An Introduction to Literary Theory

The Primary Sources that will guide your analysis

*****This will be something to hold onto not just for this semester, but the rest of your life!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
All the quotations are taken from this anthology:


To cite, just fill in the specific title and author of the piece you are quoting, then put in the correct page numbers.
Feminist Theory Introduction

- Feminist criticism became a dominant force in Western literary studies in the late 1970s, when feminist theory more broadly conceived was applied to linguistic and literary matters. Since the early 1980s, feminist literary criticism has developed and diversified in a number of ways and is now characterized by a global perspective.

- Many Feminists argue that associating men with humanity more generally (as many cultures do) relegates women to an inferior position in society.

- Others acknowledge this critique but focus on language as a tool of male domination, analyzing the ways in which it represents the world from the male point of view and arguing for the development of a feminine language and writing.

- Today, critics seldom focus on "woman" as a relatively monolithic category; rather, they view "women" as members of different societies with different concerns. Feminists of color, Third World (preferably called postcolonial) feminists, and lesbian feminists have stressed that women are not defined solely by the fact that they are female; other attributes (such as religion, class, and sexual orientation) are also important, making the problems and goals of one group of women different from those of another.
What do Feminist Critics do?

- Rethink the cannon, aiming at the rediscovery of texts written by women.
- Revalue women’s experience
- Examine representations of women in literature by men and women.
- Challenge representations of women as ‘other’, as ‘lack’, as part of ‘nature’.
- Examine power relations which obtain the texts and in life, with a view to breaking them down, seeing reading as a political act, and showing the extent of patriarchy.
- Recognize the role of language in making what is social and constructed seem transparent and ‘natural’.
- Raise the question of whether men and women are ‘essentially’ different because of biology, or are socially constructed as different.
- Explore the question of whether there is a female language and whether this is also available to men.
- Re-read psychoanalysis to further explore the issue of female and male identity.
- Make clear the ideological base of supposedly ‘neutral’ or ‘mainstream’ literary interpretations.
The Traffic in Women, by Gayle Rubin

“What is a domesticated woman? A female of the species. The one explanation is as good as the other. A woman is a woman. She only becomes a domestic, a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human Dictaphone in certain relationships. Torn from these relationships, she is no more the helpmate of man than gold in itself is money” (770)

“As a preliminary definition, a “sex/gender” system is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (771)

“Sex as we know it—gender identity, sexual desire and fantasy, concepts of childhood—is itself a social product. We need to understand the relations of its production, and forget, for a while, about food, clothing, automobiles, transistor radios” (774)

“If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the women being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it” (779)

“recognizing the mutual interdependence of sexuality, economics, and politics without underestimating the full significance of each in human society” (790)
Women on the Market, by Luce Irigaray

“Why are men not objects of exchange among women? It is because women’s bodies—through their use, consumption, and circulation—provide for the condition making social life and culture possible, although they remain an unknown “infrastructure” of the elaboration of that social life and culture” (799)

“In still other words: all the systems of exchange that organize patriarchal societies and all the modalities of productive work that are recognized, valued, and rewarded in these societies are men’s business. The production of women, signs, and commodities is always referred back to men (when a man buys a girl, he “pays” the father or the brother, not the mother . . .), and they always pass from one man to another, from one group of men to another. The work force is thus always assumed to be masculine, and “products” are objects to be used, objects of transaction among men alone” (800)
The Madwoman in the Attic, by Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar

"Specifically, as we will try to show here, a woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of "angel" and "monster" which male authors have generated for her" (812)
Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference, by Audre Lorde

“As women, we must root out internalized patterns of oppression within ourselves if we are to move beyond the most superficial aspects of social change. Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each other’s difference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles” (859)
We will now look at a Feminist critique of Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain” titled “The Great American Bitch” by Dolores Barracano Schmidt. While reading through this critique, notice how Schmidt reads Hemingway through an entirely different lens, allowing her to give a critique on the story paralleling feminist perspective.
FEMINIST THEORY/CRITICISM

• As you read through the essay by Dolores Barracano Schmidt, annotate for the following:
  • Areas where a clear Feminist approach is taken by Barracano Schmidt
  • Areas where you see possible bias by the writer
  • Points that Barracano Schmidt makes that you agree with
  • Points that Barracano Schmidt makes that you disagree with or find fault with
  • Areas that you are confused or have questions about

