



Speakers Bureau

(Revised January 2013)

Thank you for your interest in becoming a speaker with the Council's Speakers Bureau program. For more information, please read through these common questions.

What is the Mississippi Humanities Council?

The Mississippi Humanities Council is an independent affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency. The Council is neither a state nor a federal program, but instead is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring the presence of the humanities in the state's cultural and intellectual life. The Council implements its own education and public programs. In addition, each year the Council re-grants federal funds to hundreds of programs at museums, libraries, universities, historical societies and other educational and cultural organizations.

What are the Humanities?

The humanities encompass the range of human experience: who we are and what our lives mean. The humanities represent ways of thinking about this meaning, as set forth in scholarly disciplines such as literature, history, philosophy, ethics, comparative religion, linguistics, jurisprudence, archaeology, history and criticism of the arts and certain aspects of the social sciences that employ a qualitative approach.

The humanities, of course, should not be confused with particular philosophies, such as humanism, or social movements, such as humanitarianism. They should also be distinguished from the arts. If you are talking about the arts, that is humanities; if you are performing or teaching an art, that is not.

Who is eligible to apply to be a speaker?

Applicants should hold an advanced degree (M.A. or higher) in one of the humanities disciplines listed above. Affiliation with a college or university is customary but not necessary. The Council also recognizes that scholarship and knowledge gathering are defined differently in different cultures, and respects such diversity of training and preparation as consistent with our understanding of the humanities as fields and methods of inquiry. Scholars need not be employed, may be retired or may be on temporary leave from a professional position. Applicants must be genuinely interested in addressing public audiences and be available during their entire tenure with the program.

We encourage applications and participation from women and members of minority and ethnic groups. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact the Council at (601) 432-6752.

If you have participated in our speakers program before, it will still be necessary for you to re-apply for inclusion in the online catalogue at the end of your tenure with the program. Your proposed presentation need not differ from your previous offerings, though you may choose to apply with additional or different presentation topics.

What should I keep in mind when preparing a talk for the Speakers Bureau program?

Regardless of the subject area, you will be talking to a general audience and perhaps even to high school students, not to scholars or graduate students. Therefore, lectures should assume little, if any, prior knowledge of the subject on the part of the audience. In all cases, presentations should be grounded in the humanities. The Council encourages speakers to select topics that are specific rather than general.

The Council cannot support presentations which advocate specific political, social or public policy stances. Lectures may, of course, examine different political, historical or philosophical perspectives of an issue, but the speaker should be an unbiased presenter. The lecture should be rooted firmly in the humanities (not social or public policy), and it should be a balanced consideration of the issues to be addressed.

Lectures must promote understanding of our cultural heritage, interpret our own experience, foster critical thinking, encourage reasonable public discourse, strengthen our sense of community and thus empower Mississippi's people with a vision for the future. They cannot be primarily instructional or how-to presentations.

Finally, we will not fund presentations used as fund-raising vehicles.

If I am accepted into the program, for how long will my presentations be listed in the online catalogue?

Speakers must commit to a three-year tenure upon being accepted to the program. At the end of his or her tenure, each speaker will be invited to re-apply to the Speakers Bureau program.

Complete and submit the attached application to apply to renew your lecture tenure with the program.

Do I have to speak to every organization that requests my presentation?

No. Organizations requesting presentations are always reminded that programs are scheduled at the speakers' convenience. The Council understands that speakers' schedules and the distances to some activities will sometimes limit participation. You certainly are not required to accept every request for your presentation. We only ask that you make yourself as available as possible.

Please do not apply if you know you will only accept invitations from your immediate community.

How do organizations find out about my presentation?

All accepted presentations will be described in the Council's on-line Speakers Bureau program catalogue. The catalogue will provide brief biographical and contact information for each speaker, followed by descriptions of their presentations. Information regarding the online catalogue is sent to thousands of libraries, historical societies, museums and schools, in addition to other educational, community and cultural groups in Mississippi. Speakers are welcome, of course, to promote their own presentations as well.

How is the program administered?

Over the years, the Council has refined the program so that it operates with great efficiency. Organizations learn how to apply for speakers by reading our online catalogue, and general guidelines are provided for all accepted speakers.

Organizations requesting speakers are instructed to contact the speaker first to arrange an agreeable lecture time, date and location, and then submit an application to the Council at least four weeks before the lecture date. The hosting organization's project coordinator works directly with the speaker to plan the activity. **It is advisable for speakers to contact the Council at least two weeks before the lecture date to ensure the organization has submitted the proper application and received approval.**

How am I paid? How much am I paid?

Speakers receive honoraria directly from the Council. Payment is always made promptly after receiving a speaker evaluation form and matching contributions form from the hosting organization.

The per-lecture honorarium for speakers is \$250.

You are welcome to present up to six (6) lectures per calendar year with the MHC Speakers Bureau program. You may, of course, present more, but the MHC will not provide honoraria for more than six per calendar year.

Who decides who will be in the Speakers Bureau program?

A committee of Council staff and members of the Board of Directors review and make decisions on applications. Applicants will be notified within eight (8) weeks of Council receipt of application.

In reviewing applications, the committee will consider not only the applicant's background and expertise; it will also take into account the Council's desire to present a varied roster of speakers and subjects to organizations throughout Mississippi.

If you have additional questions regarding the Speakers Bureau program, please e-mail them to carol@mhc.state.ms.us.