

BANNED BOOKS

Instructor: [Tamás Scheibner](#)

Institute of Cultural Studies and Hungarian Literature

Hours: Wednesday, 12.00 – 13.30

Spring 2020/2021

Code: BBN-ERA-091, BMA-ERAD-091

Room: A/322

On what grounds do books get banned, censored, challenged? What factors make them such dangerous objects that virtually all cultures across the globe have established some sort of censorship? This course explores tabooed, forbidden, transgressive and provocative fictional and non-fictional literature in a variety of historical and contemporary contexts from the United States to Latin America and from Africa to the Soviet Union and its satellite states (including Hungary), in particular.



We will read and analyze 20th century literature that provoked profound controversy, were censored or silenced altogether, leaving some to be subsequently circulated underground. We will consider issues of intellectual and artistic freedom, their role in society, freedom of speech and techniques of censorship, and how power relates to literature in various political and moral regimes. This inquiry closely relates to pressing contemporary dilemmas, since the question what one might assign as reading and discuss in class in secondary and higher education fuels heated debates today. How do we understand canonization in a society with multiple and often conflicting social and cultural values? Are there any texts that we should keep out of sight of children or adults? If not, why, and if yes, on what grounds could such a consensus be established? How does a text's status in a given cultural system influences its reception?

By confronting such questions, students will develop skills to work across a variety of cultural contexts, and will acquire a nuanced understanding of historical contexts and key concepts central to issues of canonization, censorship, free speech and human rights. They will get practice in articulating and publicly discussing their critical opinion in a multicultural environment.