

**Introduction to Literary Theory**  
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**Lecture – 01**  
**Introduction: What is Literary Theory?**

Hello and welcome to this course titled Introduction to Literary Theory. In a today's lecture we will try and understand what constitutes literary theory, and we will also familiarize ourselves with some of the topics that we are going to cover as part of this lecture series. However, before we start discussing the term literary theory we will need to keep in mind that there is no readily available definition of the term that is universally accepted. Therefore, our task would be to analyze the various available discourses about literary theory and to arrive at a working definition.

We will then go on adding nuances to this tentative definition as we proceed with our course, so that by the end of it we should have a thorough understanding of the subject. Now according to the Oxford English dictionary; the term theory means and I am quoting from the dictionary the conceptual basis of a subject or area of study.

And this conceptual basis is understood in opposition to the notion of practice ok. So, one easy way to understand literary theory is to read it as a conceptual basis of the area of study that we know as literature. And this can then be opposed to the more practical side of literary studies which deals with analysing and evaluating particularly literary texts. And this second bit is usually identified as literary criticism as opposed to literary theory. So, literary criticism takes up the practical part of literary studies. So, when other words literary theory deals with the broad picture, attempting to give a comprehensive vision of what constitutes the field of literary studies and literary criticism concerns itself with the practice of reading individual texts by transforming abstract concepts of literary theories into analytical tools.

However, in spite of this being a rather neat and ready definition of literary theory this does not take us very far, and this is because for most of the students of English literature. The term literary theory usually presents itself as a self-contradictory concept. Here I would like to digress a little and make clear that throughout this course I would be

talking about literary theory as it is usually taught within the disciplinary framework of English literary studies.

I would therefore, request you to keep in mind that I teach English literature in an Indian Institute and it is from this location that I will try to intervene in the field of literary theory. As in fact, you will see during the course of our discussion that the location of the scholar crucially determines the approach to this subject. And so I thought it would be better to clarify my own position, my own location at the very onset.

Anyway coming back to where we left, I was saying that the definition of literary theory that we can construct from the dictionary meaning of the word theory does not take us very far. And the reason for that is theory the term usually appears to be self-contradictory to most of the students of English literature. And there are several reasons for this: for a start most of the intellectuals that we normally study as part of any standard syllabus of literary theory are not literary critics.

To give you an instance Jacques Derrida one of the most common names that we encounter in any course of literary theory was in fact, a Professor of philosophy Jacques Lacan. Another important name was a practicing psychoanalyst Claude Lévi-Strauss one of the founding figures of structuralism which is an integral part of our study of literary theory today, in fact taught social anthropology in France. Therefore, as you can see for someone situated within the framework of English literary studies, most of what is discussed under the rubric of literary theory seems to be concerned not primarily with literature but with other things; with things like philosophy for instance, or psychology, or sociology, or history.

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**Jonathan Culler**  
(1944-)

Literary Theory: A Very  
Short Introduction  
(1997).



Source: Daniel Aloi

Indeed for someone like Jonathan Culler and Jonathan Culler is a Professor of English at the Cornell University in America. The two words that compose the term literary theory appear to be so distinct from each other. That he insists on calling it simply theory, without the objective literary attached to it. In his book literary theory a very short introduction color defines theory in literary studies as a self-contained genre, which might be concerned with anything and everything under the sun, but not with and here I quote color, not with the nature of literature or the methods of its study.

In colors account this kind of theory, which originates outside the discipline of literary studies and remain an alien presence within it is associated with a particular date. And with a particular decade rather and that particular decade is a decade of the 1960. I would like to underline this date, because in a significant number of textbooks you will find the 1960, repeatedly mentioned as a moment of origin for what we now consider as a literary theory.

I will have to come back to this date and why it is regarded as a watershed moment later on but right now let us move on to another peculiar point about literary theory, which seems problematic to most of the students of English literature. Now if you are doing a course on a literary theory as part of any English literature program, I am sure you will be struck by the number of French authors that you encounter in your course.

