

ENP11010 *Samuel Beckett and Environmental Humanities*

Module type Optional (approved module: MPhil in Irish Writing)

Term / hours Hilary / 22

ECTS 10

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Module description

This module explores Beckett's writing over more than five decades in a wide range of media, including novels, short stories, and plays for stage, radio and television. Beckett, perhaps more than any other writer of the twentieth century, was attentive to matters that have become central in the field of Environmental Humanities, and we will read his work drawing on concepts from this field. Over the course of the module, we will focus on a number of distinctive features and preoccupations of Beckett's writing, including the prominence of animals in his work; the challenge his writing poses to anthropocentrism or human exceptionality; his characters' embodied experiences of disability, illness, and senility; and the physical environments within which they find themselves, from lyrically evoked landscapes to abstract sites subject to extreme changes in temperature.

Assessment

The module is assessed through a 4,000-word essay.

Indicative bibliography

Materials will be uploaded to Blackboard before and throughout the module. Students are encouraged to read as much of Beckett's writing as possible before the module begins.

Primary texts by Beckett:

- *The Complete Dramatic Works* (Faber, 2012)
- *Molloy* (Faber, 2009)
- *Malone Dies* (Faber, 2010)
- *The Expelled, The Calmative, The End, with First Love* (Faber, 2009)
- *Texts for Nothing and Other Shorter Prose, 1950-1976* (Faber, 2010)
- *Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho, Stirrings Still* (Faber, 2009)

Secondary reading will include the following works:

- Ackerley, Chris (2007), 'Samuel Beckett and Anthropomorphic Insolence', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 18, pp. 77-90.
- Anderton, Joseph (2020), "'living flesh": The Human-Nonhuman Proximity in Beckett's Four Stories', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 32, pp. 192–206.
- *Beckett and Animals* (2013), edited by Mary Bryden. Cambridge University Press.
- Dennis, Amanda (2018), 'Compulsive Bodies, Creative Bodies: Beckett's *Quad* and Agency in the 21st Century', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 27.1, pp. 5–21.
- Derrida, Jacques (2002), 'The Animal that Therefore I Am', *Critical Inquiry*, pp. 369-418.
- Farrant, Marc (2020), 'Earth, World, and the Human: Samuel Beckett and the Ethics of Climate Crisis', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 32, pp. 207–22.
- Garrard, Greg (2011), "'Endgame": Beckett's "Ecological Thought"', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 23, pp. 383-397.
- Kennedy, Seán (2010), 'Abortion and Infanticide in Beckett and Yeats', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 22, pp. 79-91.
- Morin, Emilie (2017), *Beckett's Political Imagination*. Cambridge University Press
- Murray, Rachel (2016), 'Vermicular Origins: The Creative Evolution of Samuel Beckett's *Worm*', *Journal of Literature and Science*, 9:2, pp. 19-35.
- Purcell, Siobhán (2019), 'Beckett and Disability Biopolitics: The Case of Cuchulain', *Estudios Irlandeses*, 14.2, pp. 52-64.
- Rabaté, Jean-Michel (2016), *Think, Pig! Beckett at the Limit of the Human*, Fordham University Press.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- LO1 Discuss Beckett's writing in terms of its formal and thematic qualities and historical context.
- LO2 Discuss key concepts within Environmental Humanities, including those related to animals, place, bodies, the nonhuman, and the Anthropocene.
- LO3 Appraise the potential of Beckett's writing as a means of understanding the issues associated with the climate crisis.
- LO4 Develop academic written skills through essay writing.