

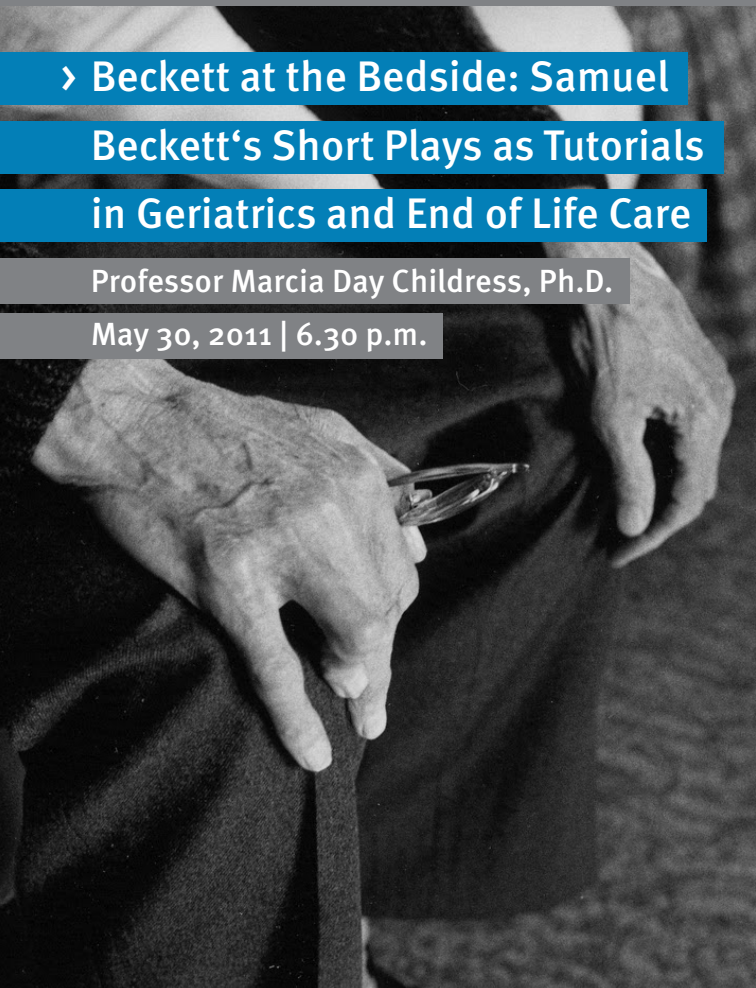


WESTFÄLISCHE  
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› Beckett at the Bedside: Samuel  
Beckett's Short Plays as Tutorials  
in Geriatrics and End of Life Care

Professor Marcia Day Childress, Ph.D.

May 30, 2011 | 6.30 p.m.



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## › Beckett at the Bedside

Modernist Irish author Samuel Beckett's spare, compact, and provocative short plays *Footfalls* (1976) and *Rockaby* (1981) are virtuoso studies in the loneliness of old age, physical and psychological disengagement from life, the difficult „delivery“ of dying, and the human costs of caregiving. Departing from conventional critical approaches to Beckett, this presentation develops quite literal and realistic readings and explications of *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*, with reference to clinical cases of elderly patients and their caregivers. As this application of literary analysis to the clinical practice of medicine shows, Beckett's pared-down dramas, starkly realized characters, and spare, terse language can powerfully instruct clinicians in the understanding and care of frail, solitary geriatric patients nearing the end of life and in the appreciation and support of those who look after their dying elders.

Marcia Day Childress is Associate Professor of Medical Education and directs the Program in Humanities within the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Humanities at the University of Virginia School of Medicine. Her research interests include narrative in medicine, reflective education and the moral formation of the physician, and uses of literature and the visual arts in medical education and preparation for professional life. She writes on literature and the role of narrative and the arts in medicine, ethics, medical education, and end-of-life care. In May and June 2011 she is a fellow of the Centre for Advanced Study in Bioethics at the University of Münster.

## › Venue

Institute for Medical Ethics, History and Philosophy of Medicine, Von-Esmarch-Strasse 62, 48149 Münster