

# Literature and Justice

COLT 385, Class #22045R, Fall 2008, Mon and Wed, 12:00-1:15, THH 215



Nunzio LaSpina, "Justice is blind" (1932)

Who holds the keys to justice in our world? Is it politicians and philosophers? Or writers and readers who construct stories of injustice? This course examines autobiography and fiction (1950-2007) about individual and collective experiences of injustice due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, religious intolerance, and immigration, in Cuba [Barnet, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*], France-Senegal [Sembene, *Black Docker*] Guatemala [Burgos-Debray, *I Rigoberta Menchu*] India [Divakaruni, *Arranged Marriage*], [Khadra, *The Swallows of Kabul*], Eastern Europe [Appelfeld, *Tzili: Story of a Life*], Italy [Levi, *If This Is a Man*], Palestine [Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah* & Khoury, *Gate of the Sun*] and Israel [Khadra, *The Attack*], Somalia [Hirsi Ali, *Infidel*] and the U.S. [Wright, *Native Son*].

We'll link these personal literary voices to political philosophers who theorize about achieving justice in multicultural societies. We'll discuss human rights and other international criteria for justice in relation to the literary dynamics of empathy. We'll compare models of justice based on **redistribution** of wealth and power to models based on the need of subaltern individuals and groups for **recognition** of their worth. You'll develop critical abilities to identify and analyze ways literature raises questions about human rights, personhood, gender, and ideological values within democracy, liberalism, feminism, Zionism, & Islam.

COLT L/M/CT Track: This is a Critical Thought Concentration Course.

Global Cultures: This course is an option for the Global Cultures Track of the COLT Minor.

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