This course is designed to provide an introduction to contemporary debates in literary criticism and aesthetic theory. Of central concern will be the concept of theory, how we understand its purpose, and what we render legible as modes of theorizing and critique within contemporary studies of literature. Topics include poetics, literary semantics, translation, narratology, representation, language and epistemology, interpretation, and the history of literary theory. We will also trace the emergence of aesthetic philosophy and literary criticism as centrally concerned with both the realms of meaning and sense, on the one hand, and the political and the ethical, on the other, which we will explore in relationship to contemporary trends in post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, Marxist philosophy, phenomenology, postcolonialism, feminist and queer theory, critical race studies, as well as the recent ‘turn’ to affect.

Professor Neetu Khanna
neetukha@usc.edu  THH 156T