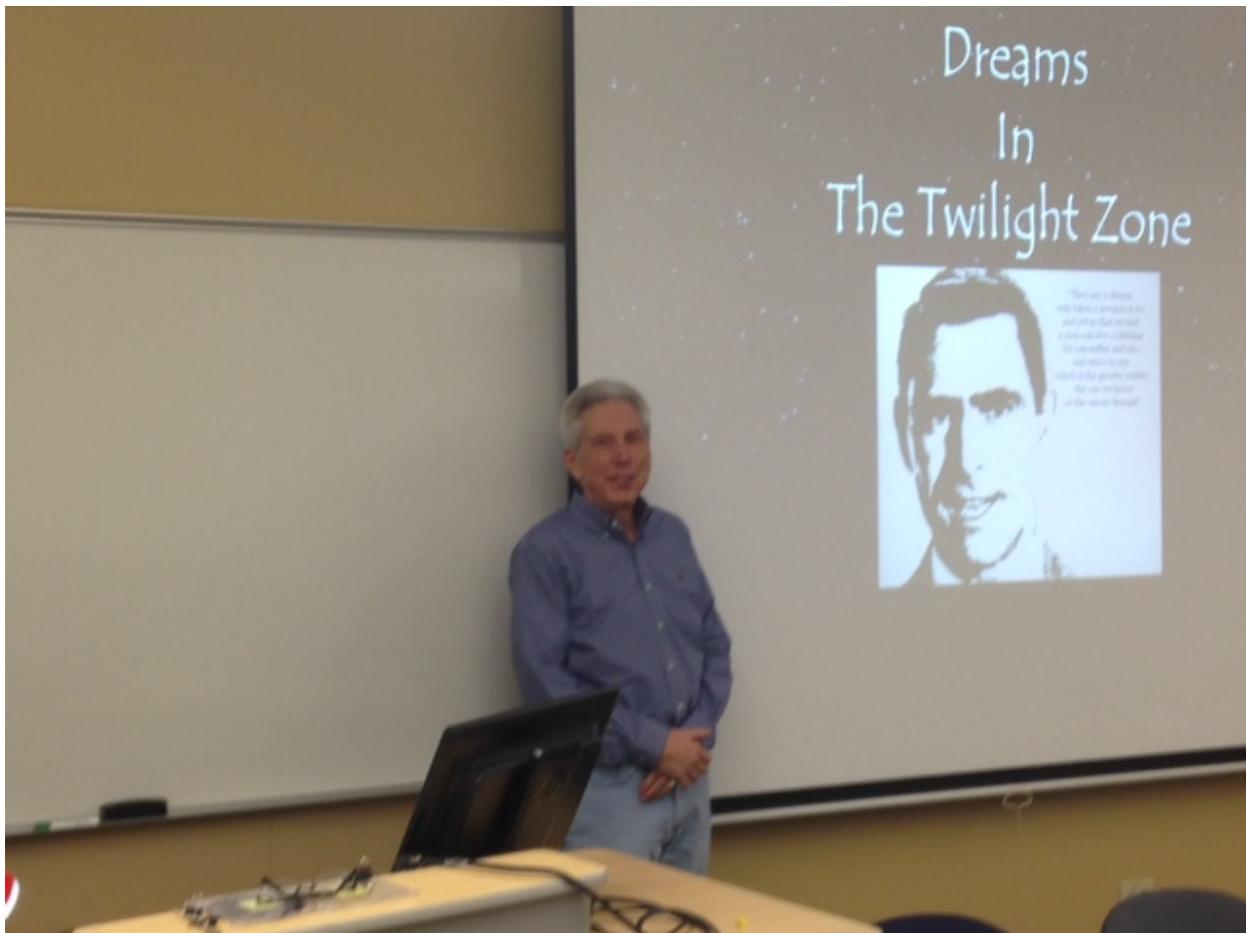


# Exploring the Heart of *The Twilight Zone*

Foundation member Michael Lynn teaches several adult classes about *The Twilight Zone* and Rod Serling at [College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois](#), as part of their Adult Continuing Education series. He uses [rodserling.com](#) and dozens of other resources to prepare for those classes.



Students view a different complete episode at the beginning of each class, so that someone could attend all the classes without seeing the same episode twice. He teaches his class Tropes & Tales regularly, using different episodes to keep it fresh.

Mike's classes survey the impact of Rod Serling's original *Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) on television, the movies, and society. The subject matter explores societal mores, morals, religion and politics, and the messaging within Serling's work.

The classes are fascinating, and all are now approved by the college for inclusion in upcoming semesters. He described them for us:

### ***The Twilight Zone: Six Degrees of Separation***

(1 class; 1 hour)

Accompanied by video from the classic 1959 to 1964 series, this lecture explores The Twilight Zone's connections with other shows, movies and media since the original series aired.

### ***Rod Serling's Twilight Zone: Political Theater and Morality Plays***

(4 classes; 2 hours each)

Many *Twilight Zone* episodes were often thinly veiled morality plays about the human condition or political theater about current events. Serling used science fantasy to avoid the censorship that was emasculating TV dramas. Using videos from the 1959-64 series, we'll discuss how the elements of these episodes (e.g., writing, lighting, cinematography, direction and music) reflected and enhanced the mood, message, impact and intensely personal nature of Serling's storytelling in *The Twilight Zone*.

### ***The Twilight Zone: Tropes and Tales***

(4 classes; 2 hours each)

A turning point in TV content and a high point in the use of TV to challenge social and political mores. Using videos of the 1959-64 series, research and interviews with many associated with the series, we will discuss the cautionary tales within and their impact on society. In addition, we'll discuss how the elements of these episodes (e.g., writing, lighting, cinematography, direction and music) reflected and enhanced the mood, message, impact and intensely personal nature of Serling's storytelling in *The Twilight Zone*.

### **Rod Serling: Lunchtime Lecture Series**

(multiple 1-hour lectures)

These lectures use *Twilight Zone* episodes to illustrate and discuss Serling's life, his perspectives and beliefs on war, politics, religion and other 1960s issues. These issues remain contemporary, fifty-plus years later.

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Mike's own *Twilight Zone* interest digs even deeper, to questions about writing and directing decisions.

“For example,” he asks, “knowing that any decisions about content were usually deliberate and made with their contribution to the story in mind, I have been trying to find out why the prisoner in ‘Shadow Play’ is playing ‘That Silver-Haired Daddy of Mine’ on his harmonica. Was it simply because that seemed like an appropriate “prisoner/prison” sounding melody? Or was it in the public domain and therefore no cost attached? Or had someone heard it in another movie/program? Or did they use it because of something significant in the lyrics (that I can't figure out) or music?”

This writer's guess: all of the above!



I enjoyed a discussion with Mike that explored the physical state of Inger Stevens' character in the episode "The Hitchhiker." We learn at the end that she's dead. But during the episode, is she in the real world—as she seems to be? Or is she a spirit on an ethereal highway, encountering other spirits in transition from the physical world?

There are details in the episode that support both of these possibilities, even though they are contradictory. So it was the

kind of meaty exchange that delights *Twilight Zone* nerds like Mike. And me. And you? Of course!

We at the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation believe strongly in courses like the ones that Michael Lynn teaches. Rod has been gone for more than forty years and yet his legacy, his message, is just as powerful and relevant today.

Rod wrote with passion about the need for living with reason, about the need to defeat prejudice, about the need to look past our anger and into our hearts. We believe that keeping these ideas alive is one of the best causes around.

Michael Lynn is doing his part—and then some. Thank you!