• After you finish reading, answer the following questions:
  1. How might the use of the female perspective of “Cat in the Rain” change your interpretation of the story?
  2. What does Barracano Schmidt claim is the representation of the woman?
  3. What are the main differences between the male and female roles in the story?
  4. Why is this woman who seemingly has everything a woman could want, dissatisfied with her life?
  5. What is the point of the de Beauvoir praying mantis metaphor? Why is this comparison made?
  6. Why were women during this time period still dissatisfied after achieving the right to vote?
  7. According to Barracano Schmidt, what needs to truly change before a woman can be satisfied with her life and feel equal?
  8. Do you agree or disagree with the wife from “Cat in the Rain” being classified as ‘an American Bitch’? Provide at least two specific examples from the text, which you should still have. If not, it is public domain on the web.
New Historicist Theory Introduction

- A simple definition of the new historicism is that it is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period.

- They are less fact- and event-oriented than historical critics used to be, perhaps because they have come to wonder whether the truth about what really happened can ever be purely or objectively known.

- They are less likely to see history as linear and progressive, as something developing toward the present, and they are also less likely to think of it in terms of specific eras, each with a definite, persistent, and consistent zeitgeist (spirit of the times). Hence they are unlikely to suggest that a literary text has a single or easily identifiable historical context.

- They have erased the line dividing historical and literary materials, showing not only that the production of one of William Shakespeare's historical plays was both a political act and a historical event, but also that the coronation of Elizabeth I was carried out with the same care for staging and symbol lavished on works of dramatic art.

- New historicists remind us that it is treacherous to reconstruct the past as it really was—rather than as we have been conditioned by our own place and time to believe that it was. And they know that the job is impossible for those who are unaware of that difficulty, insensitive to the bent or bias of their own historical vantage point. Thus, when new historicist critics describe a historical change, they are highly conscious of (and even likely to discuss) the theory of historical change that informs their account.

- They believe no historical event has a single cause; rather, each event is tied into a vast web of economic, social, and political factors.
What do New Historicism critics do?

- They juxtapose literary and non-literary texts, reading the former in the light of the latter.

- They try thereby to "defamiliarize" the canonical literary text, detaching it from the accumulated weight of previous literary scholarship and seeing it as if new.

- They focus attention (within both text and co-text) on issues of state power and how it is maintained, on patriarchal structures and their perpetuation, and on the process of colonization, with its accompanying ‘mind set’.

- They read all literature in context, through a historical lens.
The Country and the City, by Raymond Williams

“What is dramatized, under increasing pressure, in the actions of these novels, is the long process of choice between economic advantage and other ideas of value” (509)
Some Call it Fiction: On the Politics of Domesticity, by Nancy Armstrong

“The conventions to which I refer are many and various indeed, but all reinforce the assumption that history consists of economic or political events, as if these were essentially different from other cultural events. Some of us—a distinct minority, to be sure—feel that to proceed on this assumption is to brush aside most of the activities composing everyday life and so shrink the category of “the political” down to a very limited set of cultural practices” (567)

“More than that, I regard any model that places personal life in a separate sphere and that grants literature a secondary and passive role in political history as unconsciously sexist” (567-568)

“They demonstrate that the middle-class hegemony succeeded in part because it constructed separate historical narratives for self and society, family and factory, literature and history. They suggest that by maintaining these divisions within culture, liberal intellectuals continue to sanitize certain areas of culture—namely, the personal, domestic, and literary” (568)

“To subvert this process, I believe we must read fiction not as literature but as the history of gender differences and a means by which we have reproduced a class and culture specific form of consciousness” (581)
New Historicist Theory Primary Sources

- Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture, by Louis Montrose
  - “The writing and reading of texts, as well as the process by which they are circulated and categorized, analyzed and taught, are being reconstrued as historically determined and determining modes of cultural work” (584)
  - “At the same time, writing and reading are always historically and socially determinate events, performed in the world and upon the world by gendered individual and collective human agents” (588)
We will now look at a poem by William Blake titled “The Chimney Sweeper.” We will first read it for our initial reactions, then discuss the historical context and with a New Historicist perspective, see if it changes our interpretation of the text.
As you read the poem, annotate for the following:

- Summarize the plot of each stanza
- Underline any key words/phrases

Before you answer the adjacent questions, research one or more of the following elements found in the poem:

a) Chimney sweepers
b) William Blake, biographical information
c) Historical information regarding late 1700s, England, that you can relate to the poem.
d) Elements of Christianity/Christian Allusions that help reveal the true meaning of the poem.