So, you will encounter for instance Claude Levi Strauss, you will encounter Jacques Lacan, Simone de Beauvoir, Louis Althusser, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Julia Kristeva, Elaine Sixuvus and I can go on the list seems to be endless. And these are figures; who now form a permanent part in le syllabus of literary theory within the field of English studies.

But they were scholars who worked from within the French intellectual tradition and are therefore, in some sense outsiders to the world of English literary studies. In fact, most of their works were available to the English speaking world only after a very significant delay. Thus to give you an example Michael Fucause famous book fully a de Rais own which was published in French in 1961 was available to the English speaking world all after a delay of 4 years, when R Howard translated it and brought it out under the title madness and civilization.

However, this 1965 English version translated by Howard was a highly abridged edition of Fukos original text. And in the English version about 300 pages of the original text along with 800 footnotes were left out. Indeed the first unabridged edition of the text by Fuko was not available in to the English readers before 2006, 45 years after the original text was published in French you remember the date is 1961.

And the final version becomes available in English only in 2006. Similarly right we talk about pwalks celebrated translation bearing the title of dermatology was published 11 years after Jacques Derridas French original telegram ethology, and of course, Derridas work was originally published in French. Thus, as you can see the very core authors and texts who are studied as part of a literary theory course, in the English speaking world reaches the Anglophone readers from outside and only after a very significant delay.

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## **Terry Eagleton** (1943–)

Literary Theory: An  
Introduction (1983).



Source: Wikipedia

This notion of literary theory arriving from outside to the universities of the English speaking world is translated into a devastating, but witty metaphor by Terry Eagleton in his book *Literary Theory and Introduction*.

So, Eagleton speaking as a Professor of English literature located in England again I need to remind you that the location of the scholar is very important as far as this course is concerned. So, Eagleton located in England as a Professor of English literature describes how the jaw of a section of British literary critics was reduced to waiting at the port city of Dover to receive the latest shipment of theory dispatched from Paris, which on an average took a decade or so to sail across the channel separating France and England. For those of us who study literary theory within the English departments of India or other places in the global south like Africa and Latin America. The texts and theorists appear to be even more foreign and the delay in accessing them is much longer.

For us therefore, waiting to acquaint ourselves with the latest in literary theory not only means waiting for these works to be first conceptualized by theorists sitting in the continent then translated in English, but it also involves waiting for the publishers to bring out affordable editions for our local markets. So, they can be purchased and readily studied by our students in the class. In what follows my effort would be to reduce these feelings of alienation and confusion that usually surrounds the concept of literary theory.

And I wish to do this by addressing two issues, the first is how what is labelled as quote unquote theory is connected with the idea of literature, this is the first issue that I would like to address and as I have said earlier for some the general impression is that theory is external to the field of literature.

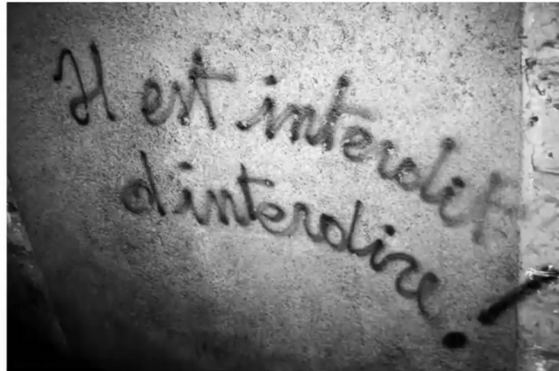
But I would like to question is that so is that really the case or are they both part of a wider cultural scene which integrally binds them together. The second point that I would want to focus on is how we, the students of English literary studies in India are connected with the evolving story of literary theory. Here again the general impression is that we are at least twice removed from the main source of action.

As I said first we wait for the European continental philosophers, sociologists, psychoanalysis to come up with the theories and then we wait for them to be translated in English and subsequently handed down to us in the form of affordable local editions. But I think our location in India might not be as marginal to the evolving story of literary theory as is usually made out to be, but before we go into these issues.

