

| Highly Influential Paradigms | | |
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| ca1945 <--- Formalism---->ca1965 | <----- Deep Structure Models -----> (Structuralism proper exemplifies these trends) | ca1980 <---- Post Structuralism ----> ? |
| Explicate the Formal Properties of the Text. Politics, author’s life, etc. secondary. There is a limited number of great texts (canon). Great literature expresses “universal” themes. | Uncover the “deep structure” beneath the text. Look for parallels with other texts & cultures. Relationship between parts of the structure more important than elements of the structure. | Demonstrate how oppositions that deep structures depend on break down (deconstruction). Texts are infinitely interpretable in theory, though not in practice (politics). |

| Critical Approaches that Displace New Criticism & Become More Complex | |
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| 1960 <----- 2nd Wave Feminist Criticism -----> late 70s | early 80s <-----3 rd Wave & Other Feminisms -----> ? |
| Maintained that “the personal is political” & traditional criticism ignored women readers & the way women were portrayed in literature from a male-centered viewpoint. | Grows out of 2nd wave feminism's internal critique and complicates its earlier assumptions by examining differences between women, including issues of race, age, and sexuality. Many recent approaches modify other interpretive traditions (materialist, psychoanalysis, French theories about language). |
| Sought to recover neglected women authors of the past and value female experience. Sometimes posited a “universal sisterhood” or uniquely female experience. | Gender Studies Draws on feminist scholarship but also discusses men and masculinity in historically specific ways. |
| Sometimes viewed lesbians as the most “women-centered” writers and activists, but not all lesbians were happy with this notion. | Queer Theory Takes practices like drag and butch/femme as an occasion to theorize about how representation “consolidates” or “disrupts” identity and how political dilemmas are simultaneously representational dilemmas. |

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| 1960 <----- Afro-American Criticism -----> | Recent Afro-American Criticism |
| Closely connected with Civil Rights & Black Art movements. Tried to define what was unique about Afro-American experience and art. | Shift from discussing race as an identity to examining race as a cultural construct. Maintains its political commitments, but moves toward coalition models (people of color). Incorporates feminist critiques of earlier work that stressed male experience. |
| Initially some critics took black male experience and identity to be the most authentic form of resistance to oppression. Many other culturally marginalized groups model their criticism and activism on Afro-American efforts. | Ethnic Studies Examines literature from groups traditionally seen as “marginal” to US culture (Native, Asian, & Latino Americans). Also examines literature of groups that became provisionally accepted (Jewish, Italian) and/or moved from being perceived as ethnic to white (Irish, Scottish). |
| Sought to theorize about African-American literature in a global context. Interested in identifying & recovering African roots of much Afro-American literature & culture. | Post Colonial Criticism Examines literature from areas that were formally colonized and that is often written in the language of the colonizers. |

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| Older Interpretive Traditions that Morph into Fresh Forms | | |
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| “Vulgar” Marxism Art is <i>wholly determined</i> by economics. 1930s Marxist criticism is a New Critical whipping boy that helps the New Critics clarify their ideas. | Structuralist Trends in Marxist Criticism Marxists contend that material conditions are <i>the</i> deep structure (base) for literature and culture (superstructure). But some Marxists argue that the superstructure can act independently of the base (example: racism endures after slavery ends). | Materialist Criticisms Draw on components of Marxist thought to examine the role that material conditions play in literature’s production and status. Rarely Marxist in the popular understanding of the term. |
| Historicism “Old” Historicism was another New Critical whipping boy because it treated literature as a footnote to history. | New Historicism Argues that the best, most plausible context for interpreting literature is the historical one when it was written. | <i>Some analysis of literature’s historical and cultural context is a component of almost every critical approach used today.</i> |
| Psychoanalysis Freud adopted by intellectuals who focused on “repression.” Criticism tends to be cartoonish (every long object is a phallic symbol, etc.). | Structuralist Trends in Psychoanalytic Criticism The Oedipus complex is <i>the</i> deep structure. Every character with problems (for example, Hamlet) has an unresolved or poorly resolved Oedipus Complex. Criticism tends to adhere rigidly to Freudian terms: the character or author as patient. | Lacanian Literary & Film Criticism French Theorist Jacques Lacan draws on Saussure’s work to think about Freud as a theorist of representation, and the ways humans create a sense of themselves by interacting with and within systems of representation. |

Notes

These charts leave out some theorists & approaches (Foucault, Deleuze, etc.) that I will mention in class. Additionally, some would argue that *Cultural Studies* is the new highly influential paradigm, both drawing on and superceding Post Structuralism.

Structuralism proper actually only comes the US in the late 70s. But it epitomizes the importance most theories of the time placed on a single deep structure to explain literature and culture. Jungian or myth-based criticism identified the structure as “archetypes.” Second wave feminism looked to gender difference. Psychoanalysis to the Oedipus complex. Marxism to material conditions, and so forth.