After reading, answer the following questions:

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
2. Who is the audience? What word tells you this?
3. What does Tom Dacre dream of?
4. What do the coffins symbolize?
5. What does the river and sun symbolize?
6. Who has to do their duty according to the speaker?
Psychoanalytical Theory Introduction

- Psychoanalytic criticism originated in the work of Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who pioneered the technique of psychoanalysis. His theories are directly and indirectly concerned with the nature of the unconscious mind.

- Originally, literary works were read—sometimes unconvincingly—as fantasies that allowed authors to indulge repressed wishes, to protect themselves from deep-seated anxieties, or both.

- Later, psychoanalytic critics began to emphasize the ways in which authors create works that appeal to readers’ repressed wishes and fantasies.

- Much of the theory applies concepts of psychoanalysis or the study of psychology to an author, characters, or readers.

- Examples are ideas of the ego, id, and superego, the unconscious, repression, dissociation, and the uncanny.
What do Psychoanalytical critics do?

- They give central importance, in literary interpretation, to the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind. They associate the literary work’s ‘overt’ content with the former, and the ‘covert’ content with the latter, privileging the later as being what the work is ‘really’ about, and aiming to disentangle the two.

- Hence, they pay close attention to unconscious motives and feelings, whether these be (a) those of the author, or (b) those of the characters depicted in the work.

- They demonstrate the presence in the literary work of classic psychoanalytic symptoms, conditions or phases, such as the different states of emotional and sexual development of infants.

- They make large-scale applications of psychoanalytic concepts to literary history in general; for example, Harold Bloom’s book *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) sees the struggle for identity by each generation of poets, under the ‘threat’ of the greatness of its predecessors, as an enactment of the Oedipus complex.

- They identify a ‘psychic’ context for the literary work, at the expense of social or historical context, privileging the individual ‘psycho-drama’ above the ‘social drama’ of class conflict. The conflict between generations or siblings, or between competing desires within the same individual looms much larger than conflict between social classes, for instance.
“The ‘unconscious’ as he called it, is a repository of repressed desires, feelings, memories, and instinctual drives, many of which, according to Freud, have to do with sexuality and violence” (389).

“It is not a direct translation of the unconscious into symbols that ‘stand for’ unconscious meanings. Rather, literature displaces unconscious desires, drives, and motives into imagery that might bear no resemblance to its origin but that nonetheless permits it to achieve release or expression” (394).
“The subject of ‘bringing flowers’ recalled an anecdote which I had recently repeated to a circle of friends and which I had used as evidence in favor of my theory that forgetting is very often determined by an unconscious purpose and that it always enables one to deduce the secret intentions of the person who forgets” (397).

“We have introduced a new class of psychical material between the manifest content of dreams and the conclusions of our enquiry: namely, their latent content, or (as we say) the ‘dream-thoughts,’ arrived at by means of our procedure. It is from these dream-thoughts and not from a dream’s manifest content that we disentangle its meaning” (400).
On Narcissism, by Sigmund Freud

“The same impressions, experiences, impulses and desires that one man indulges or at least works over consciously will be rejected with the utmost indignation by another, or even stifled before they enter consciousness” (415).

The Uncanny, by Sigmund Freud

“This reference to the factor of repression enables us, furthermore, to understand Schelling’s definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light” (429).

Beyond the Pleasure Principle, by Sigmund Freud

“This is convincing proof that, even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind” (433).
We will now look at a psychoanalytic critique of Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* titled “A Psychoanalytic Attitude to The Great Gatsby” by Mojtaba Gholipour and Mina Sanahmadi. While reading through this critique, notice how the authors read Faulkner through an entirely different lens, allowing them to give a critique on the story paralleling a psychoanalytic perspective.
As you read through the essay by David Leverenz, annotate for the following:

- Underline the Thesis statement of the criticism
- Look up any/all words you do not know; there will be quite a few.
- Any evidence of a Freudian or Psychoanalytic perspective/claim made by Leverenz
- Criticism/commentary on Hamlet and sanity/insanity (so, you’re looking at the unconscious feelings/motives of the characters in Hamlet.)
- Points that the authors make that you agree/disagree with
- Areas that you are confused or have questions about. Write questions off to the side.