Let us concentrate on the connection between literature and theory and see how tenuous or how strong the links are between the two. And to do this we will need to go back to the decade of the 1960, in the month of May in the year 1968 the streets of Paris were on fire, open battle was going on between graduate students and the police.

The ranks of the students were swelled by workers and they were putting up barricades in the famous university area in Paris known as the Latin quarters. And the graffiti on the walls red anti-authority slogans like (Refer Time: 14:58) it is forbidden to forbid.

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**May 1968 slogan. Paris. "It is forbidden to forbid".**

Many of the French intellectuals that we had listed a moment ago as prominent theorists of our time, including the two most famous names Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault were student participants in the events of May 1968. And it is generally agreed that these events which came to a head in Paris in the May of 1968 have had a transformative influence on how literature is read and theorized, but why were these anti-establishment riots taking place in Paris.

And what is the connection between these scenes of violence and anti-establishment protests with how literature is read and theorized to understand or to answer this question we need to look beyond 1968. In fact, the story of the events of 1968 actually starts from after the end of the Second World War after 1945.

In spite of the huge amount of devastation that was wrecked by this war the years following it saw significant economic growth and all round prosperity. Especially in the developed capitalist countries, but also in the communist ruled soviet bloc, America whose economy had got a great Philip in the war years continued to grow even after the war was over, but it was the economy of the non-communist countries in the Europe that were more successful. And they were almost completely transformed by the 1960, the USSR was also faring equally well in terms of economy and grew at a rate that was comparable to the developed capitalist countries, but this prosperity what was not just confined to the USA or Europe or the USSR.

Rather it was a worldwide phenomenon and as a historian Eric Hobsbawm for instance observes in his book age of extremes, between the end of the world war 1945 and the 1970 there was a spectacular growth in world population.

But at the same time there were no mass starvation except as a product of war and political madness as in china of the 1958. And this was because there was a boom in food production, which rose faster than the population. The average life expectancy also shot up by an incredible 7 years and this is the global average. So, there was all round prosperity in the years following the Second World War.

And one of the key social features that characterize the changing times after the Second World War was a sharp decline, in the number of people engaged in farming and this in spite of the fact that food production actually increased.

And this decline in the number of people engaged in farming was complicated by a parallel trend. A dramatic rise in occupations that required higher education, and this requirement for higher education in turn was matched by growing number of families worldwide, who because of the economic boom could afford to send their adolescent children to secondary schools and then to universities, rather than forcing them to go to work early to support the family income.

So, from the 1960s to say the 1980s the student population in different parts of the world multiplied by anything between 3 to 9 times. In France alone the student population which was roughly around hundred thousand at the end of the Second World War grew to become 650000 by the end of the 1960s.

And most of this increase was noticed in the departments of humanities and social sciences. This enormous rise in a student population had profound consequences, because most of these new students were first generation learners and had a very different class profile from the group of social elites who attended universities till the Second World War.

There was therefore, a sense of a natural class resentment that most of these students felt towards the university authority which was geared for hundreds of years to serve only the social elite. This class resentment felt by the students found eco within the ranks of the workers and so in the May of 1968 we see students and workers coming together to



build barricades and to resist authority in general. However, these anti-authority, anti-establishment unrest was not just limited to Paris, Paris was indeed the epicentre. But similar student revolts were witnessed all over Europe as well as in America where it usually took the form of anti-vietnam war movement protesting against the American military action against Vietnam.

And these student protests and the erosion of the social status quo that it is represented had deep reaching impact in the field of humanities and social sciences. And this of course, includes the field of literary studies in countries that witnessed the student unrest during the 1960s. The socio cultural vantage point from which literature was read and analysed till the pre Second World War era was not the point of reference that was shared by the new students in the post war generation.

This resulted in a breakdown of the meaning making process that is necessary for communication. The social and cultural norms which had stabilized the meanings of words and which had structured them structured the process of meaning making till recently, were now put under question.

