

REV-00

SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL



MA ENGLISH

MEN 205 : DRAMA II : MILTON TO BECKETT

w.e.f Academic Session: 2024-25



**CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA**

nirf India Ranking-2023 (151-200)

Accredited 'A' Grade by NAAC

Techno City, 9th Mile, Baridua, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya, 793101

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UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA

First Edition

Print Aug 2024

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This book is a distance education module comprising of collection of learning material for students of Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya, 9th Mile, G.S. Road, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya – 793101.

Printed and Published on behalf of Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya - 793101

COURSE INFORMATION

The MEN 205 paper for the 2nd semester of MA English (Distance Learning) offers a deep dive into significant plays from diverse periods and genres, focusing on dramatic literature's evolution, themes, and characterization. The course covers works from classical and modern playwrights, allowing students to engage with a variety of styles, literary devices, and cultural contexts. The exploration includes Milton's Biblical tragedy, Congreve's comedy of manners, Goldsmith's satirical farce, Shaw's social drama, Eliot's modernist exploration of faith, and Beckett's absurdist masterpiece. This paper emphasizes critical analysis, thematic interpretation, and character development, providing a rich foundation for understanding drama's role in literature and society.

UNIT 1: John Milton – *Samson Agonistes* Part I

About the Author: John Milton (1608-1674) was an English poet and intellectual, renowned for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. His works often explore themes of freedom, morality, and religious faith. **Background of the Play:** *Samson Agonistes*, written as a tragic drama, is based on the Biblical story of Samson from the Book of Judges. It reflects Milton's views on suffering, divine justice, and personal redemption. **Themes of the Play:** Themes include physical and spiritual blindness, freedom vs. bondage, divine will, and redemption through suffering.

UNIT 2: John Milton – *Samson Agonistes* Part II

Explanation of the Play: The play centers on Samson's inner turmoil and eventual acceptance of his fate as he seeks redemption after being betrayed and captured by the Philistines. It is a psychological study of strength and faith. **Important Characters:** Key characters include Samson, Delilah, Harapha, and Manoa.

UNIT 3: William Congreve – *The Way of the World* Part I

About the Author: William Congreve (1670-1729) was an English playwright and poet known for his sharp wit and sophisticated comedies of manners. **Background of the Play:** *The Way of the World* (1700) is a Restoration comedy that portrays the complexities of marriage,

wealth, and social status in the aristocracy. **Themes of the Play:** Key themes include deception, love and marriage, social etiquette, and gender roles in society.

UNIT 4: William Congreve – *The Way of the World* Part II

Explanation of the Play: The play explores the schemes of Mirabell and Millamant as they navigate societal obstacles and manipulations to secure their marriage. **Important Characters:** Important figures include Mirabell, Millamant, Lady Wishfort, and Fainall.

UNIT 5: Oliver Goldsmith – *She Stoops to Conquer* Part I

About the Author: Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) was an Irish writer, poet, and playwright known for his works blending humor with social critique. **Background of the Play:** *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) is a comic play that satirizes the class distinctions and romantic entanglements of the 18th century. **Themes of the Play:** Themes include mistaken identity, class and social status, courtship, and the contrast between city and country life.

UNIT 6: Oliver Goldsmith – *She Stoops to Conquer* Part II

Explanation of the Play: The plot revolves around misunderstandings and mistaken identities, as the heroine, Kate Hardcastle, pretends to be a servant to win the affections of the socially awkward Charles Marlow. **Important Characters:** Key characters include Kate Hardcastle, Charles Marlow, Tony Lumpkin, and Mr. Hardcastle.

UNIT 7: G.B. Shaw – *Candida* Part I

About the Author: George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was an Irish playwright, critic, and social reformer, famous for his wit and his exploration of social issues through drama. **Background of the Play:** *Candida* (1898) addresses themes of love, marriage, and personal independence, set within the context of Victorian social norms. **Themes of the Play:** The main themes include romantic idealism, the roles of women in society, personal worth, and the nature of true love.

UNIT 8: G.B. Shaw – *Candida* Part II

Explanation of the Play: The play examines the love triangle between Candida, her husband Reverend Morell, and the young poet Marchbanks, who challenges Morell's idealized views of marriage. **Important Characters:** Key characters include Candida, Reverend James Morell, and Eugene Marchbanks.

UNIT 9: T.S. Eliot – *Murder in the Cathedral* Part I

About the Author: T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) was an American-English poet, playwright, and critic, known for his modernist poetry and dramatic works. **Background of the Play:** *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) is a verse drama focusing on the martyrdom of Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170. It explores the conflict between spiritual and temporal power. **Themes of the Play:** Themes include martyrdom, faith, the conflict between church and state, and the role of destiny. **Role of the Chorus:** The Chorus acts as the voice of the common people, providing commentary and expressing fear and anxiety about the unfolding events.

UNIT 10: T.S. Eliot – *Murder in the Cathedral* Part II

Explanation of the Play: The play dramatizes the events leading to Becket's death, his moral struggle, and ultimate martyrdom, highlighting themes of loyalty and sacrifice. **Important Characters:** Key figures include Thomas Becket, the Chorus, King Henry II, and the Four Tempters.

UNIT 11: Samuel Beckett – *Waiting for Godot* Part I

About the Author: Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) was an Irish avant-garde novelist, playwright, and poet, best known for his works in the Theatre of the Absurd. **Background of the Play:** *Waiting for Godot* (1953) is a landmark of absurdist drama, focusing on two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, as they wait endlessly for someone named Godot. **Themes of the Play:** The key themes include existentialism, absurdity, the passage of time, human suffering, and the search for meaning.

UNIT 12: Samuel Beckett – *Waiting for Godot* Part II

Explanation of the Play: The play's cyclical structure, minimal plot, and emphasis on dialogue and symbolism reflect the existential struggle of waiting for meaning in a seemingly

indifferent universe. **Important Characters:** Important characters are Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, Lucky, and the boy (messenger of Godot).