

| | Theory / Dates | Representatives | Questions and Key Concepts | Wider Social Issues |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Production-/Author-centred approaches | Positivism 1860s – 1890s | Hippolyte Taine | environment; epoch [<i>race, milieu, moment</i>] – focus on ‘external facts’ | reorganisation of knowledge and society |
| | (Neo) Marxism Late 19 th century – present | Georg Lukacs, Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser, Fredric Jameson | reflection of social conditions in literature; ideology; economic basis; class consciousness; class struggle | control over means of production; type of political system |
| | Psychoanalysis c. 1900 – present | Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva | desire; the unconscious; repression; wish-fulfilment | human psyche and identity, and its social dimensions |
| Text-centred approaches | (Russian) Formalism 1910s – 1930s | Yurii Tynyanov, Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson | analysis of literary ‘devices;’ literary evolution as a dialectic of defamiliarization vs. conventionalization | relation of art to history and society in general, (conservative?) |
| | New Criticism 1920s – 1960s | T.S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, René Wellek, W. K. Wimsatt | Unity; coherence; close reading; ambiguity; impersonality; “intentional fallacy;” – focus on work instead of authors or characters | pure art vs. political function of art |
| | Structuralism from 1920s, strong in 1960s and 70s | F. de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Gérard Genette | sign/signifier vs. signified; binary oppositions; difference; narratology. | reorganisation of knowledge, scientific anti-humanism |
| | Post-Structuralism 1970s / 1980s | Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida | deconstruction of binary oppositions; discourse analysis; “death of the author” | condition of knowledge in our societies, status of the subject / the self |
| Context-oriented approaches | New Historicism 1980s and 1990s | Stephen Greenblatt | “embeddedness” of canonical literature; subversion vs. affirmation; “the historicity of texts and the textuality of history” | pure art vs. political function of art |
| | Cultural Studies 1980s to present | Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault, Clifford Geertz, Stuart Hall, Richard Hoggart | power; resistance; local culture; thick description | identity politics, affirmative action |
| | Gender and Queer Theory 1980s to present | Luce Irigaray, Elaine Showalter, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Eve K. Sedgwick, Judith Jack Halberstam. | sex vs. gender; patriarchal society; construction of sexual identity and sexual difference; heterosexual matrix (compulsory heterosexuality) | emancipation; gender roles and patterns in society |
| | Postcolonial Theory 1980s to present | Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha | orientalism; centre vs. margins; the subaltern; race; hybridity; diaspora | colonialism; globalisation |