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**Jacques Derrida**  
(1930 – 2004)

**“Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”** (A lecture delivered in John Hopkins University, 1966) was published in 1967.



Source: Wikipedia

The old figures of authority who had fixed the meaning were now being dismantled. This crisis of meaning was most powerfully put forward by Jacques Derrida in a 1966, lecture which later became the essay, structure, sign and play in the discourse of human sciences.

In this essay Derrida posited or in fact, posits the idea of discourse as a decentred structure which is devoid of any central figure of authority. The meanings of words therefore, do not get fixed, but in a free play continues to lead from word to word for students of literature, this crisis in meaning making due to lack of an authority figure was perhaps even more clearly stated by Roland Barthes.

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**Roland Gérard  
Barthes**

(1915 – 1980)

**“Death of the  
Author”** (an essay  
published in 1967).



Source: Wikipedia

But in his famous 1967, essay announced the death of the author, the figure who was assumed to be the ultimate authority on what his words on the printed paper might mean. Refusal to accept any authority meant refusal to accept the power that an author might have in controlling the meaning of his words. A central tenet that would inform the school of post structuralist literary theory which is one of the things we are going to take up in one of our future lectures.

Now, this erosion of authority which erupted in the form of violent riots in the 1960s in Europe and America was however, not merely confined to the university campuses and streets, but was also felt within the intimacy of the family structure. In the years following the Second World War the number of women in the higher education section rose considerably. And I am here stating figures from all over Europe and from the USA.

So, whereas, till the Second World War women constituted only 15 to 30 percent of the student population enrolled in higher education, by the end of the 1970 the number had risen to almost 50 percent in most of the developed countries.

So, this means that the wave of new student population that we have been discussing so far also had a large number of women in them, women who were as disaffected if not more at least as disaffected with the authority and with the old established order as their male counterparts. The rise in the women student population across Europe and America was complemented by another trend. It was complemented by an equally dramatic rise in the participation of women in workforce.

And such an expansion of the social group of educated and economically independent women resulted in obvious tensions within the family structure which was inherently patriarchal, and within which the superiority of men over women was almost taken for granted. This tension gave rise to the social and intellectual movement that is referred to as a second wave of feminism. A movement that took up issues of female sexuality, reproductive rights and position of women both in the workplace as well as within the family, and in the field of literary studies this movement manifested in the form of a quest to find new parameters for writing and reading literature as a woman.

A women were however, not the only marginalized section of the society who gained prominence in the change scenario after the Second World War. Another previously marginalized social group now enjoyed a similar kind of emancipation and a similar kind of foregrounding.

And here I am thinking about the inhabitants of the vast stretches of colonized area in the global south which gained independence in the decades immediately following the Second World War. So, it started with the independence of countries like India and Pakistan, but soon it spread across to Africa. And most of this continent most of Africa was decolonized during the 1950s and 1960s.

There was again a huge impact of this emancipation on how literature is read and analysed. So, by the 1960s the literature produced by authors from earths while colonies managed to carve out a niche in the global book market. In England for instance the publisher Hyndman started bringing out the African writers series which published and brought to the metropolitan readers the work of authors like Chinua Achebe Boog Eva Tongo Amata I do (Refer Time: 27:05) and so on. And these are authors that we will have to remember they would not be considered part of mainstream English literature

even say 50 years ago. Also just as the second wave feminism gave rise to various intellectual debates regarding how women as a reader should engage with literature.

The new sense of emancipation and prominence gained by the people in the global south gave rise to a whole new field of literary theory concerned with how the once colonized subject should intervene in the field of literature. And we will talk more about this particular kind of literary theory when we discuss post colonialism again in one of our future lectures.

So, as you can see. Therefore, the world changed radically between the end of the Second World War and the end of 1970 beginning of 1980s. This meant that not only the context in which literature is studied and made sense of underwent a very significant transformation. But also this means that the profile of producers of literature as well as the students who critically analyze these literary texts within the classroom setting they changed dramatically.

