

Krzysztof Michałek Memorial Lecture

University of Warsaw, May 30th 2018

Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, Casimir Palace

Prof. Elizabeth Dunn

Indiana University Bloomington, Department of Geography

"The Trouble With Refugees: Xenophobia, Populism, and the 2016 American Presidential Election"

ABSTRACT: In 2015, a group of citizens attempted to bring refugees to resettle in their small Midwestern American town. At first widely viewed as humanitarian, the effort was soon met with an enormous backlash from a group of local conservatives. Why did refugees, who were a fairly neutral figure of humanitarian intervention in 2015, suddenly become a polarizing figure in the run up to the 2016 US elections? What role does the figure of the refugee play in the constitution of illiberal regimes? In this talk, I argue that the figure of the refugee became the focal point of a long-standing affective economy based on anxiety, one cultivated over the decades. By unpacking anti-refugee sentiment, I show that it is contagious anxiety which defines illiberal voters, rather than their membership in any particular social group - which is what allows illiberal ideologies to spread quickly across social groups and across space.

Program

15:00 – 16:00 Meeting with prof. Elizabeth Dunn

Senate Hall

16:00 – 17:30 Open Lecture

Brudziński room

- Welcome address – dr. hab. Maciej Duszczyk, Vice-Rector for Research and International Relations, University of Warsaw
- Remembering prof. Krzysztof Michałek – dr. Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska, American Studies Center, University of Warsaw
- Introduction – prof. Joanna Niżyńska, Slavic Department, Director Polish Studies Center, Indiana University Bloomington
- *"The Trouble With Refugees: Xenophobia, Populism, and the 2016 American Presidential Election"* - prof. Elizabeth Dunn, Department of Geography, Indiana University Bloomington
- Questions/Answers, discussion