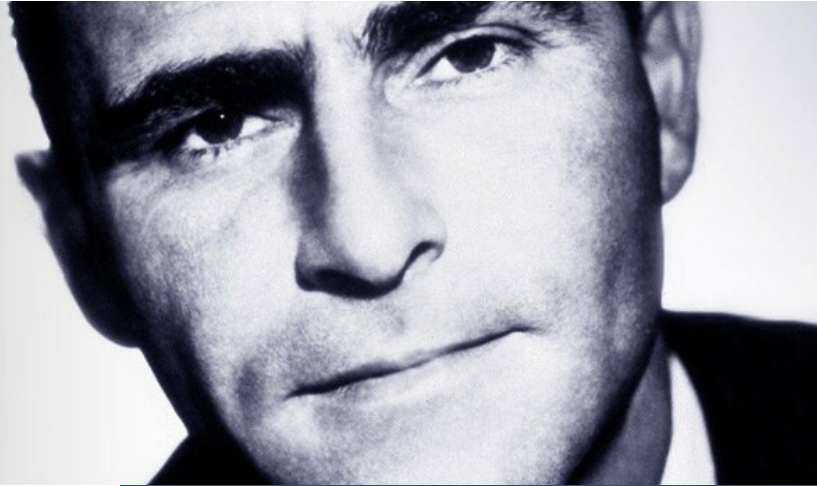


Björklunden Seminars

"Vacation with a purpose"

SEPT. 29 - OCT. 2, 2024 AT BJÖRKLUNDEN

The TWILIGHT ZONE



A Timely Trip into the Twilight Zone, That Prophetic "Fifth Dimension" of Depth and Meaning

Course Description

Late 2024 marks both the 65th anniversary of TV's groundbreaking *The Twilight Zone* (1959–1964) and the centennial birth of its creator, Rod Serling. The ingenious Serling—also the series' executive producer, onscreen host, and writer of nearly two-thirds of its 156 episodes—had, by his mid-30s, made a big name for himself with prestige teleplays (he still holds, with six, the Best Teleplay Emmys record). In 1959, Serling successfully lobbied CBS-TV to let him helm what appeared to be a science-fiction / fantasy series. *Twilight Zone* certainly was that, but it was also much more: a means for Serling and company, via genre-based allegories, to comment on the issues of their times—the late-Eisenhower years, the entirety of the Kennedy era, and the beginning of the Johnson years—issues that also happen to be timeless.

Perhaps most consistently, and strikingly, Serling's show addressed America's increasing alienation as the nation moved into and through the first half of the 1960s toward the cultural revolution that followed, which *Twilight Zone* not only foresaw but, arguably, helped set in motion. Serling having endured anti-Semitism as a teen, consistently attacked discrimination, segregation, forced conformity, dehumanization and "othering" in his series. Many episodes were cautionary parables and feel, by now, downright prophetic; others were less sociopolitical than philosophical / psychological, addressing universal topics like human nature and the meaning of life, or even of reality—always through the lens of what Serling termed "the Fifth Dimension" of imagination.

Author, filmmaker, and *Twilight Zone*- / "Rod-scholar," Paul McComas screens the richest, most timely episodes, analyzes them, and then leads lively discussion.

Advance reading: *Rod Serling: His Life, Work, and Imagination* by Nick Parisi, 2018, University Press of Mississippi, ISBN-13: 978-1496817501

Instructor



Paul McComas ('83)

Recognized for his arts-driven advocacy and activism by the Wisconsin state legislature, McComas is a two-time *Chicago Reader* Critic's Choice honoree in Theatre and Performance and the award-winning author of six books of fiction with two more under contract. He is an American Film Institute Prize-winning filmmaker whose current project, a feature adaptation of his acclaimed novel *Unplugged*, stars Christina Ricci, Louis Gossett Jr. and, in his final role, the late, great Edward Asner; it's being co-produced by Paul with Oscar winner Lynne Littman and Emmy winner Adam Belanoff.

McComas is a literary- and media-scholar, with a film book upcoming from an academic press, as well as a musician and recording artist. He earned teaching awards from Northwestern (in the continuing education program) and, for instruction at the Master's level, National Louis universities; works regularly with both Marquette University's Center for Peacemaking and The Kennedy Forum for mental health; spent a decade on the National Advisory Committee of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network; and founded Rock Against Depression and the *Fool for Love* Sam Shepard Memorial / ALS Benefit project. He holds a Master of Arts in Film/Media from Northwestern.

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