The new prominence that literary theory enjoyed in the second half of the twentieth century was therefore, a result of students and scholars trying to connect their study of literature with this changed context. An effort which involved redefining the very conceptual basis of literary studies and connecting it with the new streams of thought in the sister areas of humanities and social sciences like as I have already mentioned philosophy, psychology, sociology, history and so on.

Now one of the reasons that the post 1960s boom in literary theory is often regarded as we saw. As an alien intervention within the field of literary studies is because the scholars who made use of these new theories who still make use of these new theories are actually challenging the prevalent ways in which literature was being read and understood till say the Second World War. However, what we need to remember here is that no matter how alien theory might appeared at a particular historical moment no reading of literature can be ever bereft of theory altogether.

So, those who portray the literary theories that has emerged in the post 1960s often forget that existing ways in which literature was being read and understood till that point in time, were themselves underlined by certain conceptual basis which echoed certain other philosophical or sociological or historical outlook of that time. And therefore, with each major shift in the economic social and cultural context we can see fresh attempts to put

literary studies on a new conceptual basis. That is not only more in tune with the changed world, but also in tune with the changing perspectives in other academic disciplines.

So we need to remember that the reading of literature has never been an isolated practice that is cut off from other disciplines of human enquiry. An attempt to create an inside outside division and please literature on one side and theory on the other side is therefore, something which cannot be sustained for very long. In other words that significantly changed global context of the Second World War of the post Second World War era. Might have led to a profusion of new literary theories, but it was definitely not the first attempt to theorize how to read and how to engage with literature.

Here I would like to give you an example and I would of course, borrow this example from within the field of English literary studies. Near the very end of the 18th century William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge two friends and literary collaborators significantly changed the ways in which literature is created is conceived and is read. This revolution in the field of English literary studies is usually referred to as a Romantic Movement, but if we look deeper we will see that this re conceptualization of literature also had a broader, social, political and cultural context.

On the one hand these urge to think about literature a new was fuelled by the great political and intellectual changes that were brought about by the French revolution. Indeed Wordsworth was present in Paris immediately after the most iconic act of French revolution the storming of the Bastille prison had been performed and a republic had been declared in place of a monarchy in France. And the revolutionary political change that was witnessed in France had such an impact on him that he sought to express this paradigm shift in poetic form in his autobiographical piece the prelude. And I will read out some lines from the prelude here.



You need from the vantage point of being a student of English literature we can spot a number of such watershed movements, one of them being of course the emergence of the English Romantic Movement about which we just discussed. And the 1790s when a new theory of literature emerged along with the writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge, but we can spot another watershed moment at the beginning of the 18th century. When the English word literature started acquiring its modern meaning the meaning that we understand now.

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**Raymond  
Williams**  
(1921 – 1988)

Marxism and Literature  
(1977).



As Raymond Williams notes in his book *Marxism and Literature*, the term literature which has its origin in the Latin word *littera*.

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**“littera”** (Latin) —————> **“litterature”**  
(around 14<sup>th</sup> century English), meant  
merely someone’s ability to read.

Started being used in English from around the 14 century and in its earlier forms which was by the way spelt with a double t, so the spelling was l i double t e r a t u r e and this was because the Latin word littera was also spelt with a double t right. So, in this earlier form it signified just someone’s ability to read so when the late sixteenth early 17th century English scholar Francis Bacon for instance mentioned someone being learned in literature. He was actually simply referring to the fact that the person was able to read.

Now, therefore, and we still retain something of this earlier use when we use the term literacy for instance which was initially connected with the word literature right. Now that connection of course, has been lost the connection between literature and literacy; William Caxton, if you know your English history you will know this that William Caxton had introduced the printing press in England in the fifteenth century.

So, by the end of the 17th century when printed reading material was available in sufficient abundance literature had come to signify not only one’s ability to read, but also more specifically the ability of someone to read printed books or the practice of reading printed books. More over literacy and the availability of printed books, whereas is I think obvious limited to a small section of elite within a society, think of India even now and you will get the meaning of what I am trying to say here.

