Samuel Beckett’s Trilogy
4 weeks, February 22 – March 18

Instructor: Bill Regier
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Course Description: Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) won worldwide fame as a playwright. His novels are just as good, maybe better.

His best known novels are his trilogy from the early 1950s—Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable. He wrote them in French and translated the last two into English himself.

The text used in this course will be the current Grove paperback edition, Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable.

In addition to the usual literary questions, we’ll inquire why the three novels are treated as a trilogy. What ties them together except infirmity and old age? What did a writer in his forties know of loss, sadness, and confusion? Can old age laugh at itself? We’ll squeeze all the pleasure we can from the trilogy’s pages.

If you like challenging reading, there are many ways these novels will challenge you. If you like banned books, the trilogy is a “must read.”

Reading Beckett is an especially solitary experience. This course will discover whether his novels, like his plays, are better appreciated in company.

No prior knowledge of Beckett is needed. With a little courage and a deep breath you can dive right in.

Participants will be encouraged to read the trilogy at a gradual pace, one novel a week.

The course will be in English, but persons able to read the French too will be doubly welcome.
4-week course outline:

1) Introduction to the fiction of Samuel Beckett


2) *Molloy* (1951; English translation supervised by Beckett, 1955)


3) *Malone Dies* (1951; English translation by Beckett, 1956)


4) *The Unnamable* (1953; English translation by Beckett, 1958)

Reading materials and sources:


  Alphabetical entries of persons, characters, works, and major themes. Good on early publishing and performing histories.


  Beckett on writing, translating, and publishing his novels.


  The recommended text!


  An Irish friend of Beckett reminisces and speculates.


  The reigning Beckett biography.


  An excellent anthology of remembrances by and about Beckett, including remarks by his translators and by actors whom he directed in his plays.


  Stress how the “serene” prose of the trilogy composes the “mess” of the content. Has a reliably annotated “Guide to Further Reading.”

Helpful when embarking on further study of Beckett.

**Beckett websites:**

The Samuel Beckett Endpage, University of Antwerp:


The Samuel Beckett On-Line Resources and Links Pages:

http://www.samuel-beckett.net/#other

**Instructor Biography:** Willis Regier retired in 2015 as the Director of the University of Illinois Press, where he published works by André Gide, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean Paulhan, and Monique Wittig. When at the University of Nebraska Press he published works by André Breton, Hélène Cixous, Marguerite Duras, and Jacques Derrida. He is the author of three books and editor of another. His reviews and essays have appeared in *French Forum, Modern Language Notes, World Literature Today*, and other journals. In the summer of 2016 he will curate an exhibit on Erasmus for the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, commemorating the 500th anniversary of Erasmus’ New Testament.
Instructor Résumé:  Willis Regier

B.S., M. A., and Ph. D., English and American Literature, University of Nebraska

Instructor, English and Classics Departments, University of Nebraska, 1972-1979
Humanities Editor, University of Nebraska Press, 1979-1983
Editor in Chief, University of Nebraska Press, 1983-1987
Director, University of Nebraska Press, 1987-1995
Director of the Johns Hopkins University, 1995-1998
Director of the University of Illinois Press, 1999-2015 (retired).

Author of:

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