

**ITHACA COLLEGE LONDON CENTER
FALL 2006**

**COURSE SYLLABUS
(revised 9/6/06)**

**Special Topics: Rod Serling's Dimension of Imagination
(221-20800-99, 3 credits)**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine a variety of social, moral, political and ethical issues as dealt with by one of television's most influential and best-known writers. Throughout his career, Rod Serling struggled with how to craft powerful human stories within the limitations of sponsor control... censorship... and the pressure of audience ratings. Designed for a broad range of students with varied interests -- this course will make extensive use of video and script material from the Rod Serling Archive at Ithaca and will include discussion of British programming (such as "The Goon Show") which "pushed the envelope" and faced challenges similar to Serling's head-on.

FOCUS AREAS:

1) A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A brief examination of "The Golden Age of Television" explores the "climate" that existed during the 1950's which made it possible for a writer like Serling to thrive.

This portion of the course makes extensive use of early Serling work as examples of how young writers were able to craft powerful stories for what was then a brand new medium.

2) WHY "TWILIGHT ZONE?"

Here, important issues facing television in the late 1950's will be examined, such as ratings... sponsor control of program content... censorship... etc. The very problems and challenges that Serling faced in getting his work produced provide a natural framework for important "media studies" discussions. Essentially, many political, ethical and moral issues were faced by producers of mass media in their attempts to "create a quality television series."

At the same time, the series itself will be analyzed to find out what made it successful, including:

- recurring themes used by Serling
- production values used in making the series
- the scripts as showcases for young talent (writers/actors)

Another major, underlying element of this course is: Why has this series endured for more than 40 years, while others have not?

3) TWILIGHT ZONE *STORIES* AS LITERATURE:

Although written originally as dramatic television scripts, many of the TWZ stories have been published in print form... how do these hold up?

4) LIFE AFTER "TWILIGHT ZONE"

Serling produced a large body of work after Twilight Zone" -- which will be examined from a critical perspective. This includes television series ("The Loner" & "Night Gallery") as well as more than a half-dozen screenplays.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Engel, Joel. ROD SERLING: DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES OF LIFE IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE (Contemporary Books, Chicago), 1989

Zicree, Marc Scott. THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION -- first OR second edition (Silman-James Press, Los Angeles), 1982 & 1989

COURSEWORK:

SCREENINGS

This course will make extensive use of Serling's work, and much of this will be shown and discussed in class. If you miss a screening for any reason, you'll be expected to make it up outside of class (screened work will be on reserve in the ICLC library). Additional work may be assigned for viewing outside of class.

MIDTERM PAPER (SERLING BIBLIOGRAPHY) 15%

An extensive listing of Serling sources and references -- including: books... magazine articles... scholarly papers... websites... electronic media. Please use M.L.A. format -- the standard recommended by the Modern Language Association (check the web if you're not sure about this).

DUE DATE: TH 10/12 in class

SERLING BIOGRAPHY 25%

A brief, well-written "biographical sketch" of Rod Serling that provides anyone NOT familiar with the writer with "an understanding of the man and his place in American pop culture." Your paper should be a factual report, based on legitimate, reliable sources -- documented using proper M.L.A. format (about 3-5 pages in length).

DUE DATE: TH 11/9 in class

FINAL PAPER/PROJECT 50%

Demonstrate your knowledge of Serling (or one aspect of his career) through an extensive piece of work. The topic and style is up to you, but should be large enough in scope to justify half of your final grade (see

GRADING, below). Presentation style is also optional: written... "live" (i.e. Powerpoint)... interactive, staged reading, etc.*

Any references used, or material which is not your own must be cited using proper M.L.A. style.

DUEDATES: one-page proposal -- TH 10/26 in class
Final paper/project -- TH 12/7 in class

Hints/ideas/possibilities:

- a research paper on the film "Salamander" -- focusing on Serling's involvement in the project and the extent to which his story ideas are included in the final film
- a comparison of the 30-minute *Twilight Zone* episodes with shows from the 60-minute season... including the impact of length on story structure, character development, etc.
- a comparison of the *Twilight Zone* episodes which were shot film-style compared with those produced multi-camera in a television studio and recorded on tape (like modern sit-coms).
- an analysis of one or more recurring "themes" dealt with in *Twilight Zone* episodes
- an analysis of Serling's film work, compared with his television scripts
- an original script written in "Serling-style" (i.e. *TWZ*, *Loner*, *Night Gallery*, etc.)

These are just hints... be creative in deciding what aspects of Serling's work and which format/presentation style you prefer.

* regardless of format chosen, ALL students must present at least a summary of their work to the class

GRADING:

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION	10 %
MIDTERM PAPER (bibliography):	15 %
SERLING BIOGRAPHY:	20 %
MAJOR PAPER/PROJECT:	50 %
EXERCISES, ETC.	<u>5 %</u>
	100 %

Americans with Disabilities Act:

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case by case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the college before any academic adjustment will be provided.