And so by the 18th century literature was also associated with this with a kind of elitist aura, why? Because literacy and availability of printed material was restricted to only to



a group of social elite. And by the 18th century literature was also associated with a certain degree of cultural sophistication; It was associated with everything that a social elite is associated with.

Engaging with literature therefore, was a way of gaining as well as displaying cultural values and civilizational attainments. Raymond Williams also notes that by the 18th century the use of the word literature changed in another fundamental way. During this time it acquired the meaning of imaginative composition or imaginative writing. And while it gained this meaning it subsumed within itself the earlier category of poetry or poesy which had signified imagined imaginative composition before then.

Now, with the development of the term literature poetry was confined primarily to metrical composition. Even now we associate poetry primarily with metrical composition, but it is important to remember that at one point of time, it was not just one kind of literature, but poetry or poesy signified a much broader thing it signified imaginative composition in general. And why I am saying it is important to remember, because we will often come across terms like poetics, which actually signifies more than just a commentary on poetry it signifies more than that it signifies a commentary on literature in general as we understand the term now.

Coming back to the point it is in this time of change 18th century, when literature gradually became what we understand it to be now. That I would like to locate the origin of literary theory or literary criticism, because it is only when certain works started being identified and thought as literature that we encounter the growth of theories to sustain it as a field of studies as a separate field of independent studies.

Interestingly India and Indian students of literature played a very significant role in this 18th century story of how English literature developed as a separate field of study and how a complementary field of literary theory developed along with it. And this is, because India was one of the earliest places in the world where English literature was studied as an academic discipline.

So, you can see rather than being marginal to the story of literary theory we those of us who teach and study English literature in India are actually at the very heart of it. Not only during the moment of its origin in the 18th century, but also in later times when India again comes to prominence with the rise of post-colonial literature and post-

colonial theory and with the emergence of theorists like Greta Chakraborty Spivak and Homi Bhabha.

We will encounter these names again in our lectures of post-colonial literary theory later on. I would like to point out that though I have just mentioned the early 18th century as the point from where we should start our discussion of literary theory, because the very concept of literature was absent within the field of English studies before that. But in practice in actuality our syllabus will go will begin far back in time. And this is because ancient Greek and Roman philosophers like Plato for instance or Aristotle or Horace or Longinus also known as Pseudo Longinus they had a very significant impact on the theorists of the 18th century, and these philosophers. Therefore, form an integral part of the history of literary theory as it is taught and studied within the academic discipline of English literature.

In our next lecture therefore, we will first discuss Plato and Aristotle. And we will discuss their commentary, on the idea of mimesis you will discover that this term mimesis has been crucial in guiding all later understandings of literature in particular and art in general.

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- Literature and Mimesis
- Literature and the Sublime
- Neoclassical Literary Theory
- Literature and Romanticism

So, we will first discuss that and then we will in turn move to Longinus and his theory of the sublime and how that theory of the sublime relates to literature. And it is only after

these initial lectures that we will be able to start discussing, how literature and literary theory started being studied in the field of English studies from the 18th century.

So, when we will move to the topic of literary theory in the context of 18th century England we will see how there was an effort to mould the emerging field of literature in accordance to the rules borrowed from the writings of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers this is why. In fact, the kind of literary theory that we see developing in England between the second half of the 17th century right up to the first decades of 18th century is referred to as the new classical school of literary theory.

And here the word neoclassical refers to a renewed interest in the writings of classical authors of Greek and Roman antiquity. Now the interest in these classical authors of ancient Greece and Rome were already kindled in England during the renaissance, but it was not until the late 17th and early 18th century. That we encounter substantial body of theoretical writings based on the thoughts and insights provided by the classical authors. Incidentally and also very interestingly the classical authors often did not influence the literary theoreticians in England directly. rather they were influenced via the works of French intellectuals like Nicola voila Dupree.

