

National Press Release

All Aboard!

The Elderquest launches this February at 19 Lifelong Learning Institutes around the country.

A more appropriate and up-to-date aging narrative as well as a new eight session course that is free and open to all, **The Elderquest in Today's Movies and Novels** is bound to spark a lively, nationwide debate about the meaning and purpose of the new old age in this the year when the first of the nation's 77 million boomers reach sixty.

Increasingly evident in today's movies and novels, the Elderquest portrays today's longer, healthier old age not as a time when all journeys cease and development stops, but as an opportunity to embark on the last of life's transformative journeys, one that is just as important as the heroic, mid-life quest but is also profoundly different. Elder heroes, like their younger counterparts, are called to journey forth into the world, but their real journeys are inward and their real adversaries themselves. They often move backward in time, the pace at which they proceed is far slower, and the victories and transformations that ensue have little to do with overcoming external forces and everything to do with encountering the self, death, God, and transcendence.

To understand this new narrative and its relevance to their own aging, students will screen, read and discuss five Elderquest films (**Wild Strawberries**, **The Trip to Bountiful**, **The Straight Story**, **Central Station**, and **About Schmidt**) and two Elderquest novels (Paule Marshall's **Praisesong for the Widow** and Ethan Canin's **Carry Me Across the Water**). To support them on this journey there is an Elderquest website (www.oli.umb.edu --click on elderquest, a series of forums designed to spark discussion nationwide, and an online Study Guide that contains essays on the Elderquest, its origins and its history, brief commentaries on the individual films and novels, questions for discussion, film lists and book lists, and suggestions for further study.

Sponsored by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Massachusetts and partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the course, though free and open to all, must be registered for in advance. If you are interested in enrolling, please contact the LLI that is nearest to you, but hurry. Registration has been brisk and some of the programs are already full.

If you are interested in learning more about this project and/or joining it in the future (two more programs are planned-- *Aging and Gender in Today's Movies and Novels: New Models for the New Old Age*; and *Keeping the Generations Together: The Young and the Old in today's Movies and Novels* email Program Director, Chuck Nicholas at chucknicholas@juno.com or charles.nicholas@umb.edu