

FEMINISM

Relevant Readings

- “Feminist Criticism” (*A History of Literary Criticism*, M. A. R. Habib)
- “Fractured Identities” (*A Cyborg Manifesto*, Donna J. Manifestly Haraway)

The Waves (American-European)

- First Wave
- Second Wave
- Third Wave
- Fourth Wave
- Fifth Wave?

Feminist Literary Criticism

FEMINISM

The Waves (American-European)

- These are historical movements that affect literature and literary study.
- The first three are focused upon politics, culture and academia.
- The fourth wave is less “universal” and focuses upon technology.
- It is possible that a fifth wave is developing.

FEMINISM

First Wave

- Began in mid-1800s
- UK and USA and then the UK Colonies and Europe
- Focused upon women's suffrage
- Tied to efforts of abolitionism in the USA
- First to allow women to vote: New Zealand (1893)
- The wave was interrupted by World War I (1914)
- Considered to have culminated in 1920, with the USA ratification of the 19th Amendment
- Most women of this movement were white; many were middle-to-upper class
- Exception: Sojourner Truth (“Aint I a Woman?”, 1851 Women's Convention)
- Seneca Falls Convention: Declaration of Sentiments

FEMINISM

Second Wave

- Inspired by World War II and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement
- 1960s-1970s
- Focused upon social and economic justice (beyond voting rights):
 - In the home
 - At work
 - In the schools
 - In public spaces

FEMINISM

- **Second Wave**
- Two Major Works:
 - “The Second Sex” (Simone de Beauvoir)
 - “The Feminine Mystique” (Betty Friedan)
- Eventually split into two extremes:
 - Equal Rights Feminists
 - Radical Feminists
- National Organization for Women (1969) developed to attempt resolution (failed)

FEMINISM

Third Wave (grrrl feminism; ecofeminism)

- Began in mid-1990s in reaction against the Second Wave
- Influenced by:
 - » Postmodernism
 - » Queer Theory
- Aimed to be intersectional
- Reclaimed and Re-defined traditionally sexist images
- Limited by the idea that a woman is someone who has a vagina (invalidates trans identities)
- Grrrl feminism:
- Ecofeminism: an environmental perspective is necessary

FEMINISM

Fourth Wave

- More inspired by gender-queer theories
- Shifts focus from what it *means* to be a woman to a more queering of gender and sexuality based binaries:
 - Body positive movements
 - Sexual assault awareness (slutwalks, #MeToo)
 - Sex positive
 - Trans inclusive
- More in the hands of non-academics than the Second Wave and Third Wave
- Anti-mysogyny AND anti-misandry
- Social media dependent (Digital Age Feminism)
- Also see “6 Things to Know About 4th Wave Feminism”

(<https://www.bustle.com/articles/119524-6-things-to-know-about-4th-wave-feminism>)

FEMINISM

Fifth Wave?

- Pussy Riot:
 - » Members' perspectives range from anarchist to liberal left
 - » All united by feminism, anti-authoritarianism and anti-Putin
 - » Concerns include: education, health care, and the centralization of power
 - » Supports regional autonomy and grass-roots organizing
- Caitlin Moran (*How to Be a Woman*, 2012):
 - » “Put your hands in your underpants . . . a. Do you have a vagina? and b. Do you want to be in charge of it?”
 - » “I suspect it's around the fifth wave that you stop referring to individual waves and start to refer, simply, to an incoming tide.”
 - » “...women counter the awkwardness, disconnect, and bullshit of being a modern woman.”

FEMINISM & Literary Criticism

- Informed by the politics of feminism
- Examines old texts of the literary canon through a “new” feminist lens
 - Development and discovery of female traditions in writing (à la Virginia Woolf)
 - Rediscovery of old works (such as by Margery Kempe) and a developed awareness of traditional censorship (e.g. destruction) of women's writings
 - Interpretation of women's writing from a counter-male (female) point of view, resisting inherent sexism of mainstream literary study
- Feminist writing that is often anti-patriarchal
- Frankfurt School influence (Third Wave): explores dominant ideology as it influences societal understanding of women and women's rights
- Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic approaches toward both intentional and unintentional patriarchal “programming” of women in society
- Feminist Deconstructionism
- Has expanded to include a very broad spectrum of identities and to recognize intersectionality
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QUEER THEORY

Relevant Readings

- “Performativity, Precarity, and Sexual Politics” (Judith Butler)
- “Queer and Now” (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick)

Origins & Influences

- Thinkers
 - Michel Foucault
 - Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick
 - Judith Butler
 - Jack Halberstam
 - Lauren Berlant
 - Teresa de Lauretis
- Culture of the 1990s
 - Post-structuralism
 - Deconstructionism
 - Women's studies and Feminist Theory
 - Queer Studies
 - The AIDS Crisis

QUEER THEORY

Major Concepts

- Sexuality is fluid, fragmented and dynamic
- Performativity
- Heteronormativity
- Marginalization
- Exploitation
- Violence
- Queer
- Is sexuality natural or essential—or is it merely a social construction, ever-changing?

