21st Century Twilight Zone

Legendary television and film writer Rod Serling created The Twilight Zone in reaction to censorship and sponsor interference in Hollywood. His goal was to find a way to use television to discuss major issues of the time—often related to prejudice, paranoia and their effect on community. 21st Century Twilight Zone is a Media School project developed in concert with the College of Arts and Sciences Themester—Otherness, Difference, Diversity. We have chosen three iconic Twilight Zone scripts which we will adapt for production this fall. This talk will be about the challenges of updating the scripts, why they must be updated, how the productions will be managed and created, and what we hope to learn through the exercise. The three original programs are The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street; Will the Real Martian Please Stand Up; and The Shelter. Each was chosen because of its relationship to the Themester theme. Each script, in some way, illustrates how society chooses “who belongs” and “who does not belong.” In Monsters, uninformed paranoia causes a community to tear itself apart. In The Shelter, similar mis-information causes a peaceful community to decide who will live and who will die. Finally, in Martian, while suspicion causes stranded commuters to declare each other to be dangerous aliens which resonates with current debates about “good immigrants versus bad immigrants.” We will discuss how to make these programs even more relevant to current events today, even as we try to adhere to Rod Serling’s original purpose.

Bio: Steve Krahnke is an award-winning Senior Lecturer in the Media School. He is also the Director of National Program Development for Bloomington’s Public Television station, WTIU. Steve has served as producer or executive producer of dozens of important films distributed nationally on Public Broadcasting. Prior to working in television Steve managed several professional theatre companies, and continues to work as a stage set designer for theatre, musicals, opera and television.

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