

# Films as "Gateways" to an OLLI Program

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Older adults enjoy watching films for many reasons. For one, films can provide exposure to the wider society in a non-threatening setting. Secondly, films can offer opportunities for exploring "common ground" for viewers from different backgrounds. Thirdly, attending film screenings (especially if paired with the enticement of a social experience such as a restaurant meal) is generally perceived as a fun and informal activity -- a less daunting undertaking than learning a new language, grappling with astrophysics, or tackling the works of Cervantes. In other words, film screenings can serve as useful "gateways" for those new to an OLLI program who are reticent, shy and/or not quite sure that they're ready for full-blown seminars on Shakespeare or life review or even Tai Chi classes.

Just this week one of the OLLI Culinary Cinema participants reported that her first venture "outside" of the cinema screenings into our classical musical classes had surprised and delighted her. Why was she surprised?

"I didn't know ANYTHING about classical music," Carolyn said. "I'm a complete dunce on that and I was pretty sure that everyone else in that class knew a lot more about that than I do. But when some of the folks in our cinema group told me that they'd decided to branch out and try the music class this term it gave me courage to give it a try, too. Well, I LOVE it!"

She went on to say, "The music is beautiful, the other students are nice and I realize now that it doesn't matter about what level I am at going into this. Heck, we're all still learning. Even the teacher! I'm going to sign up for more OLLI classes next term!"

So, for this student, who was five terms into taking Culinary Cinema (and no other class) at OLLI, the socialization and the network of friends provided by the film class motivated her to consider other courses and take action to expand her learning.