

Sylvia Plath and Her Cultural Afterlife
(9/30/1)

This course is dedicated to the students in my 2001 course on Sylvia Plath. I am especially grateful to those who allowed me to include their work in my essay for Pedagogy: "TMAX Authorship: Teaching Plath and Her Unabridged Journals."

Professor Marsha Bryant

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Class Meets: MWF 3 in TUR 2334

Office Hours: MF 4 and by appointment

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DESCRIPTION:

By the time she was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Artists and Entertainers of the Century in 1998, Sylvia Plath had become a preeminent poet—and literary culture's ultimate commodity. From her photo-shoot in the Cambridge *Varsity* during her Fulbright years to Christine Jeffs's film *Sylvia*, Plath enters the cultural imagination as text and image, writer and celebrity, historical and mythic figure. This course will explore Plath's literary career and her cultural afterlife through close study of her poems, her novel and short stories, her journals, and her critical reception on the web (including the online journal *Plath Profiles*). We will also study key ways that biographers plot Plath's life and career, as well as her contemporary status in the media. The latter perspective is especially fitting in this 50th anniversary of *The Bell Jar* and Plath's death. Our work together will sharpen your skills in literary, critical, and cultural analysis, as well as hone your abilities to write and speak professionally. I look forward to discussing these materials with you!

TEXTS:

Sylvia Plath, *Collected Poems*

Sylvia Plath, *Unabridged Journals*

Sylvia Plath, *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

Ted Hughes, *Birthday Letters*

You will be assigned 1 of these Plath biographies: Linda Wagner-Martin (*Sylvia Plath: A Biography*), Paul Alexander (*Rough Magic*), Carl Rollyson (*American Isis*)

*Recommended: Elizabeth Winder, *Pain, Parties, Work* (short version)

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Short Archive & Academic Biography Assignment (1 page)
- 20 % Media Image paper (5-6 pages)
- 30 % Biography Project (9-10 or 10-11 pages, depending on your book)
- 15% *Plath Profiles (PP)* panel (2 pages)
- 15% parody
- 20 % Class Participation

POLICIES

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance*: Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences *wisely* (for emergencies, serious illness) as you would for any job. You will fail the course if you accrue 6 absences. You will earn a lowered course grade if you accrue **4** absences.

3. You do not need to tell me why you are absent *unless* you have a medical or family emergency that will use up *more than your 3 allotted absences*. At that point, you should contact me and provide documentation.
4. If you are *absent*, you are responsible for knowing the material and for turning in any assignments due that day.
5. *Cell Phones, laptops, tablets*, and other electronic devices must be turned off and put away *before* you enter the classroom. The only *exception* is when you are using an electronic edition of a textbook and show me before class starts.
6. *Latecomers* must see me after class and may receive partial absences. If you didn't hear me call roll, I don't know you're here.
7. *Paper Format*. Please *put your e-mail address* on the front page of your paper, and make sure the printout is easy to read. Use this format: 12 point font, 1-inch margins, double spacing, numbered pages. Grammatical errors will cost you, so proofread.
8. *Submitting Papers*: Your papers are due *in class* on the assigned days (if you are absent, your paper should be *in my Department mailbox* when I return from class). You will also submit to Turnitin on SAKAI (just papers; not panel statements). Late papers and panel statements earn grade reductions; papers submitted a week late earn an "E."
9. *Save That Paper!* Always make backup copies of your work so it arrives on time. Also, *save the graded work I return to you* in case you ever request a letter of recommendation, which requires at least *three weeks'* notice.
10. *Participation*: The quality and frequency of your contributions determine your participation grade. For example, repeating what someone else says does not move the conversation forward. Learning to participate effectively will help you understand the literature and develop important professional skills. If you're shy about offering opinions, try asking questions. Remember that if you are confused about a text, others are, too! Panels will help you feel more comfortable addressing the class (see ABOUT PANELS, below).
11. Students requesting classroom *accommodation* must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation for you to give me when requesting accommodation.
12. For information on UF Grading policies, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/reulations/info/grades.aspx>

ABOUT PANELS:

Read the *Plath Profiles* essay designated by your issue # and Panel letter (a, b, c, or d). In your 2-page, double-spaced statement, evaluate your essay by answering these questions: (1) What are the essay's 3 essential points about Plath? (2) What is the major strength of the author's approach? (2) What is the major weakness? Refer to 1-2 examples from the Focal Texts in your statement. You can find the link to *Plath Profiles* on my website. *In class*, panelists will read their statements and field audience questions, simulating an academic conference. Note: *you do not need to submit this assignment on Sakai*.

SYLLABUS:

Date *Reading Viewing Web Assignment*

DUE

W 8/21	UG: Introduction	
F 8/23	Poems & Bio on the <i>Academy of American Poets</i> Plath page (see my Links)	
M 8/26	CP: "Soliloquy of the Solipsist" (1956), "Full Fathom Five" (1958), "Metaphors" (1959)	
W 8/28	*Meet in Smathers Library (East), Special Collections Research Room, 2nd floor with Rare Book curator John Ingram* Explore the other Plath material on <i>Academy of American Poets</i> site.	
F 8/30	NO CLASS: Dr. Bryant is presenting in Brighton, U.K. for the Modernist Studies Association Conference.	Short Assignment, by email
M 9/2	NO CLASS: LABOR DAY	