QUEER THEORY

Major Concepts

- Seeks to be a tool for deconstructing dominating ideals of social “norms” as well as examining how these “norms” came about in the first place.
- “Queer” was originally a term used for individuals who were considered to be sexually deviant (from the “norm”); it was a slang for homosexual with a homophobic implication.
- Now “Queer” has become a term for those who are culturally marginalized, for all sorts of sexual identities.
- Queer theory is born out of the writings of such thinkers as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwich, Judith Butler, Michael Warner, and Adrienne Rich—all of which were inspired by the writings of Michel Foucault.
- Queer Theory is intersectional, recognizing the impact of many cultural variables, including race, class and religion.
- Queer Theory is no binary (hetero vs. homo), recognizing a broad spectrum of gender and sexual identities.

QUEER THEORY

Major Concepts

Michel Foucault:

Western man has been drawn for three centuries to the task of telling everything concerning his sex; that since the classical age there has been a constant optimization and increasing valorization of the discourse on sex; and that this carefully analytical discourse was meant to yield multiple effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation and modification of desire itself. Not only were the boundaries of what one could say about sex enlarged, and men compelled to hear it said; but more important, discourse was connected to sex by a complex organization with varying effects, by a deployment that cannot be adequately explained merely by referring it to a law of prohibition. A censorship of sex? There was installed rather an apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex, capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy.

QUEER THEORY

TYPES OF QUESTIONS (Purdue OWL)

- What elements of the text can be perceived as being masculine (active, powerful) and feminine (passive, marginalized) and how do the characters support these traditional roles?
- What sort of support (if any) is given to elements or characters who question the masculine/feminine binary? What happens to those elements/characters?
- What elements in the text exist in the middle, between the perceived masculine/feminine binary? In other words, what elements exhibit traits of both (bisexual)?
- How does the author present the text? Is it a traditional narrative? Is it secure and forceful? Or is it more hesitant or even collaborative?
- What are the politics (ideological agendas) of specific gay, lesbian, or queer works, and how are those politics revealed in...the work's thematic content or portrayals of its characters?
- What are the poetics (literary devices and strategies) of a specific lesbian, gay, or queer works?
- What does the work contribute to our knowledge of queer, gay, or lesbian experience and history, including literary history?
- How is queer, gay, or lesbian experience coded in texts that are by writers who are apparently homosexual?
- What does the work reveal about the operations (socially, politically, psychologically) homophobic?
- How does the literary text illustrate the problematics of sexuality and sexual "identity," that is the ways in which human sexuality does not fall neatly into the separate categories defined by the words homosexual and heterosexual?

(https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/gender_studies_and_queer_theory.html)

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Relevant Readings

- “Who's Afraid of Critical Race Theory?” (Derrick A. Bell)
- “Looking Inward” (Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic)

CONCEPTS:

- Examines the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression
- Influenced by Civil Rights Movement, and by such writers as Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Common Questions (Purdue OWL)

- What is the significance of race in contemporary American society?
- Where, in what ways, and to what ends does race appear in dominant American culture and shape the ways we interact with one another?
- What types of texts and other cultural artifacts reflect dominant culture's perceptions of race?
- How can scholars convey that racism is a concern that affects all members of society?
- How does racism continue to function as a persistent force in American society?
- How can we combat racism to ensure that all members of American society experience equal representation and access to fundamental rights?
- How can we accurately reflect the experiences of victims of racism?

(https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/critical_race_theory.html)

DISABILITY THEORY

Relevant Readings

- “Introduction: Normality, Power, and Culture” (Lennard J. Davis)
- “Deafhood: A concept stressing possibilities, not deficits” (Paddy Ladd)

CONCEPTS:

- Strives to understand representations and misrepresentations of disabilities
- Examines definitions of “ability” and ableism (the belief that disabled individuals are inferior somehow)
- Questions the “dis” in disability: are we not all disabled and abled in various ways?
- Intersects with Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory, Feminism, and many other cultural/identity/political theories.

DISABILITY THEORY

Social Model

- Recognizes a difference between one who is impaired (physical or mental limitation) and one who is disabled (socially excluded, marginalized).
- For example, one might have to wear glasses for a vision impairment, but that does not mean such an individual will be socially excluded from society.
- The argument is that society decides what is disabled and what is not. Wheelchairs are not the disability: allowance for wheelchairs is the disability.

DISABILITY THEORY

TYPES OF QUESTIONS (Purdue OWL)

- How is disability represented in literature?
- How are “normal” people or bodies constructed? How is normalcy reinforced?
- Is disability a catalyst for the narrative?
- Are people with disabilities gendered differently? As asexual? As feminized?
- In what ways do disability, gender, race, nationality, and class intersect?
- Does the narrative refigure the ways we define the human body? For example, how is prosthesis or technology tied to the body, and how does this change the ways we relate to our environment?
- How are disabilities like blindness tied to “Truth” or deafness to communication within a literary work? What symbolism is attached to disability?

