

FRANKENSTEIN SPEAKER BUREAU CATALOGUE



IMPROVISING *FRANKENSTEIN*: BRINGING TO LIFE NEW STORIES OF DISABILITY

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Frankenstein is a reflection of how we think about, respond to, and ultimately create disability as individuals and communities. How different would the story have been if Victor Frankenstein and the villagers had reacted to the “creature” not with fear and violence, but with “yes and” and “got your back”? In this participatory, thoughtful, and fun session, we’ll use improv -- the art of making things up on the spot -- to explore these ideas and co-create new stories of disability that represent our highest aspirations. This session can be customized for a variety of audiences, including teens and grade school students.

STITCHED AND BOUND: *FRANKENSTEIN* AND THE BOOK

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Unlike the creature brought to life by Victor Frankenstein, the first edition of *Frankenstein* is not a freak. Rather, it appears to be a typical novel of its time, three volumes bound in plain boards, published without the nineteen-year-old author’s name on its title page. But the story of *Frankenstein*’s publication and the history of its readership over the past two centuries is just as exciting as Mary Shelley’s novel. This talk examines not only the birth of the novel but also its reception, emphasizing how physical formats changed the way readers have understood the story of the monster within.

***FRANKENSTEIN* AND *JURASSIC PARK*: TWO TALES OF SCIENCE FICTION AND IMAGINATION**

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Frankenstein and *Jurassic Park* share several intriguing themes, including the ethics of scientific process; the commercialization of scientific achievement; and the interplay of power, control, and respect for the natural world. This talk by Dr. Cassandra Bausman will explore these comparisons and consider how both stories help us think about the exciting yet potentially difficult relationship between scientific progress and imagination. Examining these Promethean tales celebrates *Frankenstein*’s remarkable staying-power and suggests that storytelling and science both share the centrality of imaginative vision, from Shelley’s groundbreaking work and Crichton’s juggernaut to Spielberg’s cinematic mastery.

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE QUESTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AFTER GENETIC ENGINEERING

Eileen Botting, Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame
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Prominent critics and skeptics of genetic engineering have treated the ethical issue of genetic engineering of children as if it were still science fiction, like the artificially made creature imagined in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*. After surveying the history of making genetically modified (GM) children through three-person in vitro fertilization since the late 1990s, Dr. Botting sketches a framework for a theory of the rights of the GM children made from heritable biotechnological interventions in the human genome. The hard question is no longer, "Should science genetically engineer children?" but rather, "What are the rights of the GM child?"

FRANKENSTEIN AT WAR: NAMING THE MONSTROSITY OF MILITARISM, 1880-1919

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Often, the idea of Victor Frankenstein's inhuman monster has served as a metaphor for the terrifying unintended consequences of technology gone awry. Whereas today *Frankenstein* is often understood as a parable about bioengineering or the potential dangers of genetic engineering, a century ago people used *Frankenstein* imagery to grapple with the technological threat posed by the arms race. *Frankenstein* gave a name and a body to the horrific development of militarism and nationalism then careening out of control. Ms. Erickson will examine propaganda posters, sermons, speeches and letters to newspapers that used the idea of *Frankenstein*—both the creator and the created—to portray a soulless monster bent on destruction and discuss possible parallels in our present-day world.

FRANKENSTEIN: HUMAN LIMITS AND HUMAN POSSIBILITIES

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From the Bible's Tower of Babel to the Greek myth of Prometheus to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Western literature brims with insights into the importance of recognizing human limitations. Specifically, *Frankenstein* illuminates the limits of natural science, technology and knowledge itself as means of enhancing human life. By examining these limitations, we can more deeply understand our own nature and what it takes to make the most of our human potential.

FRANKENSTEIN'S LEADERSHIP MONSTER

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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* offers one of the most compelling portraits in the English language of leadership gone seriously wrong. Through its portrayal of catastrophic leadership failures, it provides engaging and memorable insights into the callings that an effective leader needs to answer and steps each of us can take to enhance our leadership effectiveness.

