

**Call for Papers:**

Counterfactuality in Literature and Literary Theory  
Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The “School of Language and Literature” at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) invites papers on “Counterfactuality in Literature and Literary Theory” for an interdisciplinary conference on “Counterfactual Thinking / Counterfactual Writing”.

The conference will focus on counterfactual thinking as both an object and a method of study, exploring the potential of the concept of the counterfactual for interdisciplinary work by bringing together experts from a wide range of disciplines, such as psychology, linguistics, philosophy, history and political science. What is more, counterfactuality has a long tradition in literature and the arts. For centuries fictional characters and narrators have engaged in the all-too-human practice of dwelling on what could or might have been. Literary criticism, however, has only just begun to explore the phenomenon and its epistemological and cultural repercussions. While there has been recent work on the history of counterfactual thinking for British literature, investigations of other literary cultures are still lacking. In similar fashion, critics have only recently turned to the genre of alternate history that projects counterfactual courses of history, imagining, for example, how the Reformation fails or the Nazis win World War II.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Counterfactual thinking in literary texts (characters and/or narrators)
- Theorizing counterfactuality (e.g. possible-worlds theory)
- Counterfactuality as a poetic strategy
- Cultural functions of counterfactuality in literature
- Counterfactual plot patterns (forms, functions, literary historical developments)
- Biographical and historical counterfactuals
- Counterfactuality and genre (e.g. alternate histories)
- Counterfactuality in the digital media

We especially invite papers that offer a broad perspective on the status and functions of counterfactuality in literature, possibly in combination with a paradigmatic textual analysis.

Please send your 1-page abstract for a 30-minute presentation to: [michael.butter@frias.uni-freiburg](mailto:michael.butter@frias.uni-freiburg).

For further information, please visit our conference site at [http://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/lang\\_and\\_lit/veranstaltungen/conterfactual-lili](http://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/lang_and_lit/veranstaltungen/conterfactual-lili) or contact one of the organizers.

**Deadline:** October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Contact:**

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