After you finish reading, answer the following questions:

- Where do you see discussion of Feminist theory? New Historicist Theory?
- Choose one of the many Freudian ideas regarding Hamlet’s character or any other character from the play. State the theory and agree or disagree; defend your response.
- Provide evidence for the theory that Hamlet is struggling with an “overwhelming interpersonal confusion” (Leverenz 292). After reading, do you agree or disagree with this assumption?
- According to Leverenz, how do various societal roles play into Hamlet’s “insanity”?
Narratology is the study of narrative structures. It is the study of how narratives make meaning, and what the basic mechanisms and procedures are which are common to all acts of story-telling. Narratology, then, is not the reading and interpretation of individual stories, but the attempt to study the nature of ‘story’ itself, as a concept and as a cultural and as a narrative.

This is a crucial distinction: the ‘story’ is the actual sequence of events as they happen, whereas the ‘plot’ may well begin somewhere in the middle of the chain of events, and may then backtrack, providing us with a ‘flashback’ which fills us in on things that happen earlier. The plot may also have elements which flash forward, hinting at events which will happen later. So the ‘plot’ is a version of the story which should not be taken literally.

Story vs Plot: Story = actual sequence of events. Plot = (‘discourse’) those events as they are ordered, presented and packaged. Including style, viewpoint, pace etc.
What do Narratologist Critics do?

- They look at individual narratives to pick out structures recurrent to all narratives.
- They focus on the teller and the telling rather than content.
- They use structures derived from sort narratives and apply to longer forms.
- They foreground action and structure rather than character and motive.
- They foreground affinities between narratives rather than look for a few unique highly regarded examples.
Introduction: The Implied Order: Structuralism, by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan

“That such myths, despite their heterogeneity and multiplicity, told the same kernel narratives. Those narratives tended to work to resolve contradictions in the culture . . . the tale’s (The Oedipus Myth) function is to provide a mediation to the contradiction between nature (sexuality) and culture (rule against incest) by forbidding natural sex between family members” (53-54).
The Structure of Narrative Transmission, by Seymour Chatman

“Direct presentation presumes a kind of ‘overhearing’ or ‘spying’ on the audience’s part; in mediated narration, on the other hand, the audience is directly addressed by a narrator. This is essentially the ancient distinction between mimesis and diegesis, or in modern terms between showing and telling” (97).

“The initial question, then, is whether a narrator is present, and if he is, how his presence is recognized and how strongly it is felt by the audience” (98)

“That it is essential not to confuse author and narrator is now a commonplace of modern criticism” (98)

The implied author: “He is ‘implied’ i.e., he is a construction or reconstruction by the reader, and he is not the narrator, but rather the man who invented the narrator (if there is one), in short, the man who stacked the cards in this particular way, who had these things happen to these people” (99)

“What makes a narrator unreliable is that his values diverge strikingly from that of the implied author’s; that is, ‘the norms of the work’ conflict with the view of the events and existents that the narrator is presenting, and we become suspicious of his sincerity or competence to tell the ‘truth’” (99)
Gerard Genette. Narrative Discourse (1972): Not about the content, but how it is presented

1. Is the basic narrative mode ‘memetic’ or ‘diegetic’?
   - Mimetic = dramatised. We ‘see’ the events.
   - Diegetic = reported. Summarised.
   Almost all prose mixes the two.

2. How is the narrative focalised?
   - external = outside the characters. What they say and do.
   - internal = how they think and feel.
   If there is a main POV character she is the focaliser/ reflector.
   - zero = internal focus on multiple characters. (Omniscient narrator)
Gerard Genette. Narrative Discourse (1972): Not about the content, but how it is presented

3. Who is telling the story?
Named characters. Also called ‘overt’, ‘dramatised’, ‘intrusive’.
These have subtypes:
   'heterodiegetic'. (‘other telling’) An outsider to the story being narrated.
   'homodiegetic'. (‘same telling’) A character in the story being told. eg Jane Eyre.
Omniscient narrators are 'heterodiegetic'.

4. How is time handled in the story?
   analeptic = ('back-take'). eg flashback
   prolepsis = ('fore-take'). eg flash forward. Also show in foreshadowing. eg spilt wine is proleptic of split blood later.

