

Criticism and Critical Theory (Area IX)

The list of “issues” below reflects the typical key terms found in standard anthologies of theory and criticism, such as the [*Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*](#) or Blackwell’s [*Literary Theory: An Anthology*](#). These issues reflect debates between critics and theorists over time. Students should be familiar with those critics and theorists who shaped the conversations on the issues of most concern to the field. “Issues” refract and reflect debate among multiple critics; who are the central figures debating the “issues” and how do those conversations relate to one another? Students are encouraged to read widely around in anthologies of literary theory and criticism—study the table of contents, the headnotes to various theorists, etc.—in order to gain a solid overview of important texts and figures related to key issues. Students may also wish to consult introductory guides to literary theory and criticism, including [*The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*](#), [*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*](#) (Jonathan Culler), [*Literary Theory and Criticism: An Introduction*](#) (Anne H. Stevens), or [*Literary Theory: An Introduction*](#) (Terry Eagleton) to gain familiarity with the broader field. Handbooks such as *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (M.H. Abrams) are also helpful for defining the terms of the field. Students should additionally be prepared to speak to the differences between literary criticism, literary theory, and critical theory.

Issues:

Authorship	Linguistic Turn
Battle of the Books	Mimesis
Canon	Modernism/Postmodernism
Classicism/Romanticism	Narratology
Defense of Poetry	Postcolonialism
Fantasy/Imagination	Realism
Gender	Representation
Genre	Rhetoric
Ideology	Self-expression
Influence	Social Function of Art
Intentionality	Structuralism and/or Organic Form
Interpretation	

This area exam asks you to develop a strong foundational knowledge of literary criticism and critical theory. Therefore, while the texts included in the list below provide a starting point for acquiring both breadth and depth in the field, this list is not exhaustive. When the item in the list mentions “selections,” these are generally keyed to the excerpts included in the second edition of the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2010). The third edition (2018) is more contemporary and reflects more current trends, but both are useful (remember, these comments are meant to guide your study and preparation to help you to accomplish competency in the field). As the *Graduate Student Handbook* states: “These reading lists serve to guide students toward essential readings. Students are expected to read the works on the lists and demonstrate their knowledge of those works in the written and, if required, oral components of their examinations. In writing answers to exam questions, a student may discuss texts not appearing on an exam list if doing so would effectively supplement a discussion of those that are; however, students must in all cases demonstrate competency in those texts generally accepted as defining the field” (17).

Texts:

Plato	Selections from <i>The Republic</i> (Books II, III, X, especially)
Aristotle	<i>Poetics</i>
Horace	“Art of Poetry”
Boccaccio	Selections from <i>Life of Dante</i> and <i>Genealogy of the Gentile Gods</i>

Sidney, Sir Philip	<i>An Apology for Poetry</i>
Dryden, John	“An Essay of Dramatic Poesy”
Johnson, Samuel	“Preface to Shakespeare,” selections from <i>Lives of the Poets</i> (especially, <i>Lives of Cowley, Pope, Gray</i>)
Coleridge, S. T.	<i>Biographia Literaria</i>
Shelley, Percy Bysshe	“A Defence of Poetry”
Arnold, Matthew	“Preface to <i>Poems</i> ,” “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time”
Eliot, T. S.	“Tradition and the Individual Talent,” “The Metaphysical Poets”
Woolf, Virginia	<i>A Room of One’s Own</i>
Frye, Northrop	<i>Anatomy of Criticism</i>
Booth, Wayne C.	<i>The Rhetoric of Fiction</i>
Bakhtin, Mikhail	<i>The Dialogic Imagination</i>
Cixous, Helene	“The Laugh of the Medusa”
Williams, Raymond	<i>Culture and Society</i>
Foucault, Michel	“Discourse on Language” and “What Is an Author?”
Gates, Henry Louis	<i>The Signifying Monkey</i>
Barthes, Roland	“Death of the Author”
Derrida, Jacques	“Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”
Kristeva, Julia	“Women’s Time”
Lacan, Jacques	“The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience”
Said, Edward	<i>Orientalism</i>