Identity Politics & Power

(A Little Beyond Gender, Sexual, Race, and Culture Theories)

Relevant Readings

- “What is an Author?” (Michel Foucault)
- “Arts of the Contact Zone” (Mary Louise Pratt)
 - Contact zone
 - Autoethnographic
 - Transculturation
 - community
- “Five Faces of Oppression” (Iris Marion Young)
 - Exploitation
 - Marginalization
 - Violence
 - Cultural Imperialism
 - Powerlessness

ECOCRITICISM

Relevant Readings

- “Literature and Environment” (Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber)
- “The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism” (Ursula K. Heise)

Concepts

- Analysis of texts that illustrate or address environmental concerns
- Intentionally broad in focus
- Disagrees with humanist reflections that mankind is the “center” of the universe
- Seeks to emphasize connections between humanity and the environment, regardless of the extreme
- Extremes: corrupt civilization vs. savage wilderness
- Extremes: progressive (civilization) vs. natural (wilderness)
- A strong commitment to the natural world
- A strong commitment to making connections between everything and everyone

ECOCRITICISM

Types of Questions (Purdue OWL)

- How is nature represented in this text?
- How has the concept of nature changed over time?
- How is the setting of the play/film/text related to the environment?
- What is the influence on metaphors and representations of the land and the environment on how we treat it?
- How do we see issues of environmental disaster and crises reflected in popular culture and literary works?
- How are animals represented in this text and what is their relationship to humans?
- How do the roles or representations of men and women towards the environment differ in this play/film/text/etc.
- Where is the environment placed in the power hierarchy?
- How is nature empowered or oppressed in this work?
- What parallels can be drawn between the sufferings and oppression of groups of people (women, minorities, immigrants, etc.) and treatment of the land?
- What rhetorical moves are used by environmentalists, and what can we learn from them about our cultural attitudes towards nature?

MEDIEVALISM(S)

Relevant Reading

- “Comparative neomedievalisms: A little bit medieval” (Daniel Ladd)
- NOT PROVIDED: Shippey, T. (2009). “Medievalisms and Why They Matter.” In K. Fugelso (Ed.), *Studies in Medievalism XVII: Defining Medievalism(s)* (pp. 45-54). Boydell & Brewer.

MEDIEVALISM(S)

Sample:

Medievalists Respond to Charlottesville

Posted on August 18, 2017 by postmedievalist
(<http://medievalism.net/?p=79>)

In light of the recent events in the United States, most recently the racist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, the undersigned community of medievalists condemns the appropriation of any item or idea or material in the service of white supremacy. In addition, we condemn the abuse of colleagues, particularly colleagues of color, who have spoken publicly against this misuse of history.

As scholars of the medieval world we are disturbed by the use of a nostalgic but inaccurate myth of the Middle Ages by racist movements in the United States. By using imagined medieval symbols, or names drawn from medieval terminology, they create a fantasy of a pure, white Europe that bears no relationship to reality. This fantasy not only hurts people in the present, it also distorts the past. Medieval Europe was diverse religiously, culturally, and ethnically, and medieval Europe was not the entire medieval world. Scholars disagree about the motivations of the Crusades—or, indeed, whether the idea of “crusade” is a medieval one or came later—but it is clear that racial purity was not primary among them.

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MEDIEVALISM(S)

Sample:

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Contemporary white nationalists are not the first Americans to have turned nostalgic views of the medieval period to racist purposes. It is, in fact, deeply ironic that the Klan's ideas of medieval knighthood were used to harass immigrants who practiced the forms of Christianity most directly connected with the medieval church. Institutions of scholarship must acknowledge their own participation in the creation of interpretations of the Middle Ages (and other periods) that served these narratives. Where we do find bigotry, intolerance, hate, and fear of "the other" in the past—and the Middle Ages certainly had their share—we must recognize it for what it is and read it in its context, rather than replicating it.

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MEDIEVALISM(S)

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The medieval Christian culture of Europe is indeed a worthy object of study, in fact a necessary one. Medieval Studies must be broader than just Europe and just Christianity, however, because to limit our object of study in such a way gives an arbitrary and false picture of the past. We see a medieval world that was as varied as the modern one. It included horrific violence, some of it committed in the name of religion; it included feats of bravery, justice, harmony, and love, some of them also in the name of religion. It included movement of people, goods, and ideas over long distances and across geographical, linguistic, and religious boundaries. There is much to be learned from studying the period, whether we choose to focus on one community and text or on wider interactions. What we will not find is the origin of a pure and supreme white race.

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MEDIEVALISM(S)

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Every generation of scholars creates its own interpretations of the past. Such interpretations must be judged by how well they explain the writings, art, and artifacts that have come down to us. As a field we are dedicated to scholarly inquiry. As the new semester approaches at many institutions, we invite those of you who have the opportunity to join us. Take a class or attend a public lecture on medieval history, literature, art, music. Learn about this vibrant and varied world, instead of simply being appalled by some racist caricature of it. See for yourself what lessons it holds for the modern world.

Twisted Logic



<https://youtu.be/rc7VUoytoU4>

Twisted Logic Extra Credit

- What is intersectionality? How is the Prager University video twisting the perspective of this concept? How might such misinformation affect contemporary literary theory? Write 200-400 words.
- This is worth up to 30 points toward the Final Exam grade (30/300 total points).