And therefore, better known as just wallow and therefore, in the debates and discussions through which English literary theorists tried to modify and expand or even contradict the ideas of the classical authors. So Greek and Roman antiquity to arrive at a new understanding of literature, often these discussions had French intellectuals like voila as powerful interlocutors.

And so you see terry Eagleton complaint about certain twentieth century English literary critics waiting in the port City of Dover for their intellectual shipment to arrive from France can in fact be extended back to the late 17th early 18th century, because even back then what was happening in France in the intellectual circles of France had a major impact on the intellectual life of England and of the Anglophone world in general.

By the end of the 18th century; however, the edifice of neoclassical literary theory was crumbling. The world was changing and it was changing primarily under the influence of two major revolutions the industrial revolution and the French revolution. And there were also new intellectual currents which were at work by the end of the 18th century.

All this resulted in the new set of literary theories that I have mentioned before as forming the Romantic Movement forming part of the Romantic Movement. So, after discussing the neoclassical theory first of course, we will begin with the works of Greek and Roman intellectuals like Plato, Aristotle, Longinus, etcetera. Then we will move on to a discussion of neoclassical literary theories as it developed in late 17th and the first half of the 18th century. And after that we will move to this new kind of literary theory that developed at the very end of 18th century early nineteenth century, which we see as part of the greater Romantic Movement.

In our subsequent lectures after we have completed romanticism completed discussing romanticism, we will again move forward roughly a 100 years from the Romantic Movement. And we will see that a fresh set of literary theories had started emerging during the early twentieth century and here we will deal with how different strategies of reading literature were experimented with by the American school of new critics for instance by the Russian formalists.

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- American New Criticism
- Formalism and Dialogism
- Literature and the Reader
- Structuralism
- Post-structuralism

And we will also pay special attention to Mikhail Bakhtin who was part of the Russian formalist movement, but he was also a major theorist in his own right and terms like (Refer Time: 49:38) for instance which is today integrally associated with literary theory and how we understand literature goes back to the writings of Buckton. So, when we will discuss Russian formalism we will also especially focus on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin

and we will also focus on the German phenomenologists like Russell for instance of Heidegger. Who initiated a school of literary theory that later developed into what we now call what we now know as the reader response theory. After these discussions we will then move on to a set of lectures that would help us connect literary theory with three major developments that marked the beginning of the twentieth century.

We will start here with the development that is perhaps least discussed in the world outside the academia, but nevertheless which has had an astonishing amount of influence within the field of literary theory. Here, I am talking about the 1916 publication of the book titled who the linguistic general or course in general linguistics that is the title under which its English translation was published.

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**Ferdinand de  
Saussure**  
(1857 – 1913)

*Cours de linguistique  
générale* (1916),  
or  
*Course in General  
Linguistics*.



Source: Indogermanisches Jahrbuch

And this book is basically a collection of lectures collection of lectures delivered by the Swiss linguist. Ferdinand de Saussure and he is Saussure delivered these lectures between 1900 and 6 and 1900 and 7 and by the time the book was published in 1916. So, sure was already dead, but it is to this book to this collection of lectures that we can trace the beginning of structuralist theory, which not only influenced the field of linguistics, but also had a profound impact on the field of sociology and literature. For instance earlier in this lecture we have mentioned someone called Claude Levi Strauss for instance who was a sociologist but who may be use of this structuralist insight in his analysis of societies and Strauss. In general influenced literature and literary theory,

which goes under the name of structuralist literary structuralism its. In fact, the influence of Saussure and his text continued even after the 1960s.

And we see for instance even Rogues Derrida taking his cue from structuralist theory indeed he starts his famous essay structural sign and play in the discourse of human sciences by critiquing the work of Levi Strauss. So, the new kind of theory that emerged after the 1960s and that is associated primarily with the name of Rogues Derrida is also referred to as post structuralism.

