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Kinzie Schweigert

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Censorship for Religious Reasons: From the Bible to Harry Potter

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— An arts-infused talk about challenged books called “Censorship for Religious Reasons: From the Bible to Harry Potter,” will take place on Wednesday, October 2 at 4:00 p.m. in the Evelyn Chapel (1301 N. Park St., Bloomington).

The program, which is free and open to the public, is co-sponsored by The Ames Library and is a part of the “First Wednesday” Chapel Series. The featured speaker for the event is Barbara Jones, the American Library Association’s executive director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

“Live theater, in the form of two student-directed and performed scenes from *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, will set the stage for Jones’ talk about censorship and why books have become challenged on religious grounds,” said University Chaplain Elyse Nelson Winger.

The student directors are Hannah Dhue, Class of 2015 English-writing and theatre arts major, and Aaron Woodstein, Class of 2015 theatre design and technology major. The performances will kick off the event and also offer brief excerpts of banned books in the midst of Jones’ presentation.

“I chose the scene from *To Kill a Mockingbird* in which the whole family is sitting around the breakfast table right before the trial. I think the scene, especially Atticus’s speech at the end, emphasizes what is wrong about banning this particular book and what is wrong about banning books in general,” said Dhue.

Dhue said that the program will be interesting for all attendees. “When people arrive, there will be banned music playing and a large projection screen showing tons of challenged material. I think it will really make people stop and take a deeper look at the motives behind taking books off the shelves.”

The event follows nationwide Banned Books Week, Sept. 22-28, a week celebrating the freedom and right to read. “We wanted to find a way to bring the issues alive in a creative way, and we are excited about our collaboration with IWU students to do just that,” said Nelson Winger.

Also during Banned Books Week, The Ames Library is featuring a photo gallery of IWU community members, including student leaders, faculty and staff holding their favorite challenged book. Each photo also includes a quote from the individual about why the book they selected should remain available for everyone to read. The gallery will be on display on the entry level of The Ames Library until October 5.



Contact: Kinzie Schweigert '15 (309) 556-3181, univcomm@iwu.edu