5. How is the story ‘packaged’?
Frame narratives (‘primary narratives’) contain within them embedded narratives (‘secondary narratives’ or in Genette’s terms ‘meta-narratives’). The primary narrative is just the one that comes first. Not usually the main narrative.
Frame narratives are also single-ended or double-ended. If single-ended the frame situation is not returned to at the end of the story.
Frames can be ‘intrusive’. The embedded tale can be interrupted by the frame situation.
We will now look at a Narratologist Critique of Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain” by Seymour Chapman titled "Soft Filters": Some Sunshine on "Cat in the Rain." This criticism discusses Hemingway’s in terms of an element of narrative, causing readers to understand the story through a different lens.
As you read through the essay by Seymour Chatman annotate for the following:

- Underline the Thesis statement of the criticism
- Any evidence of a Narratology perspective/claim made by Chatman
- Points that the author makes that you agree/disagree with
- Areas that you are confused or have questions about. Write questions off to the side.

After you finish reading, answer the following questions:

- What are the elements of Narratology that Chatman focuses on with “Cat in the Rain”?
- Why is the narrator’s role important to “Cat in the Rain”?
- What is the difference between the narrator and the woman’s role in the telling of events in “Cat in the Rain”? 
- How would the review be different if we were given more insight into George’s character and his perception of events as they happened? How is the dialogue between George and his wife evidence of Narratology?
Marxist Theory Introduction

- Marxist criticism is a type of criticism in which literary works are viewed as the product of work and whose practitioners emphasize the role of class and ideology as they reflect, propagate, and even challenge the prevailing social order.

- In The German Ideology, Marx and Engels discuss the relationship between the arts, politics, and basic economic reality in terms of a general social theory. Economics, they argue, provides the base, or infrastructure, of society, from which a superstructure consisting of law, politics, philosophy, religion, and art emerges.

- A novel written in a society in flux, for instance, might include an official, legitimate discourse, as well as one infiltrated by challenging comments.

- Some critics discuss the relationship between ideology and hegemony, the pervasive system of assumptions and values that shapes the perception of reality for people in a given culture.

- They also discuss how history enters a text, which in turn may alter history.
What do Marxist critics do?

- They make a division between the ‘overt’ (manifest or surface) and ‘covert’ (latent or hidden) content of a literary work and then relate the covert subject matter of the literary work to basic Marxist themes, such as class struggle or the progression of society through various historical stages, such as the transition from feudalism to industrial capitalism.

- Thus, the conflicts in *King Lear* might be read as being really about the conflict interest between the rising class (the bourgeoisie) and the falling class (the feudal overlords).

- They relate the context of the work to the social status of the author.

- They explain the nature of a whole literary genre in terms of the social period which ‘produced’ it.

- They claim that literary forms are themselves determined by political circumstance.
The German Ideology, by Karl Marx

- “By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life” (653)
- “What they are, therefore coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production” (653)
- “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force” (656)
Wage Labor and Capital, by Karl Marx

“And this life activity he sells to another person in order to secure the necessary means of subsistence. Thus his life-activity is for him only a means to enable him to exist. He works in order to live. He does not even reckon labor as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice of his life” (660)

“He belongs not to this or that capitalist but to the capitalist class, and, moreover, it is his business to dispose of himself, that is, to find a purchaser within this capitalist class . . .” (661)
Marxist Theory Primary Sources

- *Capital, by Karl Marx*
  - “Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer’s labor does not show itself except in the act of exchange” (668)
  - “All means of the development of production undergo a dialectical inversion so that they become a means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into torment” (680)
Marxist Theory Primary Sources

Capital, by Karl Marx

“'They deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the juggernaut of capital’” (680)

“'Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole’” (680)

“'Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him’” (681)
Hegemony, by Antonio Gramsci

“The “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental groups; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production” (673)

“The apparatus of state coercive power which “legally” enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent” either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed” (673)
Marxist Theory Practice

We will now look at a poem by Percy Shelley titled “A Song: Men of England.” We will first read it for our initial reactions, then we will look at it in terms of Marxist Theory and see if our perspective changes or our insights deepen.
As you read the poem, annotate for the following:

- Summarize the plot of each stanza
- Underline any key words/phrases

Before you answer the adjacent questions, research one or more of the following elements found in the poem:

a) Percy Bysshe Shelley biographical information.
b) Historical information regarding early-mid 1800s, England, that you can relate to the poem.

