



Call for speakers

Indiana Humanities seeks proposals for talks and presentations from scholars and experts in **American history, civics, and democracy.**

Why are we creating a speakers bureau?

Indiana Humanities' upcoming thematic initiative focuses on American history, civics, and democracy in commemoration of the **250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence** in 2026. Over several years, we will design and support humanities programs that help Hoosiers examine **America's founding principles, the history of American democracy, how Americans play a role in our system of government, and how citizens relate to one another to build the civic fabric of our nation.**

We work with humanities scholars, experts, elders, and culture-bearers to shape and lead our programs. Humanities scholars bring deep expertise and provide valuable context, and they're also often skilled at sharing information and unlocking conversation around a big idea or shared text. Further, scholars are good at helping people become comfortable with tension and gray area, with the idea that answers are rarely "yes" or "no" but often more complex than we ever realized.

We also know that humanities scholars are passionate about connecting their research to the public. A speakers bureau helps facilitate these connections and furthers our mission to support Hoosier communities in learning about the past, collaborating in the present, and envisioning the future.

What types of talks are we looking for?

We've identified some key themes for our own programming and are especially interested in proposals that can help Hoosiers unpack these resonant but complex ideas:

- **Foundational ideas.** Related topics: America's founders and founding documents; America's founding ideals of liberty, equality, self-governance, rule of law, etc.; freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, and due process under law; interpretations of founding ideals over time (constitutional studies and jurisprudence)
- **Revolutionary spirit.** Related topics: History of the American Revolution with a preferred focus on connections to Indiana; legacy of the American Revolution in later social movements
- **Systems of governance.** Related topics: Democracy vs. republic; American democracy's systems (e.g., Constitution and Bill of Rights, three branches of government and their roles, checks and balances); relationship between citizens and government; federalism and the relationship between states and the federal government
- **Our fellow citizens.** Related topics: Enfranchisement; immigration and citizenship; Bill of Rights; American identity; multiculturalism and pluralism; equality and belonging; perspectives and experiences of America from specific ethnic, racial, or social groups

- **Rights and responsibilities.** Related topics: Civic engagement; voting and elections; jury service; campaigning and running for office; rights and protections of citizens
- **Hoosier histories.** Related topics: Hoosier political histories; local and state government; Indiana's civic health and engagement

We welcome proposals for talks by scholars working across disciplines and invite interdisciplinary perspectives. Each talk should be about 40 minutes long plus time for questions or discussion with the audience (about an hour total). Presentations can be geared toward adult, teen, or youth audiences. As long as your proposal aligns to our goal of helping Hoosiers make sense of the origins of our nation, the citizen's role, and our system of government, we welcome unique formats beyond a traditional lecture with Q&A.

Who are we looking for?

The ideal scholar-facilitator:

- Shares our vision for open-ended, inclusive, and thoughtful discussion about meaningful topics.
- Is enthusiastic about sharing the insights of the humanities with Hoosiers.
- Is passionate about Indiana and its future and excited about participating in the historic commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
- Is not afraid to tackle difficult topics and help communities ask hard questions.
- Is open to learning new techniques and best practices for giving talks and leading public humanities programs.
- Has advanced training, such as an M.A. or Ph.D., in a humanities or humanistic social science field or in another relevant field. Alternatively, has extensive experience, expertise, or cultural knowledge in a topic related to the above topic areas.
- Responds to email communication in a timely manner to assist with scheduling and organizing talks.
- Is willing to travel statewide and provide their own transportation.

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 the excitement of encountering a new idea.
- **Dynamic, easy speaking style:** Some speakers are funny, some are serious, but great public speakers often share a few things: they're able to adjust their tone and formality depending on the audience; they avoid diving too deep into the jargon of their field; and they find ways to relate to or hold the attention of a crowd. Great talks, especially for general, public audiences, are more than just a paper read out loud.
- **Deep expertise:** The speaker knows their stuff! Usually this is demonstrated by advanced study such as an M.A. or Ph.D. in a humanities field such as literature, history, ethics, philosophy, history of science, art or theater history, etc. Additionally, elders and culture-bearers have knowledge gathered through personal experience, community, and/or ancestors.
- **Relevance:** The speaker makes the case for how their specific topic is a lens for thinking about the larger historical context, a broader philosophical question, a contemporary debate or phenomenon, etc. The speaker has spent time thinking about how to make their talk relevant to nonspecialist, general public audiences, often by creating a hook that connects to people's everyday lives.

How does the speakers bureau work?

After selecting speakers for the bureau, Indiana Humanities publishes a catalog of presenters and talks. While we target the speakers bureau to libraries, schools, churches, civic organizations, and other tax-exempt organizations, any person or group may review the offerings and reach out to the speaker to gauge interest and availability and to plan a program. Speakers may accept and negotiate additional engagements on their own. When you apply, you can suggest a recommended fee for your talk, which can be negotiated with the host sites, along with travel and lodging reimbursement as needed. We currently plan for the speakers bureau to be active from 2025 to 2027.

At a future date, Indiana Humanities hopes to have funding to support paying speaker fees. At that time, our standard honorarium for these engagements is \$400, and we ask host sites to cover travel and lodging costs.

To apply:

A committee of staff, board members, and subject area experts will evaluate proposals. Candidates should submit a talk description and biography, resume, or CV for review. We may also ask candidates to provide additional information or have a quick call with staff in order for us to make final decisions. **To submit a proposal for the speakers bureau, [fill out this form](#).**

Questions?

Contact Megan Telligman (Director of Programs, Indiana Humanities) at mtelligman@indianahumanities.org / 219.405.4544. Indiana Humanities will accept new speakers bureau proposals through May 31, 2025.

ABOUT INDIANA HUMANITIES

Indiana Humanities sparks curiosity, connects people, and explores the human experience through programs, grants, and storytelling. Learn more at www.IndianaHumanities.org.