FRANKENSLAM: WHERE THE POETRY IS ALIVE! IT'S ALIVE!

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This poetic celebration begins with a hybrid lecture and performance, bringing monstrous poems to life by John Keats, Margaret Atwood, Jericho Brown, Wendell Berry, and more. After exploring Shelley's influence on rock and hip hop culture, participants are invited to create their own "horrorcore poem" in an interactive writing workshop. Echoing Byron's ghost story challenge, the session concludes with a Frankenslam, where all are invited to share their poetic creations on the mic.

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE YEAR WITHOUT A SUMMER

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In this presentation, Dr. Kelly weaves together the histories of science, art, literature and politics to tell a global story about Mary Shelley's masterpiece. Moving from the battlefields of Napoleonic Europe to the volcanoes of the Pacific to the riverbanks of the Yangtze to the farmlands of North America, attendees will see how *Frankenstein* reveals close ties between these seemingly disparate places and they will learn how the world within the novel is itself a product of these global connections.

THE SCIENCE AND THE FICTION IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

Monique Morgan, Associate Professor of English, Indiana University

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This talk discusses two important influences on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: early-nineteenth-century science and previous works of literature. Victor Frankenstein's desire to master nature echoes the way chemist Humphry Davy described the powers of modern science. Victor's goal – to "infuse a spark of being" into lifeless matter – is indebted to Erasmus Darwin's theories of spontaneously generated life, and to Luigi Galvani's demonstrations of electricity producing motion in dead animals. The creature's experiences bring to life David Hume's thought experiment about the need to learn even the simplest ideas from careful observation. The novel repeatedly gestures toward John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and to William Godwin's novels and philosophy, and Mary Shelley responds their ideas about creation, parenting, free will, and oppression. By thinking about these contexts, we'll better understand how the novel was grounded in the science and literature of its time, and why *Frankenstein* continues to raise important and complex questions about science and society.

SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*: WHY HONOR AND WILL MATTER

Jamey Norton, Professor of English, Marian University

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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* explores two key concepts of human life and culture: honor and will. How does the human will work in making honorable decisions for ethical actions? What impact does choosing honor, or refusing it, have on the social order of science and religion? In taking up these questions Shelley plunged her characters Victor Frankenstein and his monster into a vast philosophical and political debate involving thinkers ranging from her mother, the political radical Mary Wollstonecraft, to the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer on issues of how honor and the will to live shape the human condition and human destiny. The questions of honor and will that *Frankenstein* raised two centuries ago are highly relevant for our own times.

HOW *FRANKENSTEIN* HELPS US MAKE SENSE OF GLOBAL WARMING

George Phillips, Assistant Professor of English, Franklin College
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Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* when Europeans were deeply concerned with climate change—though they worried about global cooling, not warming. Then as now, climate change sparked a reconsideration of the question of what it means to be human and what form of humanity could survive in a world transformed. In this talk, Dr. Phillips will draw connections between two eras of climate change, with a look at how Shelley's appeals to reason and emotion reflect the ways we talk about climate science today.

A VISIT WITH MARY SHELLEY

Adrienne Provenzano, Independent Educator and Performer
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This one-woman event is a unique opportunity to meet Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. Learn about Shelley's life, love, and losses and how she transformed her experiences into her art. In this dynamic portrayal by Provenzano considers the creative process in depth, comparing different versions of and putting Shelley's life as a 19th-century literary woman into historical context. Shelley also converses with the audience members on how creative expression plays a role in their lives.

IT'S ALIVE! ELECTRICITY, CINEMA AND METAPHOR IN *FRANKENSTEIN*

Matthew Weedman, Assistant Professor of Art, Wabash College
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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was sparked from amazing tales of galvanization, re-animating human tissue with man's burgeoning power to wield electricity and excite a world barreling towards industrialization. Professor Weedman's presentation will examine how the invention of electricity birthed the interconnected lives of *Frankenstein* and cinema as well as how this promethean symbol has evolved through film and proven itself critical to a society increasingly reliant on technology. We will discuss this history through images, clips and humorous tales of wild ambition.