

Fresher/Sophister Module Description Template 2025-26

Full Name: 'Beckett's contemporaries: creative affinities with Louise Bourgeois, Barbara Bray, Suzanne Dumesnil, and Clarice Lispector'

Short Name: 'Beckett: Affinities'

Lecturer Name(s) and Email Address(es): Dr Julie Bates; batesju@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JF/SF/JS/SS: SS

Module Content:

This module explores the affinities between Beckett's writing and four women contemporaries: three writers and one artist. Beckett may not have been familiar with the sculptures and installations of the French-American artist Louise Bourgeois or the novels and short stories of the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector, but their works share fascinating qualities, and a comparative reading opens up new perspectives on Beckett's writing. Beckett had profound creative and romantic relationships with the other two writers on the module. The English editor and writer Barbara Bray was Beckett's partner for thirty years, and her contributions to his work have recently been acknowledged. Suzanne Déchevaux-Dumesnil was Beckett's partner for fifty years. She was almost completely erased from Beckett scholarship and little was known about her creative identity until unpublished typescripts of her stories and poems surfaced unexpectedly at auction in 2023. Recently published biographies of Dumesnil and Bray offer a corrective to the partial portrait of Beckett available until recently, and give us an opportunity to read his writing from a fresh perspective, beyond a masculinist framework.

Learning Outcomes:

- Engage with Beckett's writing in terms of its formal and thematic qualities and historical context.
- Analyse the creation of Beckett as a canonical author, and the more recent developments in Beckett Studies that have added nuance to this understanding of Beckett as a writer.
- Consider Beckett's writing from the fresh perspective of a network of affinities with the writers and artist on this module.

Learning Aims:

- To study Beckett's writing over more than five decades in a wide range of media, including novels, short stories, plays, and poems.
- To study the writing of Clarice Lispector, Barbara Bray, and Suzanne Dumesnil, and the art of Louise Bourgeois.
- To respond creatively and analytically to the texts and ideas on the module.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 2
- Name/Type of Component(s): Creative response and Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): Creative response (1,500 words); Essay (3,500 words)
- Percentage Value of Component(s): Creative response (40%); Essay (60%)

Week by week outline

1. Beckett's writing: introduction to his prose, drama, and poetry from 1932-1989
2. Beckett the biographical and critical subject
3. Beckett – prose published in the 1950s: *Molloy* [novel], 'From an Abandoned Work' [story]
4. Clarice Lispector: *The Passion According to G.H.* [novel] (1964)
5. Beckett – works published and staged in the 1970s and 80s: *The Lost Ones* [story], *Not I* [play], *Rockaby* [play]
6. Louise Bourgeois: *The Destruction of the Father* [installation] (1974), *I do, I undo, I redo* [installation] (2000), *Ode à l'Oubli* [fabric book] (2002)
7. Reading Week: no class
8. Beckett – important works in French, 1940s-70s: 'The End' [story], *Waiting for Godot* [play], 'Roundelay' [poem]
9. Suzanne Dumesnil: 'Contre-Jour' [story] (1946-47), 'Francoise' [story] (1947), 'The "F" story' [story] (1949), untitled poems
10. Beckett – plays on marriage and adultery, 1960s: *Happy Days* [play], *Play* [play]
11. Barbara Bray: *How I Remember the Names* [play] (1967), newspaper review of Beckett's *Play* (1963)
12. Conclusions

Preliminary Reading List:

Primary texts

*Unpublished texts and artworks will be available through Blackboard

Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works* (Faber, 2012)

Beckett, *Molloy* (Faber, 2025)

Beckett, *The Expelled, The Calmative, The End, with First Love* (Faber, 2009)

Beckett, *Texts for Nothing and Other Shorter Prose, 1950-1976* (Faber, 2010)

Barbara Bray, 'The New Beckett', *The Observer*, 16 June 1963, 29.
Louise Bourgeois, 'Freud's Toys', *Artforum* (1990), 111-13.
Suzanne Dumesnil, 'F-', *Transition: Forty-Eight*, 4 (1949), 19-21.
Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Idrá Novoy (Penguin, 2014).

Secondary texts

Julie Bates, "'Just under the surface I shall be, all together at first, then separate and drift': Radical intimacy with insects, plants, and mud in texts by Beckett and Clarice Lispector", *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* (forthcoming)
Julie Bates, 'I do, I undo, I redo': Louise Bourgeois and Samuel Beckett', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 32: 1 (2023), 64–82.
Daniela Caselli, *Insufferable: Beckett, Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).
Ruby Cohn, "The F– story", *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 7 (1998), 41-46.
Marek Kędzierski, 'Seeing Barbara Bray: Marek Kędzierski on Barbara Bray–Barbara Bray on Samuel Beckett', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 32: 1 (2023), 101–112.
James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (Bloomsbury, 1996).
Emilie Morin, *Suzanne Dumesnil, Suzanne Beckett* (Cambridge University Press, 2025).
Georgina Nugent, 'Introduction: Beckett's Women Contemporaries', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 32: 1 (2023), 1–11.
Xander Ryan, "'To talk alone": Beckett's Letters to Barbara Bray and the Epistolary Drama of *Happy Days*', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 31:1 (2019), 163–77.
Pascale Sardin, *Barbara Bray, A Woman of Letters: Translator, Radio Producer, Scriptwriter, Critic, and Theatre Director* (Routledge, 2024)
Pascale Sardin, 'Barbara Bray and Samuel Beckett as 'Translaborators': The Beckett–Duras–Bray Connection', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 32: 1 (2023), 12–27.

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.