For most of human history, human beings believed we were not alone in the universe – even if we were at the center of it. Some form of supernatural being(s) shared the world with us - perhaps watched over us, perhaps had responsibility for the inexplicable.

As Michael Clune writes in a recent issue of *The Atlantic*, as the scientific revolution challenged those beliefs and showed the vastness on which our lives seem an infinitesimal speck, we resisted the implications of being alone in the world. There had to be other intelligent life in the universe, right? No Father or Mother to watch over us might be bad enough – but totally alone? Literature took up the challenge of developing new stories about a "nonhuman or superhuman Other."

Science provided rationales on which literature and popular culture could build. Yet recent theory suggests, "it looks increasingly possible that humans may indeed be alone, or that we might have some mind-bogglingly gigantic region of the universe to ourselves." That has all sorts of implications – for instance, *if we are 'perhaps the only intelligent species in all of time and space,' what does that say of our own importance – or responsibility?* Join us for a discussion of cosmic scope - about literature, culture, and the stakes in human society.

The *Friday Public Affairs Discussion Lunch* is an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, emeriti and other members of our communities to learn and question each other about public policy issues at the international, national, and local levels. Faculty and other speakers share their research and experience to get beyond the headlines and repetition in the mass media, and the wild rumors of the internet. Lunch is brown bag, but cookies and some beverages are provided by the Center for Policy Studies of the College of Arts and Sciences.

[http://fridaylunch.case.edu/](http://fridaylunch.case.edu/)