How does literary art get involved in politics? What is the border between propaganda and art? This class examines moments when writers seem not only to represent politically charged topics and themes, but to have a part in bringing about political change. We’ll look at three major case studies when literature seemed to intervene in politics: 19th century Russia, the midcentury American Civil Rights struggle, and the 70s-80s antiapartheid struggle in South Africa.

It’s not always easy for writers to see how to put their skills to political use: in each case, literary debates flourished about what the role of art in society was. Revolutionaries in 19th century Russia suggested that making boots was more useful than making art; African-American writers at midcentury argued over whether great art was intrinsically protest; and writers in South Africa veered between journalistic realism and global aesthetic ambition. Historically even the most politically engaged writers have struggled to see art and protest as compatible aims—yet the history formed in these moments suggests that they might be inextricable.

UNIT ONE: THE 1860s, RUSSIA

Week 1

M 8 Jan
Introductory; read excerpts from Dostoevsky, Baldwin on handout.

W 10 Jan
Begin Fathers and Sons.

Week 2

M 15 Jan: MLK DAY, NO CLASS

W 17 Jan
Finish Fathers and Sons
Chernyshevsky, What is to be Done? (1862), excerpts.
Excerpt, Lenin, What is to be Done?

Week 3

M 22 Jan
Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground, complete.
Excerpts from *Letters* and *The Diary of a Writer*.

W 24 Jan
Finish *Notes from Underground*.
Discuss papers.

**Friday:**
**Essay #1 due.**

**UNIT TWO: CIVIL RIGHTS, USA**

**Week 4**

M 29 Jan
James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel” and “Many Thousands Gone”
Irving Howe, “Black Boys and Native Sons”
Ralph Ellison, “The World and the Jug”

W 31 Jan
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, beginning
Richard Wright, “The Man Who Lived Underground”

**Week 5**

M 5 Feb
Continue: *Invisible Man*

W 7 Feb
Continue: *Invisible Man*
Excerpt, Ellison interview.

**Week 6**

M 12 Feb
*Invisible Man*, complete
Gwendolyn Brooks, selected poems.

W 14 Feb
Eldridge Cleaver, “On Becoming” and “Soul on Ice”
Excerpts, speeches by Malcolm X

**Week 7**
M 19 Feb: Presidents' Day, no class

W 21 Feb:

**Friday:**
*Essay #2 due.*

**UNIT THREE: AGAINST APARTHEID, SOUTH AFRICA**

**Week 8**

M 26 Feb
Nelson Mandela, Rivonia Trial speech
Essays by André Brink and J. M. Coetzee; Leon de Kock’s eulogy for Brink

W 28 Feb
Miriam Tlali, *Amandla* (beginning)

**Week 9**

M 5 March
*Amandla*, conclusion

W 7 March
Nadine Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*, beginning

**Week 10**

M 12 March
*Burger’s Daughter*, conclusion

W 14 March
Review.

**Essay #3 due Monday after classes end.**

**Required books:**
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (0679732764)
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* (067973452X)
Nadine Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter* (0140055932)
Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons* (0393927970)
NB: Miriam Tlali’s *Amandla* is currently listed on the syllabus; however, it may be unavailable at a reasonable price, in which case a different book (Alex La Guma, *In the Fog of the Season’s End*) will be substituted. Do not purchase either for now. Alternate editions are acceptable for Ellison, Gordimer, and Malcolm X. Please use the specified editions of Dostoevsky and Turgenev.

**Essay #1: Art v. Politics?**
Why do writers and revolutionaries in 19th century Russia persistently describe art and politics as opposing values? How do examples of politically-engaged art question or reinforce this tension?

**Essay #2: Art as politics?**
How is writing a protest tactic? What, for the midcentury African-American writers we’ve examined, are the strengths and weaknesses of literary genres in bringing about change for their communities?

**Essay #3: Revolutionary Reading**
Creating political change through art requires thinking about the diverse potential audiences of literature: how did white and black South African writers use literary form to reach—and create—the audiences where their political interventions would be effective?

