D. Beckett: Waiting for Godot. Literature 5; 2021/22 Choose ONE of the following questions from any section. Your essay must be 2500-3000 words in length (there is NO 10% rule). Please use the question as the TITLE of your essay. Please support your answer with quotations from the primary text[s] you are analyzing. A certain amount of research into the scholarship on your topic is necessary. Please use at the very least, FOUR secondary sources. Any fewer will negatively affect your grade. Secondary sources include monographs and articles in academic journals (both online and print), by academics, philosophers, theorists, and translators. Brief references to dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and other source materials to document historical facts and other information that merely supports your argument should be considered separate from the four secondary sources. Please do not use Schmoop, Sparknotes, Gradesaver or any other quick fix. Do NOT quote from lectures or PowerPoints. The essay should be typed double-spaced in 12-point following MLA conventions with regard to footnotes (if used) and Bibliography/Works Cited. You should consider consulting the Oxford English Dictionary online for the historical meanings of keywords, and also the MLA International Bibliography to identify relevant secondary works. Both the OED and the MLA bibliography are among the databases in the Digitale Bibliotheek of the UB. If in doubt about formatting issues, you should consult Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab for citation information at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/ You might consider consulting the Oxford English Dictionary online for the historical meanings of keywords, and also the MLA International Bibliography to identify relevant secondary works You CANNOT complete the final essay on the same author as the group presentation UNLESS that author is considered alongside a second author (this is possible in section F below). ESSAY QUESTIONS A: Modernist Poetry (Stevens and Bishop) 1) ‘Make it new’ (Pound). ‘It must be abstract’ (Stevens). ‘No ideas but in things’ (Williams). How do such manifesto pronouncements bear upon the formal and thematic properties of modern poetry? 2) Specify several recurrent traits in Victorian and/or Romantic poetry that modernist poets felt they had to rebel against. In what ways did they seek alternatives? Use the contrast to develop an essay on the Modernist project as a whole. 3) ‘No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists’ (T.S. Eliot). Engaging with this quote, discuss the relationship between Modernism and tradition in the work of either Wallace Stevens or Elizabeth Bishop. 4) ‘Bishop lets us know that every detail is a boundary, not a Blakean microcosm’ (David Kalstone). Engaging with this quote, explore the significance of perspective in Elizabeth Bishop’s poetry. 5) ‘They were those that would have wept to step barefoot into reality.’ (‘Large Red Man Reading’, Wallace Stevens). Engaging with this quote, discuss the relation of Stevens’ poetry to questions of religious or aesthetic transcendence. B. Woolf: Mrs Dalloway 6) The Modernist novel is no longer a ‘ready-made’ story, shaped and packaged by a trained writer-narrator. It is ambiguous, enigmatic, and revolves around the ‘unknowability’ of the Self. Discuss this idea in relation to Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway. 7) To what extent does Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway encapsulate and/or deploy the modernist tension between the fleeting and the eternal? 8) How might a reader interpret Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway as primarily impressionistic or as primarily expressionistic? In her writing, is Woolf copying or making or both? C. Barnes: Nightwood 9) It is possible to figure ‘nonidentity as a form of subjectivity in Nightwood, where the nonlinguistic, the undecidable, and the animal serve to revise what counts as human’ (Carrie Rohman). Engaging with this quote, discuss how Barnes uses ideas of the body and embodiment to rethink what counts as human. 10) Discuss the relationship between gender and identity in Barnes’ Nightwood. 11) ‘To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.’ (T. E. Hulme). In light of this quote, discuss how Barnes’ use of language in Nightwood relates to modernism. D. Beckett: Waiting for Godot 12) In his biography of Samuel Beckett, James Knowlson cites Beckett as saying, ‘I realized that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, [being] in control of one’s own material. He was always adding to it [. . .] I realized that my own way was impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting, rather than adding.’ Discuss Beckett’s comment on his own approach with close reference to Waiting for Godot. 13) Who or what is Godot? As part of your answer you may like to consider aspects of existential philosophy. To what extent do you consider Waiting for Godot to be an existential play? 14) Beckett called his play Waiting for Godot a ‘tragicomedy’. Do you agree with this classification? E. DeLillo, Mao II 15) ‘The future belongs to crowds’ (Don DeLillo, Mao II). Discuss the social and literary implications of this quotation in DeLillo’s depiction of (post)modernity in Mao II? 16) Should we read DeLillo’s Mao II as ‘a symptom, a diagnosis, or an endorsement of the condition of postmodernity’ (Peter Knight)? Discuss. 17) ‘Beckett is the last writer to shape the way we think and see. After him, the major work involves midair explosions and crumbled buildings. This is the new tragic narrative.’ (Don DeLillo, Mao II). What is the relationship between media and terrorism in DeLillo’s account of the demise of the figure of the writer in Mao II? F. General Questions: 18) How is communication breakdown represented in TWO or more authors from the course? 19) With what justification might Modernist literature be described as ‘nihilistic’? Use TWO or more authors from the course (poetry or prose) to justify your argument. 20) Discuss the role of the body and/or traumatised subjectivity in any TWO or more authors from the course. 21) ‘But I know, too/ That the blackbird is involved/In what I know.’ (Wallace Stevens, ‘Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird). Engaging with the quote above, discuss attitudes to nature in any TWO or more authors from the course. 22) ‘I don’t know how it is best to put this thing down - whether it would be better to try and tell the story from the beginning, as if it were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time, as it reached me from the lips of Leonora or from those of Edward himself.’ (Ford Madox Ford, The Good Soldier) Engaging with the quote above, and in reference to TWO or more authors from the course EITHER (a) Discuss the way in which modern texts refer to their own production. OR (b) Discuss modern developments in the technique of ‘storytelling’. 23) ‘[A]n intoxication comes over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets. With each step, the walk takes on greater moment.’ (Walter Benjamin) Engaging with the quote above, discuss how any TWO or more authors from the course present the pleasures and other experiences of movement through city streets and spaces. 24) ‘Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world’’ (Yeats). To what extent does this quotation encapsulate the modernist experience? Use TWO or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 25) ‘One of the achievements of modernist literature is its articulation of desire’. Discuss with reference to ONE or more authors from the course. 26) Postmodernism has been defined as an ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’ (Lyotard). How is this philosophical attitude of scepticism reflected in the approach to narrative taken by postmodern works of literature? Use ONE or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 27) What happens to identity categories, such as those of gender and sexuality, in modernist and/or postmodernist literature? Use ONE or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 28) ‘In modernist fiction, linear and progressive notions of history are problematised’. With reference to this quote discuss the relation between modernism and postmodernism using TWO or more authors from the course in your essay answer 29) To what extent does postmodernism continue or exacerbate with, or deviate from, the modernist attack on realism in the arts? Discuss using TWO or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 30) The formal and technical innovations of modernist and/or postmodernist literature are intimately related to subject matter, to context. Discuss using TWO or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 31) To what extent are the formal innovations in either modernism OR postmodernism [choose one] linked to conservative/reactionary ideology or to progressive/revolutionary ideology? Use ONE or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 32) Can we identify such a thing as the modernist OR postmodernist self [choose one]? Discuss with reference to ONE or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 33) ‘Since the relationship between language and external reality had become so unreliable, postmodernist writers sought to re-locate reality in language itself’. Discuss in reference to ONE or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 34) ‘Postmodernist literature presents a participatory universe in which reception becomes creation’. Discuss in reference to ONE or more authors from the course in your essay answer. 35) ‘The poet has, not a personality to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality’ (T.S. Eliot). Discuss in reference to ONE or more poets from the course in your essay answer.