This course explores a series of interlocking questions about the role literature might play as a force for social justice on a global scale. Our literary sources include autobiography, memoir, fiction, and journalism from countries and regions like Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine, East Africa, South Africa, Europe, and Latin America. We will also enrich our literary readings with critical thinking about justice in fields like political and moral philosophy, political science, and media studies. The interlocking questions include: (1) How do we recognize injustice when we witness it? What does it mean to develop a sense of justice? (2) How should we evaluate the stories of those who claim they suffer an injustice? Should the criteria we apply be objective or subjective—or a both? (3) What is the moral and epistemological status of the survivors who bear witness to injustice and present themselves as truth-speakers? Does their speech possess a particular political or moral authority? How similar are their discourses to those of trauma survivors? (4) When we witness an account of injustice, should we feel morally obliged to the victims or survivors? If yes, how can we understand the moral components of that obligation and enact it? (5) What do the theories of justice by moral philosophers have to teach us about justice and injustice? Can they help improve our sense of justice? Can they speak authoritatively about both justice and the experience of injustice?

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

Faith49, “All shall be equal before the law”, Capetown, South Africa