for other countries—sometimes a conviction, and sometimes strongly doubted (a conviction, incidentally, expressed by other great powers about their own systems). Starting with American intervention in the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1893, and the Spanish-American War, through the settlements after the two World Wars, the Cold War, the fall of communism in Europe, interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and culminating in the verbal and military adventures involving Canada, Greenland, Venezuela and Iran, we will cursorily discuss the successes and failures in the promotion of democracy, and non-democratic interventions abroad.

Eric Beckett Weaver is an associate professor teaching political science at the University of Debrecen. He earned his doctoral degree in modern history at the University of Oxford. His academic interests include politics and history, international history and politics, and comparative politics. His research focuses on the history and political culture of Southeastern Europe, with a particular focus on minorities and nationalism. In addition to English, his studies have been published in Hungarian, Polish, and Serbian.