



# OLLI AT DUKE

## TEACHING BEST PRACTICES GUIDE



<b>Topic</b>	Course Outlines and Syllabi	
<b>Applies To</b>	All Class Formats	In-Person & Online
<b>Source</b>	Mike Bahnman, mikebahnman@aol.com	
<b>Background</b>	OLLI recommends that instructors develop a course outline or syllabus and share it with their students during the initial class session. This can take many forms, from a simple 1-page list of sessions & topics to a more detailed outline.	
<b>Benefits</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Reinforces the course description shown in the course catalog.</li><li>2. Provides instructor contact information.</li><li>3. Provides students with a session-by-session “roadmap” of the course. This allows students to see what topics will be covered during any planned absences (e.g., for student travel).</li><li>4. Spells out course materials (e.g., books, websites).</li><li>5. Allows instructors to clearly communicate expectations (e.g., required weekly readings or homework, required textbooks, if any).</li><li>6. Allows instructors to communicate any “special instructions” (e.g., dates that the class will not meet, special meeting locations, etc).</li></ol>	
<b>Key Elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Course Title &amp; Subtitle</li><li>2. Instructor Name &amp; Contact Information</li><li>3. Course Description (copied from course catalog)</li><li>4. Course Materials (e.g., books, websites)</li><li>5. Expectations of students (e.g., weekly readings, required homework, if any)</li><li>6. Session-by-Session Descriptions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Session Objectives</li><li>- List of topics to be covered</li><li>- Homework required for the following session</li></ul></li><li>7. Special Instructions (e.g., “the third class session will meet at location X”)</li><li>8. OLLI Code of Conduct</li></ol>	
<b>References &amp; Examples</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Plays of Samuel Beckett, Winter 2016 (attached)</li><li>2. See Instructor Website (<a href="http://www.olliatdukeinstructors.pbworks.com">www.olliatdukeinstructors.pbworks.com</a>) for additional examples</li></ol>	

# **The Plays of Samuel Beckett:** **Disembodiment, Indefinition, and Antitheatricity** **from *Eleutheria* to *What Where***

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Duke University Continuing Studies  
Bishop's House, Duke East Campus      Fridays 9:00am-10:30am      Winter 2016  
Instructor: Charles Joseph Del Dotto      [cjdeldotto@gmail.com](mailto:cjdeldotto@gmail.com)      (919) 423-8103

Arguably the most important playwright of the twentieth century, the Irish-born writer Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) redefined the possibilities of theater. Works such as *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* deconstructed nearly every convention of drama; in doing so, they have exerted an extraordinary influence on subsequent performance. This course offers a survey of Beckett's dramatic canon, starting with Beckett's first major attempt at playwriting, *Eleutheria*, and ending with his late political works, *Catastrophe* and *What Where*, with particular emphasis on *Godot* and *Endgame*. While attention will be paid to literary, cultural, and philosophical contexts, in addition to Beckett's comic spirit, class discussions will focus on three principal themes: disembodiment (the erasure of character and actor, as present in bodies), indefinition (the seeming suspension of plot, action, and meaning and the interrogation of the criteria by which they are possible), and antitheatricity (the resistance to theater ironically responsible for modern theatrical innovation).

## **Course Materials**

Samuel Beckett, *Collected Shorter Plays*  
Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*  
Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days*  
Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

The texts are available for purchase at the Regulator Bookshop, 720 Ninth Street, Durham. Because *Eleutheria* is currently out-of-print, it is available electronically on Dropbox as a PDF document for students to print at their leisure. Secondary critical readings will also be made available through Dropbox.

Film screenings will be scheduled on a TBA basis.

## **Syllabus**

15 Jan	Introductions; opening remarks <i>Ohio Impromptu</i> (premiered 1981)
22 Jan	<i>Eleutheria</i> (written 1947; published 1995) Ruby Cohn, <i>Back to Beckett</i> (excerpt) Ruby Cohn, <i>Just Play: Beckett's Theater</i> (excerpt)
29 Jan	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (premiered 1953)
5 Feb	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (cont.) Herbert Blau, <i>Sails of the Herring Fleet: Essays on Beckett</i> (excerpt) Martin Esslin, <i>The Theatre of the Absurd</i> (excerpt) Hugh Kenner, <i>A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett</i> (excerpt) Rónón McDonald, "Waiting for Godot and Beckett's Cultural Impact" from <i>The New Cambridge Companion to Samuel Beckett</i>

- 12 Feb      *Endgame* (premiered 1957)
- 19 Feb      *Endgame* (cont.)  
               Theodor W. Adorno, “Trying to Understand *Endgame*”  
                           from *Notes to Literature* (Vol. One)  
               Stanley Cavell, “Ending the Waiting Game: A Reading of Beckett’s *Endgame*”  
                           from *Must We Mean What We Say?*
- 26 Feb      NO CLASS
- 4 Marc      *Krapp’s Last Tape* (premiered 1958)  
               Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider  
               Irit Degani-Raz, “The Spear of Telephus in Krapp’s Last Tape”  
                           from *Beckett at 100: Revolving It All*  
               James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (excerpt)
- 11 Mar      *Happy Days* (premiered 1961)  
               Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama*  
                           (excerpt)
- 18 Mar      *Come and Go* (1966), *Breath* (1969), *Not I* (1972), and *That Time* (1976)  
               Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood”
- 25 Mar      *Quad* (1982), *Catastrophe* (1982), and *What Where* (1983);  
               closing remarks

### Expectations/Class Participation

*You don’t learn to hold your own in the world by standing guard,  
 but by attacking, and getting well-hammered yourself.*  
 —George Bernard Shaw

*He who is afraid to ask is ashamed to learn.*  
 —Chinese Fortune Cookie

The purpose of this course is for students to gain a strong knowledge and nuanced appreciation of the plays of Samuel Beckett. To that end, we will read and discuss one major play or three or four short plays per week, in addition to relevant literary criticism for context and interpretive guidance. Students are expected to have done each week’s reading before our Friday meetings and to come to class ready for discussion. Given the size of our group, your participation is vital. So, be smart. Be unafraid. Be vocal. Be generous with your knowledge and, more importantly, your ignorance. However, be civil. Be respectful. Be empathetic, and be prepared to be patient and to listen.

Any comments, questions, and statements of concern outside of class are welcome. Please feel free to email me or call me up to 11pm.