

10. List of film theories

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The following list of film theories has been adapted from *Understanding Film Theory*. Etherington-Wright, C and Doughty, R. 2011. London, UK. Palgrave Macmillan.

Theory	Brief definition
Audience research and reception	This theory is widely used to characterize the wave of audience research that occurred within communications and cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s. It uses qualitative and ethnographic methods of research and has tended to be concerned with exploring the active choices, uses and interpretations made of media materials by their consumers. ⁴¹
Auteur theory	Auteur theory holds that a film reflects the director's personal creative vision, as if they were the primary "auteur" (the French word for "author"). In spite of—and sometimes even because of—the production of the film as part of an industrial process, the auteur's creative voice is distinct enough to shine through studio interference and the collective process. ⁴²
Feminism	Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish and achieve equal political, economic, personal and social rights for women. ⁴³
Formalism	Formalist film theory is a theory of film study that is focused on the formal, or technical, elements of a film: the lighting; scoring; sound and set design; use of colour; shot composition; editing. It is a major theory of film study today. ⁴⁴
Genre theory	Genre theory examines the structural elements that combine in the telling of a story and finds patterns in collections of stories. When these elements (or semiotic codes) begin to carry inherent information, a genre emerges. The study of genre directly contrasts with auteur theory, which privileges the director's role in crafting a movie. ⁴⁵
Marxism	A complex theoretical approach that builds upon the economic and cultural ideas of Marx. Marxist film theory is often paired with other theoretical approaches such as psychoanalysis, structuralism and post-structuralism, and feminism.
Masculinity	In film studies, as in other disciplines and in cultures at large, masculinity remains a contested category, tied not only to dominant social values but also to marginal groups and practices. Masculinity studies has a short history, despite the fact that most world cultures are founded on patriarchy. ⁴⁶
Post-colonial and transnational cinemas	Transnational cinema is a developing concept within film studies that encompasses a range of theories relating to the effects of globalization upon the cultural and economic aspects of film. It incorporates the debates and influences of post-nationalism, post-colonialism, consumerism and Third Cinema, among many other topics. ⁴⁷

Theory	Brief definition
Postmodernism	Postmodernist film attempts to subvert the mainstream conventions of narrative structure and characterization, and tests the audience's suspension of disbelief. ⁴⁸
Psychoanalysis	Psychoanalytical film theory is a school of academic film criticism that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. It is closely allied with critical theory and analyses films from the perspective of psychoanalysis, generally the works of Jacques Lacan. ⁴⁹
Queer theory	Queer theory emerged from departments of literature, film, rhetoric and critical studies in universities in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe during the early 1990s. Queer theorizing, for many, aims at disrupting and politicizing all presumed relations between and among sex, gender, bodies, sexuality and desire. ⁵⁰
Race and ethnicity	Critical race theory has proven race to be a construction, yet racism remains a part of lived experience, and racial stereotypes frequently recur even in an era marked by discourses of race transcendence and "post-racial" cultural celebration. Hollywood can be read as an ethnographer, reinforcing the hegemony of whiteness on screen by producing experiences of the black racial types it creates. ⁵¹
Realism	Realism is the artistic attempt to recreate life as it is in the context of an artistic medium. The artist's function is to report and describe what he or she sees as accurately and honestly as possible. Realism began as an artistic movement in the 18th century in Europe and America. It was a revolt against the conventions of the classic view of art, which suggested that life was more rational and orderly than it really is. ⁵²
Stars	Star studies emerged out of literary criticism. The emphasis is on the actor, their ability to inhabit a role and their place within the studio system. Celebrities sell films. Within the industry, actors function as high-value commodities to encourage producers and financiers to back film projects. Equally, stars are instrumental in attracting an audience. ⁵³
Structuralism and post-structuralism	Structuralism and post-structuralism are theoretical attitudes arising out of film studies' "linguistic turn"—the attempt to reconceptualize cinema using language as an explanatory paradigm—in the 1960s and 1970s. The structuralist movement's scientific approach to criticism was very appealing to film theorists looking to move beyond "film appreciation". Post-structuralism both refined and overturned structuralist assumptions; where the structuralist impulse was to erect systems, post-structuralists looked for gaps and ruptures therein. ⁵⁴

⁴¹ Hall, S. "Encoding/Decoding." Durham, Meenakshi G. and Kellner, Douglas M. 2012. *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Malden, UK. Wiley-Blackwell.

⁴² "Auteur theory". Web. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auteur_theory. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁴³ Beasley, Chris. 1999. *What is Feminism?: An Introduction to Feminist Theory*. New York, NY, USA. Sage. Pp. 3–11.

⁴⁴ "Formalist film theory". Web. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formalist_film_theory. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁴⁵ Genre studies. Web. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁴⁶ "Masculinity in Film". Web. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0048.xml>. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁴⁷ "Transnational cinema". Web. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transnational_cinema. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁴⁸ Susan Hopkins. Spring 1995. "Generation Pulp". *Youth Studies Australia*. Vol 14, issue 2. Pp 14–19.

⁴⁹ "Psychoanalytical film theory". Web. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychoanalytical_film_theory. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁵⁰ "Queer Theory". Web. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0185.xml>. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁵¹ "Race and Cinema". Web. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0127.xml>. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁵² "Realism". Web. <http://faculty.salisbury.edu/~axsharma/mywebs/efp/realism.htm>. Accessed 25 May 2016.

⁵³ Etherington-Wright, C and Doughty, R. 2011. *Understanding Film Theory*. New York, NY, USA. Palgrave Macmillan. Pp213–215.

⁵⁴ "Structuralism and poststructuralism". Web. <http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Romantic-Comedy-Yugoslavia/Structuralism-and-Poststructuralism.html>. Accessed 25 May 2016.