

# Introduction to Queer Studies: How to Read Theory: Some Tips

*(Crowdsourced from Krista's fantastic friends)*

## What is theory?

- 1) Theoretical arguments are a conversation – they are ongoing. Nobody just comes up with a theory on their own – they're responding to a conversation that has been happening for years.
- 2) Theory is an argument – these authors are not describing a square, they are making an argument about something about the world.

## How to approach reading theory

- 1) Be okay with and get comfortable with not understanding something the first time. Read past what you don't understand and try to find something that you *do* understand.
- 2) Even if you finish reading something and feel like you don't really get it, that's OK. It's in your brain, we will work through it together. Some of these ideas take time to gel.
- 3) When possible, read theory twice. The first read through is for tone and intent, the second catches details and will make some places that weren't clear the first time much clearer.

## How to take away more from reading theory

- 1) Know what the article's main argument/thesis is. Have it identified and highlight or underline it. **KEEP THIS AVAILABLE** as you read the rest – it helps orient you to what they're doing.
- 2) When you get to the end of a subsection (introduction/subsections of articles that have them identified), see if you can summarize it in 1-2 sentences.
- 3) Be aware of the other theorists that the author is using/arguing against - even if you don't know who they are, common threads will appear. Some suggest putting a square around these names when they're used, some highlight in a different color, some write the names in an ongoing list on the first page of the article or inside of the book.
- 4) Try to discuss theory with someone else, even if it's just "Hey, I just read this article and it's weird and I THINK it's about X and Y." You can (and should!) use Carmen to do this with your classmates before or after we discuss in class.
- 5) **IF YOU GET STUCK:** For REALLY hard articles, try reading through and just highlighting every sentence that you DO understand, read through only reading those sentences, then try to read the article again.
- 6) Try to relate an article to another article from the class – it will help both of them make more sense and will help you see how conversations between theories happen.
- 7) Ask yourself whose voice is missing from this conversation. Why is it missing?