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Annual Birss Series Celebrates 50th Anniversary of 'The Bell Jar'

Library exhibition, book discussion and keynote address will explore Sylvia Plath's famed novel



February 11, 2013 | Public Affairs Staff

Each winter at Roger Williams University, the Professor John Howard Birss, Jr. Memorial Lecture Series provides a unique opportunity to study in depth a single text – by authors such as Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Harper Lee and Elie Wiesel – and to investigate why these significant works of literature remain relevant to modern readers.

This year's 13th annual Birss Series celebrates the 50th anniversary of "The Bell Jar" – the equally talented and troubled Sylvia Plath's sole novel, published in 1963 – with a book discussion, keynote address and accompanying exhibition in the University Library.

The library exhibition, "Sylvia Plath and *The Bell Jar*," runs through March 10. Organized by Christine Fagan, collection development / acquisitions librarian at RWU, in conjunction with Karen Kukil from Smith College, it features first editions of the book, a manual typewriter owned by Plath, original

typescripts and a certified copy of Plath's death certificate, among other items. The exhibition is open daily during the library's operating hours.

On Wednesday, Feb. 13, the University Honors Program and the RWU Library present a discussion group centered on Plath's novel. Moderated by faculty members James Tackach and Becky Spritz (from the English and psychology departments, respectively) the event takes place at 3:00 p.m. in the University Honors Center in Stonewall IV, ground level. It is open to the entire campus community.

Finally, two weeks later, Kukil will deliver the Birss series keynote address, "The Bell Jar at 50," on Wednesday, Feb. 27 at 3:30 p.m. in GHH G01. Like the book discussion, the keynote address is open to the entire community.

The Birss Series is sponsored the Feinstein College of Arts and Sciences and supported by the Professor John Howard Birss, Jr. Memorial Library Fund. The series and the fund were established by Roger Williams College alumnus Robert Blais '70 to honor Professor Birss, whom Blais came to know in Rhode Island before the professor's death in 1994.

While you are enjoying the exploration of "The Bell Jar," you might also get a head start on next year's text – "The Grapes of Wrath," by John Steinbeck, which celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2014.

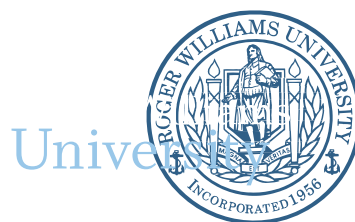
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