**In-Class Requirements:**
Students taking this class for 3 units may write only 2 essays (skipping one of their choice). All students must do all readings and participate fully in discussions.

No computers in class. Tablets *without a keyboard* are OK. (Multiple studies show that the process of taking handwritten notes is better for comprehension and retention of material!)

Prompt, prepared, and participatory attendance is required; class discussions are the primary medium by which we will develop close reading skills and sharpen critical thinking. Absences or regular silence in class will affect your participation grade. Up to one absence in the quarter, with advance notice, can be made up through writing a very short response to the readings. 3 or more absences will result in a lowering of the overall grade for the course.

**Essay Requirements:**
All essays are due by e-mail to bronstein@stanford.edu at 6 PM on the listed due dates. Please submit your paper as a Word document or PDF (no Pages or google docs). Late papers will drop a third of a letter grade (e.g., from A to A-) for each day late.

You are each entitled to ONE essay extension (no questions asked), provided you make your request more than 48 hours in advance of the relevant deadline. The extension will be for no more than three days (e.g., Friday to Monday, Monday to
Thursday). I do not grant extensions, barring documented emergencies, if you ask less than 48 hours before a deadline.

Additionally....
Feel free to drop by my office hours without an appointment (Mondays 3.30-5.15, Margaret Jacks Hall room 321). If you can't make those times, let me know and I'd be glad to work out another time. Office hours have diverse purposes: you don't need to come in only if you're struggling. You can come to discuss an upcoming assignment, to talk about something that interested you in the reading that we didn't get to in class, to talk about something said in class that you didn't like, or to talk about any topics in the course that you've become interested in beyond the reading material.

Grading Breakdown:
5 Units:
3 Essays: 25% each
Participation and attendance: 15%
In class assignments, short reading responses: 10%
3 Units:
2 essays: 35% each
Participation and Attendance: 15%
In class assignments, short reading responses: 15%

Ways Course Goals:
Aesthetic and Interpretive Inquiry
In this class, you will:
- encounter and respond to major works of world literature, and interpret your responses both in their original cultural context and in their transformation and reception around the world
- learn to close read literary form and to read for the political contexts of literature
- analyze a variety of different theories about the relationship between art and politics, and build arguments of your own about their relative merits
- discern the underlying assumptions that give rise to different artistic and cultural practices, and examine what happens when artists seek to change them
- look at three very different, yet extremely cohesive, traditions of literary-political conversation and debate, and the works that resulted
- understand the ways literary art responds to persistent problems of inequality and violence

Engaging Diversity
In this class, you will:
- examine the ways in which economic and racial inequality is perpetuated even within revolutionary movements seeking to challenge it
- look at the ways literary traditions from three nations responded to the growing presence of more diverse voices
- learn about three moments in which artists and activists across racial, economic, or cultural boundaries sought to collaborate for change, with mixed results
- look at the ways privileged authors have sought to use their position to bring about change, and the ways outsider writers found ways into positions of influence, as well as the history of censorship of political writing in multiple contexts
- examine the success and failures of writers’ efforts to use their art to change both popular understanding of disadvantaged groups and bring about economic reform
**Students with Documented Disabilities**
Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: [http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae](http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae)).

**Honor Code**
The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading.
2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

**Course Material Support**
Stanford University and its faculty are committed to ensuring that all courses are financially accessible to all students. If you are an undergraduate who needs assistance with the cost of course textbooks, supplies, materials and/or fees, you are welcome to ask the Diversity & First-Gen Office for assistance by completing their questionnaire on course textbooks & supplies: [http://tinyurl.com/jpqbarn](http://tinyurl.com/jpqbarn) or by contacting Joseph Brown, the Associate Director of the Diversity and First-Gen Office ([jlbrown@stanford.edu](mailto:jlbrown@stanford.edu); Old Union Room 207). Dr. Brown is available to connect you with resources and support