W 9/4	CP: 1956 Poems	
F 9/6	<i>Panel Focal texts:</i> “Ariel,” “Fever 103,” “Getting There,” “In Plaster,” “Lady Lazarus,” “The Thin People,” “Tulips”	PANEL 1, <i>PP1</i> : (a) Ekmekçioğlu; (b) Dillon; (c) O’Connor
M 9/9	CP: 1956 - 1957 Poems	
W 9/11	UG CP: 1957- 1958 Poems	
F 9/13	<i>Panel Focal texts:</i> “The Burnt-out Spa,” “The Colossus,” “Daddy,” “Medusa,” “Miss Drake Proceeds to Supper,” “Tulips”	PANEL 2, <i>PP1</i> : (a) Browne; <i>PP2</i> : (b) Didlake; (c) Deshmane
M 9/16	CP: 1958- 1959 Poems	
W 9/18	UG 1959-60 Poems	
F 9/20	1960-61 Poems; <i>Panel Focal texts:</i> “Lady Lazarus,” “The Jailor,” “Cut,” “Ariel,” “Getting There,” “Poppies in October,” “Medusa”	PANEL 3, <i>PP3</i> : (a) Viana; (b) Wilkins; (c) Christodoulides
M 9/23	1962 Poems	Get going on <i>Unabridged Journals</i> !
W 9/25	CP: 1963 Poems	
F 9/27	<i>Unabridged Journals</i>	
M 9/30	<i>Panel Focal Text: Unabridged Journals</i>	PANEL 4, <i>PP3 Supplement</i> : (a) Steinberg; (b) Kukil; (3) Ferretter; (4), Helle
W 10/2	<i>Unabridged Journals</i>	
F 10/4	<i>Panel Focal texts:</i> “Cut,” “The Detective,” “Elm,” “Fever 103,” “Lady Lazarus”	PANEL 5, <i>PP3</i> : (a) Aggarwal; (b) Zeng; <i>PP4</i> : (c) Gordon-B ramer
M 10/7	UG: Roundtable on Plath’s current Media Image	Media Image Paper
W 10/9	Wrap up <i>Unabridged Journals</i>	Media Image Paper for Panel 5 participants
F 10/11	<i>Panel Focal Texts:</i> “Soliloquy of the Solipsist,” “Night Shift,” Tinker Jack and the Tidy Wives,” “Crossing the Water,” Morning Song,” “Thalidomide,” “Childless Woman”	PANEL 6, <i>PP4</i> (a) Spies, (b) King, (c) Trinidad
M 10/14	<i>Johnny Panic</i> Stories: “Sunday at the Mintons”; “Superman and Paula Brown’s Snowsuit”; “The Daughters of Blossom Street”; “Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams”	
W 10/16	<i>Johnny Panic</i> stories: “The Fifty-Ninth Bear”; “Sweetie Pie and the Gutter Men”; “All the Dead Dears”	
F 10/18	<i>Johnny Panic</i> stories 8c <i>Panel Focal Texts:</i> “Mothers”; “Ocean 1212-W”; “Stone Boy with Dolphin”; “America! America!”	PANEL 7: (a) <i>PP</i> \, McCort, (b) <i>PP4</i> , Shewaga, (c) <i>PP4</i> Hayman + <i>PP5 Supplement</i> , Jost
M 10/21	Bryant, “IMAX Authorship: Teaching Plath and Her <i>Unabridged Journals</i> ’” (in the journal <i>Pedagogy</i> , available online thru the UF library)	
W 10/23	<i>The Bell Jar</i> ; Amazon’s “Look Inside” excerpts from Elizabeth Winder’s <i>Pain, Parties, Work</i> . (Elizabeth Winder will visit our class, sign books, and have books for sale)	
F 10/25	<i>The Bell Jar</i>	
M 10/28	<i>The Bell Jar</i> ; Guest Instructor: Andrea Krafft. <i>Plath Profiles</i> 6: Krafft’s essay, ““Funny and tender and not a desperate woman””	
W 10/30	<i>Panel Focal Text: The Bell Jar</i>	PANEL 8: (a) <i>PP3</i>

		Axelrod, (b) <i>PP3</i> Tsank, (c) <i>PP 6</i> , Kahn & Dash
F 11/1	Explore the <i>sylvia.plath.info</i> website	
M 11/4	<i>Panel Focal Texts</i> : “Medusa,” “The Moon and the Yew Tree,” review notes on your biography	PANEL 9: (a) <i>PP5</i> , Clifford, (b) <i>PP6</i> O’Rourke; (c) <i>PP6</i> , Schwartz TBA
W 11/6	<i>Birthday Letters</i> , “Fulbright Scholars”; Panel Prep: Come to class with a list of what you think might prove problematic in teaching Plath, and what you might do to overcome it.	PANEL 10: (a) <i>PPI</i> , Pereira, (b) <i>PP2</i> , Yaros + <i>PP4</i> , Mahler, (c) <i>PP5</i> Murphy
F 11/8	NO CLASS: HOMECOMING (Go Gators!)	
M 11/11	NO CLASS: VETERANS DAY	
W 11/13	<i>Birthday Letters</i> , “Fulbright Scholars” thru “55 Eistley”	
F 11/15	<i>Birthday Letters</i> , “haucer” through “The Afterbirth”	PANEL 11: (a) <i>PPI</i> , Ghoshal, (b) <i>PP3</i> , Kilfoil, (c) <i>PP5</i> , Chambers
M 11/18	<i>Birthday Letters</i> , finish the volume	
W 11/20	In-class screening: A&E’s BIOGRAPHY episode (2004)	
F 11/22	Biography Project Roundtable 1	
M 11/25	Biography Project Roundtable 2	Biography Project
W 11/27	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING	
F 11/29	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING	
M 12/2	Discuss the film <i>Sylvia</i>	
W 12/4	Parody Performances	Parodies
	<i>Remember to complete your online course evaluations so I can incorporate your suggestions into next year ’s courses.</i>	
	Biography Project pickup TB A	