



Irish Association  
for American  
Studies



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

**Irish Association for American Studies  
Postgraduate Symposium**

American Carnage

University College Cork

In-person event

22nd November 2024

Organisers: Ginevra Bianchini and Beth Aherne, IAAS PG Caucus co-chairs

For the 2024 IAAS Postgraduate Symposium, we invite scholars across all disciplines of American Studies to reflect on the theme of ‘American Carnage.’ We strive to interpret and unpack how—throughout history and in the current moment—American culture, politics, and society have been and are grounded in ‘carnage.’

Merriam-Webster defines carnage as either ‘the flesh of slain animals or humans’ or ‘great and usually bloody slaughter or injury (as in battle).’ When we apply them to American history, both iterations of the word are arguably appropriate. Indeed, a nation built on genocide, war, and enslavement can only be properly described in terms of ‘carnage.’ Its definitions also ring true for the contemporary American social and political landscape. Since Trump’s inauguration in 2017, when he called for a stop to “this American carnage,” the phrase has come to represent the various economic and social conditions the US has found itself in. When considering this year’s Presidential Election campaigns, one might describe the personal jibes aimed by Donald Trump (“I’m a better-looking person than Kamala [Harris]”) and the scathing responses from Kamala Harris’ running mate Tim Walz ([of Republicans] “I’m telling you: these guys are weird”) as a metaphorical “slaughter or injury” in a battle of wits. Not to mention, the ongoing horrors in Palestine, fuelled by American munitions, reflect the United States’ global impact. Carnage in and perpetuated by the US seems to be endemic. However, this “bloody slaughter” has been and continues to be masked by promises of the American Dream, reconciliation, and hope for a more unified future, while the capitalist agenda oscillates between contradicting and reaffirming American multiculturalism and the ‘supposed’ myth of the land of the free. In light of its sinister history, the US emerges as a country built on the backs of enslaved people and the genocide of Indigenous populations, appearing to embody carnage as one of its founding concepts. Thus, unpacking ‘American Carnage’ as a contemporary and historical phenomenon is a vital process in understanding the current American cultural and political imaginary.

Delegates are encouraged to reflect on the contexts and significance of the concept of ‘American Carnage’ and how it has been narrated and represented in the cultural, social, and political imaginary. Paper and panel topics may include but are by no means limited to:

- American Carnage, Manifest Destiny, and the myth of the Frontier. The frontier changes every time it is ‘reached,’ pushing its limits to impossible extremes. If the frontier no longer exists as a physical entity then, what is there to reach for?
- US foreign and domestic policies: an invasion of the Land, the Body, and the Culture?
- American Carnage in cultural productions (literature, film, TV series, visual arts, music, mainstream media, and popular culture)
- How has American Carnage evolved as a historical concept and reality for the US?
- Capitalism and consumer culture.
- How does the concept of American Carnage relate to gun control, domestic terrorism, and ideas of personal freedom?
- How does the theme of American Carnage relate to ideas of liminality, hybridity, decolonization, and the disenfranchisement of people of colour?
- The American Dream, American Extremes, American Exceptionalism, and American Decline

The symposium is scheduled as an in-person event and will be hosted by The School of English and Digital Humanities, University College Cork. UCC can be reached by public transport from Cork city centre.

The IAAS and the Postgraduate Symposium are dedicated to diversity, equality, and inclusion, and we welcome papers from under-represented groups. You can read our code of conduct at this link: <https://iaas.ie/blog/iaas-annual-conference-code-of-conduct/>.

**All presenters must be members of the IAAS to register for and attend the symposium. There is also a registration fee of €15 to attend the symposium. More information is available here: <https://iaas.ie/memberships/>.**

The IAAS is an all-island scholarly association dedicated to promoting interdisciplinary American Studies in Ireland. The annual Postgraduate Symposium, run by Postgraduates, aims at fostering a supportive and discursive environment for more junior scholars to share their research, exchange ideas, and create lasting connections and networks.

For more information, email us at [postgrad@iaas.ie](mailto:postgrad@iaas.ie) or join the IAAS Postgraduate Discord: <https://discord.gg/jasEAMKJ4b>.

The IAAS offers **two bursaries of €50 each** for attendance at the Postgraduate Symposium. Applicants must be presenting a paper in person at the symposium and **should express their interest and reasons when submitting their paper proposal**. The bursary recipients will be delegates without additional funding who are travelling the farthest distance to attend the symposium.

### **Submission Details**

We welcome 300-word proposals for fifteen-minute papers or 500-word proposals for three-person panels, along with a short academic biography (150 words) in the same document, from

postgraduate and early career researchers across all disciplines of American Studies, including literature, history, film, politics, music, art, media, geopolitics, geography, and more.

The deadline for submissions, to be sent to [postgrad@iaas.ie](mailto:postgrad@iaas.ie), is **Monday 21st, October 2024**.