

Academic Year	2020-21	Semester	2
Course Coordinator	Michelle Chiang		
Course Code	HL3039		
Course Title	Major Author Study: Samuel Beckett		
Pre-requisites	HL1001 Introduction to the Study of Literature		
No of AUs	3		
Contact Hours	39 (weekly seminars of 3 hours)		
Proposal Date	18 November 2019		

Course Aims

One of the most important twentieth century writers, Samuel Beckett's prose, plays and poems continue to influence writers, readers and audiences all over the world. Although he is well known for the play *Waiting for Godot*, most of his works remain cryptic to the uninitiated. This module is for those who would like to dive deeper into the Beckettian world. In it, you will discover a poetics of failure, an ethics of non-relation, and perhaps most importantly what it could mean to be at the limit of the human.

In this course, we will close read Beckett's selected novels, plays, short prose and poems. We will chronologically trace Beckett's development as a writer. By the end of the course, our focus on issues of form and content, reality and virtuality, as well as humanity and animality, should enable you to think critically about how his works continue to provoke readers and audiences to reconsider assumptions of lived reality.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you (as a student) would be able to:

1. Analyse and write critically about the key concerns in Beckett's works.
2. Discuss the significance of each work in relation to form and content, reality and virtuality, as well as humanity and animality.
3. Interpret the relevance of Beckett's works to the social, political and cultural present.

Course Content

Each week, we will close read one to three texts, and if a recording of a production or adaptation is available, we will view or listen to it in class to give you an idea of how each work was staged or adapted across media. You will also perform scenes from a text in class, and you are free to experiment with different media.

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Weekly Response (30%):

The weekly response has a two-part format to allow you to measure your learning and reflect on aspects of the text that you might not have considered when you were reading it for the first time. You will keep these papers in a folder, then submit it to me twice: right before Recess and on Week 13.

Essay (40%):

In your essay, you will engage critically with both primary and secondary sources. You will choose a topic and select one work to write on. Your essay must begin with a thesis statement, and all points must be structured coherently with clear topic sentences.

Presentation* (20%):

At the end of the performance, you are expected to share with the class the experience of performing the scene and decisions you've made as a group in its staging. Every member of the group is expected to participate actively in the performance/staging and sharing of experiences with the class.

Performance/Staging* (10%)

Your group will be given approximately fifteen minutes to act out a scene from the play of the week. No prior acting experience is required. You will not be graded on how well you have acted. Instead your grade will be based on how well you have identified and creatively staged the key stylistic elements of the play.

**To do well on the team assessment, it is necessary for you to demonstrate positive interdependence and teamwork. In principle, you will receive the same marks as your team. However, your individual score may vary based on feedback about your contributions to the group project.*

Formative feedback

Written feedback will be given when I return your essays to you. Feedback from me and your peers generated during in-class discussions will also be helpful to check your understanding of Beckett's works.

Learning and Teaching approach

Approach	How does this approach support students in achieving the learning outcomes?
Lecture	The one and a half hour lecture will introduce significant events in the author's life and the text(s) of the week. It will provide you with the social, historical and philosophical contexts from which to build your interpretations of each work.
Performance/Staging	The staging of one scene from the text of the week will open up alternate ways of thinking about Beckett's works, which is almost always psychologically draining on the actors and audience members/readers. Through this, you are expected to gain an appreciation for Beckett's work as a reflection of lived experiences.
Presentation	You are expected to contribute to class discussion at the end of each presentation. You can do so by asking and responding to questions, as well as giving constructive feedback to one another. Such discussions are also opportunities to formulate and test out potential ideas for

	the research essay.
Response Paper	The response papers will allow you and me to check your progress, specifically your understanding of the plays as well as the prescribed readings.

Reading and References

The Complete Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett (Faber and Faber, 2006)

The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989 (Grove Press / Atlantic Monthly Press, 2013)

Murphy (Faber and Faber, 2009)

Watt (Faber and Faber, 2009)

Company/ Ill Seen Ill Said/ Worstword Ho/ Stirrings Still (Faber and Faber 2009)

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and response papers. You will attend all seminar classes punctually. If you must miss a seminar session, you are responsible for following up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements. Since Engagement is one of the assessment components, you are expected to participate actively in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) Absenteeism

Attendance will be taken each week. Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your course grade significantly. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies. If you must miss a seminar, you must inform me (the course instructor) via email prior to the start of the class.

Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the [academic integrity website](#) for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

Course Instructors

Instructor	Office Location	Phone	Email
Michelle Chiang	SOH-03-69	67906714	michellechiang@ntu.edu.sg

Planned Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	Course LO	Readings/ Activities
1 16/1	Introduction Why study Samuel Beckett?	3	Excerpts from James Knowlson's <i>Damned to Fame</i> and Jean-Michel Rabaté's <i>Think, Pig!</i>
2 23/1	Early Beckett Mind-Body Duality I	2, 3	<i>Whoroscope</i> (1930)/ <i>Echo's Bones and other Precipitates</i> (1935)
3 30/1	Early Beckett Mind-Body Duality II	2, 3	<i>Murphy</i> (1938)
4 6/2	Postwar Beckett Displacement I	2, 3	"The Expelled" (1946)
5 13/2	Postwar Beckett Displacement II	2, 3	<i>Watt</i> (1953)
6 20/2	Middle Beckett Time and Duration I	2, 3	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1954)
7 27/2	Middle Beckett Time and Duration II	2, 3	<i>All That Fall</i> (1957)
Recess (5/3/2019)			
8 12/3	Experimentation with Technology	2, 3	<i>Krapp's Last Tape</i> (1958) <i>Film</i> (1965)*
9 19/3	Late Beckett Humour	2, 3	<i>Happy Days</i> (1961)
10 26/3	Minimalism I	2, 3	<i>How It Is</i> (1964)
11 2/4	Minimalism II	2, 3	<i>The Lost Ones</i> (1966,1970)
12 9/4	Language and the Limit of the Human	1, 2, 3	<i>Not I</i> (1972) <i>Ill Seen Ill Said</i> (1982)
13 16/4	Conclusion Language and the Limit of the Human	1, 2, 3	"What is the word" (1988)