This is because of its close links with structuralism often structuralism and post structuralism do not agree on major points, but nevertheless there are a significant number of links between these two kinds of theories for us to place them together and to learn about them one after the other from a discussion of structuralism and post structuralism. We will then move on to the second major development that shaped the twentieth century and this one is the Bolshevik revolution which happened in Russia in 1917.

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**Bolshevik forces marching on the Red Square (1917).**



Source: Wikipedia

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## **Karl Marx**

(1818 – 1883)

Source: International Institute of Social  
History in Amsterdam,  
Netherlands.

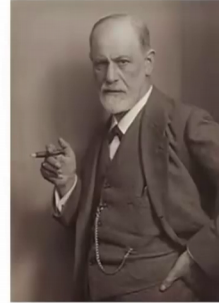
Now, with this revolution the revolution in 1917 Karl Marx's economic theory first gained the major political expression. There was always political undertones in the writings of a Marx, but it was primarily document which critiqued economic theories with 1917 this economic theory now transformed into a major significant political movement.

And the communists took over the reign of Russia by bringing to an end the rule of the Romanov monarchs. However, the Bolshevik revolution did not merely bring Marxism to the political foreground, but also expanded it as a field of debate and this expansion was also felt within the field of literary studies. And throughout the twentieth century Marxism continued to remain a very strong intellectual force guiding theories about how to read how to analyze and indeed how to create how to produce literature.

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**Sigmund Freud**  
(1856 – 1939)

*Die Traumdeutung* (1899)  
or  
*The Interpretation of Dreams.*



Source : Christie's

The third major movement was marked by the 1899 publication of Sigmund Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* which was translated in English under the title *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

And this was a major publication because it assured in the new science of psychoanalysis. And from the very beginning psychoanalysis had a very strong relationship with literature and Freud for instance borrowed character names like Oedipus from ancient Greek literature to express psychoanalytic concepts we have for instance the *edible complex*. And also apart from borrowing literary terms Freud also used his insight as a psychoanalyst to interpret various literary texts including William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

This strong connection between psychoanalysis and literary theory has continued well beyond Freud. And throughout the twentieth century we have had intellectuals like Carl Gustav Jung for instance Jacques Lacan, René Deleuze, Félix Guattari and all of them have either used psychoanalytical insights to interpret literature or whose works on psychoanalysis have been borrowed by other theorists to explicate specific literary works.

Next after completing this we will move to the topic of literature and gender and in this lecture we will try to see how the different waves of feminism have impacted literary theory. But in this lecture we will also try and move beyond feminism to see how the



more recent queer movements have also played a part in building a new set of literary canons and promoting a new kind of discourse around literature. As is common knowledge perhaps the prefix post plays a very significant role in any syllabus of literary theory almost as significant as a suffix ism. In fact, we have already encountered quite a few isms in the form of romanticism, structuralism, marxism, feminism.

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- Marxist Literary Theory
- Literature and Psychoanalysis
- Literature and Gender
- Literature and Postmodernism

And we have also come across the prefix post in the form of post structuralism, but we will focus on two more examples of this prefix post, when we do post modernism and post colonialism.

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- Postcolonial Literary Theory
- Ecocriticism
- Indian Literary Theory

Again two very important topics as far as literary theory is concerned and from there we will move on to theories or Eco criticism. And this in a way we will actually bring us up to date, because much of the contemporary literary theory is emerging out of concerns about our shared environment and ecology. In the final lecture I will try to give a brief introduction to certain literary theories that have had their origin in ancient India within ancient Indian tradition.

And here I will be talking about things like the rasa theory and how [FL] can be used as a tool of literary analysis, but it is also important to note that these quote unquote Indian theories are not usually included in courses of literary theory within the field of English studies. However, it would be agreed to try and expand the already eclectic field of literary theory a bit more. And make it slightly more relevant to us who study literary theory from within the context of Indian institutes. So, as you can see we have a lot of ground to cover in this course.

And we will continue our journey in the next lecture, where we will talk about the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle and we will discuss their lasting impact in the study of literature and literary theory. Good bye till then.