Indiana Humanities is establishing a *Frankenstein*-themed speakers bureau in 2018, and we're seeking proposals for talks and presentations from scholars and experts in the humanities and sciences. Applications are due Tuesday, May 23.

### About One State / One Story: *Frankenstein*

When it comes to asking the hard questions at the heart of scientific investigation, perhaps no book has ever topped *Frankenstein*. That's why Indiana Humanities has selected the classic novel, which turns 200 in 2018, as the centerpiece of its new thematic initiative, Quantum Leap. Through an ambitious series of statewide programs, Quantum Leap explores the spirit of possibility and creativity that occurs when we bridge the humanities with science, technology, engineering, math and medicine.

Indiana Humanities plans to award *Frankenstein* book sets and program funds to up to 100 communities statewide, activating hundreds of programs and thousands of conversations about the incredible ways science and technology are (re)shaping our lives and communities. Libraries, schools, museums and community centers will not only receive funding and books, they'll also get posters, bookmarks and other goodies created by Indiana Humanities' stellar communications team. There will be a program guide, too, full of short essays, discussion questions, activity ideas and additional reading and viewing suggestions.

To help program hosts take their ideas even further—and to ensure that diverse communities have access to high-quality and relevant humanities expertise—Indiana Humanities is putting together a special speakers bureau of experts and scholars available to travel across the state and deliver compelling, thought-provoking talks on different themes related to the book. See below for how to join this cohort of engaged scholars.

### What we're looking for

Like any enduring work of fiction, *Frankenstein* has been studied by generations of scholars and continues to inspire conversation and creativity in the present. In our speakers bureau, we aim to offer talks that can help ordinary Hoosiers delve into the many layers of interpretation of the book, appreciate its extraordinary history and consider the specific ways it may provide reflection and insight in our increasingly technological and interconnected world.

Each talk should be about 45 minutes plus time for questions and/or discussion with the audience. Talks can be delivered with or without additional media such as slides, images, film clips, etc. We welcome talks for adult, teen or youth audiences.

We've identified seven key questions that will guide our *Frankenstein* programming. We're especially interested in talks that address, in some way, one or more of these key questions:

- *Frankenstein* complicates the idea of what it means to be human. What combination of biology, experience or innate characteristics make us who we are?
- Under what conditions do advances in science and technology lead to advances in society—and how can history help us answer the question?
- What responsibilities do creators and scientists have for the consequences, even unintended, of their inventions?
- New developments in science and technology can blur the lines between human and machine, and natural and artificial, and can even shift humankind's place in the universe. How should we navigate these changing, increasingly porous boundaries?
• How do social categories based on class, gender, sexuality, race and disability affect people’s access to scientific knowledge and technological advances? Do some groups gain greater profit, or face greater risks, from scientific and technological change?

• Is there an ethical context in which science should operate, and who should be responsible for determining the limits of science? If there are limits to science, does that mean there should also be limits to knowledge?

• Why did Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* become an enduring work of fiction, inspiring thinkers, creators and scientists across generations? How is it relevant to people today?

We also welcome proposals on other themes and topics, including representations of *Frankenstein* in art and film; the historical context of the original novel, including the Enlightenment and Romanticism; literary analysis of the book; the history of science as it relates to *Frankenstein*; biographical sketches of Mary Shelley; the history of the book and its reception over time; moral and ethical questions raised by the book; philosophies of the mind and theories on the origins of life as present in Shelley’s story; and questions of gender, technology and reproduction raised by the book.

We ask that speakers commit to giving at least six talks over the course of 2018 and be open to traveling around the state (travel will be reimbursed).

**What makes a great talk?**

• **A compelling idea:** Great talks are *interesting* and are usually built around one focused idea. However they start—with a question, with a bold claim or with the posing of a problem—they should leave the audience with that indelible buzzy, refreshed feeling of encountering a new idea.

• **Dynamic, easy speaking style:** Some speakers are funny, some are serious, but all great speakers share a few things in common: they’re able to adjust their tone and formality depending on the audience, they avoid arcane jargon and confusing syntax, and they have the charisma to hold the attention of a crowd. Great talks are more than just a paper read out loud.

• **Deep expertise:** The speaker knows his or her stuff! Usually this is demonstrated by advanced study such as an M.A. or Ph.D. in a related humanities field such as literature, history, philosophy, history of science, art or theater history, etc. We also welcome proposals from scientists, engineers, researchers, doctors or others working in STEM fields who can provide insights in the scientific aspects of the novel.

• **Unexpected connections:** The speaker makes the case for how his or her specific topic is a lens for thinking about the larger historical context, a broader philosophical question, a contemporary debate or phenomenon, etc.

• **Relevance:** The speaker has spent time thinking about how to make his or her talk relevant to non-specialist, general-public audiences, often by creating a hook that connects to people’s everyday lives.

**How does the speakers bureau work?**

Speakers will receive a standard honorarium of $400 per talk. All talks will be listed in the *One State/One Story* programming guide, as well as on the Indiana Humanities website, with a talk title, description, short bio and contact information.

There will be two ways organizations can book speakers through the bureau. Organizations who are awarded a community read can contact speakers directly to arrange a mutually agreeable date and time. They can then use their awarded funds to pay the speakers’ honoraria and travel directly.

We anticipate that others, including corporate groups, schools and book clubs, may also be interested in booking a speaker. These groups can contact speakers to determine a date and time, then apply to Indiana Humanities for funding to cover the speaker’s honorarium.

Talks may be booked throughout 2018. In August 2017, Indiana Humanities will host orientation workshops for selected speakers, during which we’ll go into further detail about booking logistics, provide promotional tips and take head shots.

**Application process**

There is a two-step selection process: an application followed by in-person audition.

The application can be found online: [https://indianahumanities.wufoo.com/forms/mm61tnj1meufvi/](https://indianahumanities.wufoo.com/forms/mm61tnj1meufvi/). The application asks for:

• A description and title for your talk.

• An explanation of why you think this topic is important and interesting to include in the One State/One Story speakers bureau.
• A description of your relevant expertise and any public speaking experience.
• A resume or CV.
• A short digital recording introducing yourself and your talk. The video should be no more than five minutes in length and help give reviewers a sense of your personality and presentation style. You can upload a .WMV or Quicktime video file or link to an online video source (i.e., YouTube).
• The name and contact information for at least one public speaking reference.

After reviewing applications, we will invite a selected group of candidates to continue with in-person auditions. Auditions will be held June 6, 7, 8 and 9. Most auditions will be scheduled during normal working hours, though a limited number of evening auditions will be available.

Please note that the audition dates are set so if invited you must be able to attend one of the auditions. Auditions will be held in Indianapolis, and if there a significant pool from another region of the state, we may hold auditions in that area. Indiana Humanities will reimburse mileage for travel of more than an hour to the audition.

Questions? Ideas?

Contact Director of Programs and Community Engagement Leah Nahmias (lnahmias@indianahumanities.org / 317-616-9804).

About Indiana Humanities

Indiana Humanities connects people, opens minds and enriches lives by creating and facilitating programs that encourage Hoosiers to think, read and talk. www.IndianaHumanities.org