

Critical Cohort Report Assignment:

The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize you with the different approaches a scholar or student might take when reading a literary text closely and actively. In the end, one asks oneself, “Why is this text important?” Literary Critical Approaches help to analyze the literature to see comments and glimpses of society or psyche present—intentional or not—in the literature. The different approaches are sometimes called “Theory” or “Critical Theory”

Some places to get quick general knowledge that might help you get started in your research are:

Theory.org.uk Wikipedia <http://www.kristisiegel.com/theory.htm>
<http://vos.ucsb.edu/> (Look under “literary theory” on the side....good links) -- and your own text book (start there).

Please Note: Due to the beginning nature of this assignment, this is the only assignment where I will allow web pages as resources. The purpose of this assignment is to get you to work with your group to tackle a complex subject, digest it, and teach the rest of your class colleagues about it so that they may use it in their research if needed.

Assignment:

You and your cohorts will research your selected theory. You will find out key terms, general background, the time it appeared (30s, 40s, 50s, etc). Why did it appear? What does one learn by using this theory? What does this theory help one discover?

You will then, on your assigned day, teach this theory—this critical approach—to the rest of the class. You will produce a handout that you will give to the students outlining your lesson. Your lesson will include the following:

A definition of the theory (not as easy as it sounds)

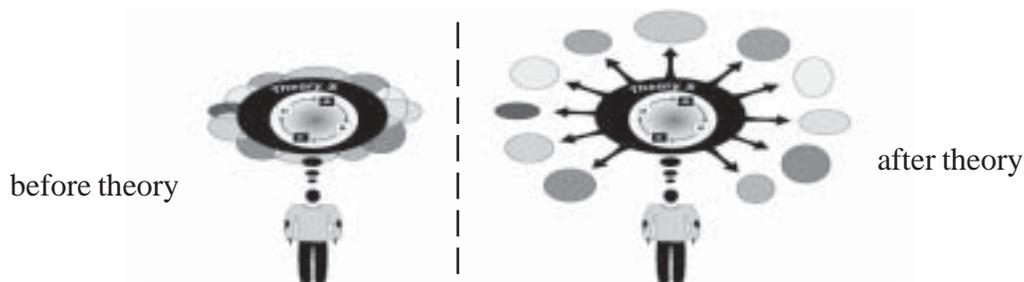
The fundamental elements of the theory — what are the basic beliefs of this approach and why are they important?

A list of the 5 major scholars who have used this theory and how they use it. What are the scholars ideas?

A list of 7 major texts in the theory (they can be written by the major scholars) and what they are about or do.

How the theory itself changes how we look at the art of literature.

How can we (as a class) use this theory to examine the texts we have read in class? How can it be applied to popular culture (Movies, Film, TV)



Your group will be assessed on the handout and the the lesson. Your handout and lesson should be in your words, in as plain English as possible, using quotes when necessary to help explain complex aspects of the ideas behind the theory. **DO NOT simply plan on getting up in front of the class and reading flatly off of a piece of paper—doing that only shows that you have made no effort to digest and understand the material, and the class will know it. Anyone can do a cold reading of material they do not understand. It takes thought, effort, and critical thinking to teach material to an audience.**

I understand this is your first time wrestling with this stuff. I do not expect you to be an expert. I do expect you to be able to explain these concepts to your colleagues in class, with a good handout as a companion, so that they can start to think about these ideas. There will be discussion during and after your lesson.

I have also placed two book on reserve that you will find helpful:

Critical Theory and Practice: A Coursebook by Keith Green and Jill LiBihan

Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms by Irena Makaryk
the first book is espeically helpful, and I can tell you which chapter covers your group’s theory