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Bringing his perennially popular course to the page, Yale University Professor Paul H. Fry offers in this welcome book a guided tour of the main trends in twentieth-century literary theory. At the core of the book's discussion is a series of underlying questions: What is literature, how is it produced, how can it be understood, and what is its purpose?

Fry engages with the major themes and strands in twentieth-century literary theory, among them hermeneutics, modes of formalism, semiotics and Structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalytic approaches, Marxist and historicist approaches, theories of social identity, Neo-pragmatism and theory. By incorporating philosophical and social perspectives to connect these many trends, the author offers readers a coherent overall context for a deeper and richer reading of literature.