

Critical Theory Cheat Sheet

Donald E. Hall. *Literary and Cultural Theory: From Basic Principles to Advanced Applications*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Theory	Key Ideas	Theorists	Comments
Formalism /New Criticism 1920's forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -analysis of literary structures (genre; character, plot, setting, etc.) -rejected literature's historical and biographical contexts -intrinsic meaning of texts; literature expresses "universal truths" -critic's task to explore precisely through language and form how that truth is expressed -"Close reading"; the TEXT holds THE meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aristotle (<i>The Poetics</i>) -Plato (<i>The Republic</i>) -John Crowe Ransom -Cleanth Brooks -T.S. Eliot 	
Reader Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -emphasis on reader's role in creating meanings -meanings generated by a transaction between reader and a text; meaning is not wholly intrinsic to the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Louise Rosenblatt (<i>The Reader, The Text, and The Poem</i>) -Robert Probst (<i>Response and Analysis</i>) -Wolfgang Iser -Stanley Fish -Norman Holland 	
Rhetorical Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -"an authorial presence [in a text] that leads the text's rhetorically attuned reader toward an authorially desired interpretation or response" (44) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wayne Booth 	
Marxist/Materialist Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -based on Marx's theories of class and cultural production -importance of class and economic conditions; power relationships and class ideologies presented within a text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Terry Eagleton -Karl Marx -Frederich Engles 	
Psychoanalytic Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -concept of the unconscious, conscious, ego and id -human activity not always conscious -nature/ nurture -developmental stages; childhood trauma and its effect on development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sigmund Freud -Jacques Lacan -Northrup Frye 	

<p>Structuralism and Semiotic Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -principles of scientific linguistic study applied to literature -<i>signified</i> (the concept), <i>signifier</i> (the word), <i>sign</i> (combination of concept and word) -making meaning through binaries (oppositions) -no sign is ever fully understandable -language structures our perception of reality -language is never neutral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ferdinand de Saussure (linguistics) -Claude Levi-Strauss (anthropology) -Romon Jakobsen (linguistics) -Jonathan Culler -Roland Barthes -Umberto Eco (<i>The Name of the Rose</i>) -Robert Scholes 	
<p>Deconstruction/ Post-structuralism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -calls into question all assumptions of comprehension and comprehensiveness; meaning never certain, always "deferred." -the power deployed and social relationships organized through discourse -"difference": meaning made through differences among signs, but never made certain -texts betray traces of their own instability -there is nothing outside the text -"blindness and insight" -the world is a text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jacques Derrida -Michael Foucault -Jonathan Culler 	
<p>Feminist Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -focuses on gender (the social roles performed by the sexes) -draws upon and influences every other critical theory -recognition of different degrees of social power granted to and exercised by women and men -explores complex ways women have been denied social power and the right to free expression -like Marxist and materialist analysis, feminist criticism sees texts as thoroughly social-language, institutions, and social power reflect patriarchal interests -women resist and are subversive to patriarchal power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Julia Kristeva -Hekene Cixous -Luce Irigaray -bell hooks (race and gender) Toril Moi Elaine Showalter 	

<p>Gay/Lesbian/Queer Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -encompasses many different methodologies (post-structuralism, gender, race, class, psychology) -focus on sexuality as a particularly important component of human identity, social organization, and textual representation -influence of negative attitudes toward same-sex desire -social attitudes about sexuality have changed dramatically; differ significantly for men and women -issues of "normality" are appropriate subjects for critique and investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Henry Abelove -Margaret Cruikshank -Michael Foucault -Eve Sedgwick 	
<p>Race, Ethnicity, and Post-Colonial Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -explores relationships between a text and its social context -examines how the belief systems of a time and place are reflected in, and potentially altered by literary representation -racism and ethnocentrism are thoroughly entrenched in language, literature, art, and social institutions -"race" = physical distinctions combined with distinct social history -"ethnicity" = nonphysical aspects of cultural identity (religion, social customs, language) -"post-colonialism" focuses on national and regional legacies of national and regional imperialism and colonialism -commitment to challenging oppression based on cultural identity -understanding that race and ethnicity have been used in ways that empowered and oppressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gloria Anzaldua -Henry Louis Gates -bell hooks -Elaine H. Kim -Edward W. Said 	
<p>New Historicism and cultural studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -New Historicism uses many other forms of analysis but always rooted in historical research on past eras and pre-20th century texts -cultural analysis also uses many other forms of analysis. Focuses on 20th century or present-day works; often emphasizes non-literary genres -history is not linearly progressive and is not reducible to the activities of prominent individuals -daily life reveals much about belief systems of a time period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wayne C. Booth -John Brannigan -Michael Foucault -Stephen Greenblatt 	