After reading, answer the following questions:

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
2. Who is the audience?
3. What questions does the speaker ask? Why?
4. What is the audience of the poem compared to? Why?
5. In the 6\textsuperscript{th} stanza, what advice is given?
6. There is a tone shift in the last two stanzas. What is the shift and what is the final message of the poem?
Queer theory was originally associated with the radical gay politics of ActUp, Outrage, and other groups which embraced “queer” as an identity label that pointed to a separatist, non-assimilationist politics.

As it has come to be understood in cultural theory, however, queer theory challenges either/or, essentialist notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality within the mainstream discourse.

It suggests an understanding of sexuality that emphasizes shifting boundaries, ambivalences, and cultural constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context.

"To queer" is to render “normal” sexuality as strange and unsettled, to challenge heterosexuality as a naturalized social-sexual norm and promote the notion of “non-straightness,” challenging the hegemony of "straight" ideology.

Queer theory focuses on "mismatches" between sex, gender and desire. Queer has been associated most prominently with bisexual, lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, intersex, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery.
What do Queer Theory critics do?

- Queer Theorists expose the ‘homophobia’ of mainstream literature and criticism.
- They foreground homosexual aspects of literature which has previously been glossed over,
- They analyze sex and gender beyond what is presented on a surface-level. They take on the assumption that nothing is as it seems
- They are politically minded and look at the “deviant” identities of characters and analyze the connection to methods of social control.
- Concerns itself with any and all forms of sexuality that are “queer” in the sense that “queer” means “odd, peculiar, out of ordinary”.
- It does not have to be limited to homosexuality, but can connect to behaviors that are gender-bending as well.
Introduction: Contingencies of Gender, by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan

“The path-breaking work of anthropologists like Gayle Rubin and historians like Alan Bray and Michel Foucault bore out the point that gender is variable: in history and between societies, there is variation between different ways of practicing sex and being one gender or another” (886)

“Christianity stands between the two dates or sites and probably has a great deal to do with how non-reproductive sexual practices became stigmatized over time” (886)

“The shift in name (Queer Theory) also indicates a shift in analytic strategy, for now gay and lesbian theorists began to explore the ‘queerness’ of supposedly ‘normal’ sexual culture” (887)
Sexual Transformations, by Gayle Rubin

“The modern sexual system contains sets of these sexual populations, stratified by the operation of an ideological and social hierarchy. Differences in social value create friction among these groups, who engage in political contests to alter or maintain their place in the ranking” (889)

“Homosexuality is the best example of this process of erotic speciation. Homosexual behavior is always present among humans. But in different societies and epochs it may be rewarded or punished, required or forbidden, a temporary experience or a life-long vocation” (889-890)
Queer Theory Primary Sources

- The History of Sexuality, by Michel Foucault
  - “There were two great systems conceived by the West for governing sex: the law of marriage and the order of desires” (894)

- Performative Acts and Gender Constitution, by Judith Butler
  - “When Simone de Beauvoir claims, ‘one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman,’ she is appropriating and reinterpreting this doctrine of constituting acts from the phenomenological tradition. In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (900)
  - “In opposition to theatrical or phenomenological models which take the gendered self to be prior of the actor, I will understand constituting acts not only as constituting the identity of the actor, but as constituting that identity as a compelling illusion, an object of belief” (901)
  - “To guarantee the reproduction of a given culture, various requirements, well-established in the anthropological literature of kinship, have instated sexual reproduction within the confines of a heterosexually-based system of marriage which requires the reproduction of human beings in certain gendered modes which, in effect, guarantee the eventual reproduction of that kinship system” (905).
We will now look at a summary and excerpt of a short story titled “The Beast in the Jungle” by Henry James. We will read them for our first impressions, and then use Queer Theory to examine different interpretations that veer from the accepted view.
As you read the summary and excerpt, annotate for the following:

- Traits of John Marcher
- Words with positive/negative connotations
- Words with more than one meaning

Before you answer the adjacent questions, research one or more of the following elements found in the poem:

a) Henry James, biographical information (He also wrote *Turn of the Screw*)

b) Historical information regarding early 1800s, America and/or England, that you can relate to the poem.

After reading, answer the following questions:

1. What is John Marcher afraid of?
2. What does he do because of this fear?
3. How does the narrator describe the other man in the cemetery?
4. What does Marcher notice about him?
5. How does Marcher compare the stranger with himself?
6. What does Marcher think he missed out on?