

Call for Papers

OUTSIDE THE FRAME OF THEORY

June 23-24, 2017

University of Freiburg

In the middle of the 20th century, Heidegger famously acknowledged that the age of systematic philosophy has come to an end. In critical theory, the same bell has been prematurely tolling for the past few decades. The decline of theory in the 1990s started not long after the age of high theory in the preceding two decades. Since then, philosophers and literary scholars have been discussing the “end of theory”—some celebrating it, some lamenting it, and others denying it. Jonathan Culler begins his book, *The Literary in Theory* with: “Theory is dead, we are told.” While there seems to be a consensus building that the dominance of theory is waning, the popularity of theorizing the end of theory within academia can itself be taken as a sign that theory has not quite left us yet. Titles such as *Theory after Theory*, *What is Left of Theory*, and *After Theory* denote this trend. Nevertheless, the age of systematic theory—at least its monolithic purchase upon the intellectual world—has passed its peak. The aim of this conference is to explore the avenues that this rupture opens. One definite trend that can be observed is an enthusiasm for an Aristotelian turn to the “work” itself, following the Platonizing moralism of ‘theory’. Rita Felski’s *Limits of Critique* is an example of this growing tendency. Whether by close-reading, ekphrasis, or hermeneutics, there is a powerful inclination to return art to a place of centrality in literary analysis. The purpose of this conference is to explore the opportunities for new ideas of engagement—whether by resurrecting older modes of reading or by adopting new modes—that this uniquely uncertain moment facilitates.

Apply if

- You are working on a topic related to the crisis surrounding theory, or on whether it is possible to ever step out of theory in a broad sense.
- You have avoided the following clichés in your methodology: neatly fitting your text into a theory, suggesting that your text neatly anticipates a theory, distancing your text by deconstructing it, etc., and want to explore what drove you to do so.
- You have done any of the preceding things and found that the method was inadequate, that your text emerged from any attempts to pin it down, and are interested in diagnosing the causes.
- You have used a method that foregrounds the work of art, and wish to talk about the significance of such an undertaking (e.g. close-reading, minimal reading, hermeneutics, ekphrasis, etc.).

We welcome contributions from graduate students, post-docs, academics, and scholars outside university. Selected papers will be considered for publication in a collection.

Send us (outsidetheory@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de) your abstracts (250-500 words) and a short biography (100 words) or CV by 25 April, at the latest. We will send you a confirmation email after receiving your submission.

We will be able to secure funding for travelling and accommodation fees for professors within Europe. A bursary will be available for the best graduate applicant to assist with travelling and accommodation fees. Please indicate in your email if you would like to apply for the bursary.

Applicants should expect to be notified about the results by mid-May.

Find out more on our website:
<https://outsidetheory.jimdo.com/>

