

## List of Participating Lifelong Learning Institutes (LLIs)

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
University of Alabama, Huntsville, AL

Central Arizona Lifelong Learners,  
Central Arizona College, AZ

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
Eckerd College, FL

Academy of Lifelong Learning,  
Lincoln Land Community College, IL

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
Brandeis University, MA

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
Tufts University, MA

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
University of Massachusetts Boston, MA

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
Saginaw Valley State University, MI

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
University of Minnesota Gateway, MN

Unlimited Learning  
Crosby, MN

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
University of Southern Mississippi, MS

Center for Creative Retirement,  
University of North Carolina at Asheville, NC

Center for Creative Retirement,  
Sandhills Community College, NC

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute,  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln., NE

Peconic Landing, NY

Institute for Retired Professionals,  
The New School University, NY

ElderCollege,  
Terra Community College, OH

Lifelong Learning Institute,  
Columbus State Community College, OH

Institute for Learning in Retirement,  
Youngstown State University, OH

## THE Elderquest IN TODAY'S MOVIES AND NOVELS

Don't miss  
THE BUS...



...boat, car, truck, or even the riding mower, for our elder heroes use them all to embark on the most important journeys of their lives. We call them Elderquests—the search for wisdom, connection, and integrity in later life—and they're providing us all with new, and more positive, narratives for successful aging.

## THE Elderquest IN TODAY'S MOVIES AND NOVELS

A free, eight-session, noncredit course that is open to all and features brief introductory presentations and guided discussions of five Elderquest films (*Wild Strawberries*, *The Trip to Bountiful*, *The Straight Story*, *Central Station*, and *About Schmidt*) and two Elderquest novels (*Praisesong for the Widow* and *Carry Me Across the Water*)

Who knows? Before long, you may be embarked on an Elderquest of your own.

Developed by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)  
At the University of Massachusetts Boston

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NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

# THE Elderquest

## IN TODAY'S MOVIES AND NOVELS

The Elderquest in Today's Movies and Novels is a national program to be offered at 19 Lifelong Learning Institutes (LLIs) in 12 different states starting in spring 2006. The program consists of an introductory presentation, five film screenings, and guided discussions of both the films and two elderquest novels, all supported by the training of local presenters via interactive video-conferences, as well as the production of a study guide, comprehensive film lists, book lists, references, and a website ([www.olli.umb.edu](http://www.olli.umb.edu)). The program is developed by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston and is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Elder heroes behave very differently from younger ones: Their journeys are often inward rather than outward, backward rather than forward, slow and intentional rather than fast and impetuous. But their actions are just as heroic if not more so, for the stakes are higher, time is short, and the flesh is weak. Victory, and it's far from guaranteed, is full acceptance and then transcendence of the self, an authentication of one's experience, and then willingness to let it go as one helps others to prepare for the ascendancy of the next generation. Join us as our elder heroes—men and women, Swedish, Canadian, American, and Brazilian—hit the road to show us what old age, and especially the new old age, is really about. Brief information about these films and novels is provided on the following panels.

## FILMS AND NOVELS STUDIED IN THE COURSE

### SESSION 1: Eight Ways to Look at an Elderquest

An introduction to the Elderquest—its nature, its history, and, thanks to the longevity revolution, its reemergence as an alternative narrative for the new old age—supplemented by a short reading from *The Odyssey* and excerpts from various films. For example, *The Lord of the Rings* (an heroic, midlife quest), *Easy Rider* (a youthful, rebellious, and pessimistic road movie), *The Straight Story* (a more optimistic Elderquest/road movie), and *About Schmidt* (a failed Elderquest). 🍷

### SESSION 2: The Prototype for the Modern Elderquest *Wild Strawberries*

(1957, black/white, 1 hour and 30 minutes)

Victor Sjöström, Bibi Andersson, Max von Sydow (Swedish; with very readable yellow subtitles). Written and directed by Ingmar Bergman. An aging professor, on the road to accept an award, must come to terms with his past as well as his present. Rated by one international survey as among the 20 best films of all time. 🍷

### SESSION 3: Coming Home

#### *The Trip to Bountiful*

(1985, color, 1 hour and 47 minutes)

Geraldine Page, John Heard, Rebecca DeMornay. Directed by Peter Masterson from a Horton Foote screenplay. Best Actress Award: Page. An aging woman, living in a small apartment with her son and his wife, schemes to return to Bountiful, her childhood home. 🍷

### SESSION 4: Hitting the Road Again

#### *The Straight Story*

(1999, color, 1 hour and 52 minutes)

This clever gem of a movie by David Lynch chronicles a 1994 trip made by 73-year-old Alvin Straight from Laurens, Iowa, to Mt. Zion, Wisconsin, while riding a lawn mower (his poor eyesight wouldn't allow him to renew his driver's license). He takes this strange journey to mend his relationship with his ill, estranged, 75-year-old brother, Lyle, and it is a superb example of late-life revitalization and transformation. Richard Farnsworth's performance earned him Golden Globe and Oscar nominations for best actor. At age 79, he is the oldest person to be so honored. 🍷

### SESSION 5: From Despair to Integrity: *Part One* *Central Station*

(1998, color, 1 hour and 46 minutes)

This Brazilian masterpiece (Portuguese with excellent subtitles) may be the best intergenerational film ever made. It features an unforgettable performance by Fernanda Montenegro as Dora, a lonely and cynical older woman who spends her days unhappily writing letters for illiterate customers at Janero's Central Station. Reluctantly, she befriends a young orphan boy and promises to help him look for his father. In helping, Dora rediscovers something she thought she had lost forever—her heart. 🍷

### SESSION 6: From Despair to Integrity: *Part Two* *Praisesong for the Widow*

(1983, Paule Marshall's novel)

Seventysomething Avey Johnson, a middle-class widow, jumps ship in mid-cruise to rediscover her Afro-Caribbean roots and re-establish her identity in a harrowing and heroic Elderquest. 🍷

### SESSION 7: A Failed Elderquest *About Schmidt*

(2002, color, 2 hours and 4 minutes)

Jack Nicholson as Warren Schmidt, a clueless 65-year-old retired insurance executive from Omaha, sets out on an hilarious but doomed Elderquest in the huge camper his recently deceased wife bought for traveling in their golden years. But he is so shut down emotionally that his encounters—with his daughter, her husband, and her mother-in-law (Kathy Bates)—all end badly. Based on a novel by Louis Begley, which is totally different—not an Elderquest, and about a successful, upper-crust insurance executive from New York City who retires to Long Island. 🍷

### SESSION 8: Summing Up *Carry Me Across the Water*

(2001, Ethan Canin's novel)

August Kleinman, a successful retired Jewish brewer, takes off in his mid-seventies to redeem himself and restore his integrity by returning to Japan to confront the descendants of a Japanese officer he killed in the South Pacific in WWII, a harrowing but heroic Elderquest. 🍷