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An Introductory Guide To Post-Structuralism And Postmodernism



Synopsis

Madan Sarup has now revised his accessible and popular introduction to post-structuralist and postmodern theory. A new introductory section discusses the meaning of such concepts as modernity, postmodernity, modernization, modernism, and postmodernism. A section on feminist criticism of Lacan and Foucault has been added, together with a new chapter on French feminist theory focusing on the work of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva. The chapter on postmodernism has been significantly expanded to include a discussion of Lyotard's language games and his use of the category "sublime." This chapter ends with a discussion of the relationship between feminism and postmodernism. A further chapter has been added on the work of Jean Baudrillard, a cult figure on the current postmodernist scene, whose ideas have attained a wide currency. The chapter includes a new section on postmodern cultural practices as revealed in architecture, TV, video, and film. Suggestions for further reading are now listed at the end of each chapter and are upgraded and annotated. In tracing the impact of post-structuralist thought not only on literary criticism but on such disciplines as philosophy, politics, psychoanalysis, the social sciences, and art, this book will be essential reading for those who want a clear and incisive introduction to the theories that continue to have widespread influence.

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Customer Reviews

Sarup's book gives an excellent comprehensive introduction to two of the most prevalent theories/philosophies of literary and cultural criticism. Poststructuralism and Postmodernism are not

easy concepts to get a grip on, but Sarup's book will help anyone interested. It is a necessity for anyone who wants to better understand the culture that we all participate in every day. The book outlines the key concepts of the major thinkers of poststructuralism (Derrida, Barthes, Lacan, Foucault) and postmodernism (Lyotard, Baudrillard, Jameson). It deals with concepts such as deconstruction, psychoanalysis, the relationship between power and history, hyperreality, etc. I recommend it for any student of literature as well as anyone interested in the increasingly popular field of cultural criticism.

The field of cultural criticism can be difficult to approach. Madan Sarup's book provides exactly what the title states, an excellent introduction to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism. His coverage of the critics and philosophers who espouse these schools of thought serve as a solid foundation for further studies. His comparisons of the theories of different authors was especially helpful, as was his treatment of the feminist critics, who seem to be often overlooked.

I first used Sarup's guide in my early days at university and, at the time, thought this a concise, lucid and accessible introductory text. Later, after coming to grips with the seminal works of the thinkers in Sarup's guide, I realised just how much was taken and used from their texts without any direct references or acknowledgement! I also feel however that sometimes Sarup's prejudices showed, in that certain thinkers and "thought" were given less attention than others according to his own discretion of who was significant and important in the academic hierarchy! His reading of Derrida is suspect, here it would be better to get your hands on "Deconstruction" by Christopher Norris as a primer to this essential thinker. Another gripe is the section on Michel Foucault! This is just not good enough. The ramifications of Foucault's work (especially with regard to feminisms, such as the works of Judith Butler and Susan Bordo, and David Halperin's text on Foucault and queer theory, "Saint Foucault"), are still being felt, as his genealogical and archaeological investigations of power and knowledge, subvert and undermine hegemonies and discourses as we know them. This said, and all-in-all, Sarup offers a fairly comprehensive guide, albeit "very" introductory, of most of the thinkers and thought synonymous with postmodernism and post-structuralism.

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