

Where's Frankenstein?

A Crowd-Sourcing Project to Identify How Frankenstein is Used in Policy Debates

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Frankenstein is everywhere. He is ubiquitous, as omnipresent as Waldo but a lot easier to spot. *Frankenstein* is an Ur-narrative of synthetic biology, and haunts public discourse about it.

Victor Frankenstein and the creature he made from dead body parts is a recurrent theme in policy arguments about new life forms and the role of human intervention in nature. When the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research was addressing oversight of recombinant DNA in *Splicing Life*, it devoted an entire section to the "Deeper Anxieties" that featured the Frankenstein tale. Frankenstein appears in countless reports on human cloning. *Amicus curiae* briefs to the Supreme Court in *Diamond v Chakrabarty* invoked Frankenstein as a cautionary tale, arguing against deciding that life forms could be patented. In his majority opinion, Chief Justice Burger explicitly dismissed the "parade of horrors" in which Frankenstein's creature was marching prominently. Frankenstein lurks in subsequent lower court decisions about patenting transgenic mice.

The Frankenstein tale resonates through popular culture and is brought to bear in policy debates in many ways, at many times, in many contexts. It is a cautionary tale, but invoking Frankenstein is also a rhetorical device to dismiss cautionary tales.

We will use the November conference in Tempe to launch a crowdsourcing project to collect documents, images, and instances of using Frankenstein when public policy decisions are being made. We will invite contributions in an open process. We will then create a taxonomy of uses of the Frankenstein tale and Frankenstein images at different times in different cultures for different policy decisions.

We will link our effort to the ASU Frankenstein Bicentennial project, and will also use it as an input to the proposed June 2016 workshop at the Fondation Brocher near Geneva.