COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the role and relevance of “winner” and “loser” as identities and concepts in American culture. We explore questions about what defines someone as a “winner” or a “loser” and the extent to which, and means by which, those labels can be revised or replaced. Through close reading, analytical writing, and online discussion forums we will work together to develop an understanding of the unique way that American culture reifies these identities as measures of an individual’s value and potential.

Some of the broad thematic questions guiding this course are:

- How has American literature expressed the experiences and effects of winning and losing? What moral, ethical, ideological, or practical lessons are we supposed to learn from these representations?
- Who are the winners and losers of American history and/or present-day? What can we learn from investigating their identities and experiences through the specific lens of this rhetoric of victory and defeat, winner and loser?
- To what extent has the American experience been defined by “winning”? What does it take to be a “winner” versus simply someone who has won something? Is the opposite of winning (necessarily) losing?
- To what extent has the American experience been defined by “losing”? What does it take to be a “loser” versus simply a person who has lost something? Is the opposite of losing (necessarily) winning?
- What moral weight do winning and losing carry in American culture? Has this changed over time? Why or why not?

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

When you finish the course, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the texts under study by being able to review their plots effectively, identifying the main issues and the most relevant historical and critical contexts;
- Discuss the literary texts under study intelligently and knowledgeably with peers;
- Analyze (close-read) the texts with a view to forming and supporting arguments about them;
- Formulate thoughtful and intellectually provocative questions and arguments based on close reading;
- Write short critical analyses of literary texts (that is, present arguments and support them with evidence gathered from close reading).
REQUIRED TEXTS:

You should purchase, rent, or borrow books from the library for the duration of the course. Please be sure to get the specific editions listed below (search online by ISBN). This will ensure that pagination is consistent across all of our texts so that we can all easily reference page numbers throughout the course.

- *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (ISBN 9780439023528)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There is no way to measure “attendance” in an online course; what counts is your active participation in every task and assignment, and the submission of various required pieces of written work by the given deadlines. You earn points toward your grade by three types of assignments: twice-weekly online discussion board posts; weekly structured writing assignments; and three longer essays.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

I aim for complete transparency regarding grading: your grade is yours, so I don’t ever want it to be a mystery or a surprise! At any point in the semester, you should be able to calculate your own average by adding up the number of points you’ve earned and dividing that by the total number of points currently available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Board Participation</td>
<td>1 point each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(BB1-20)</td>
<td>(x20 total = 20 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments (WA1-10)</td>
<td>5 points each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x10 total = 50 points)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal Essays (E1-3)</td>
<td>10 points each</td>
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<tr>
<td>(x3 total = 30 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL # of points available</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
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I reserve the right to announce additional extra credit assignments throughout the course. Be sure to monitor the course announcements page for any updates on this front.

GRADING SCALE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>outstanding; honors-level work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93-94</td>
<td>excellent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>91-92</td>
<td>very good; high level of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85-90</td>
<td>good; solid &amp; above average level of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>83-84</td>
<td>good; still above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>81-82</td>
<td>average level of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75-80</td>
<td>acceptable level of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>73-74</td>
<td>minimally acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66-72</td>
<td>passing but unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>65 or below</td>
<td>failure; inferior performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GRADING POLICIES:

Late Assignments: Late work is not accepted and will result in an automatic 0 for the assignment. It is penalized according to the "skipped assignments" policy described below. **If you would like to appeal this late work policy, you must contact me within 24 hours following the assignment deadline to explain your circumstances.** It is usually the case that appeals are only granted in the case of true medical and family emergencies that can be verified with supporting documentation.

Skipped Assignments: “Skipping the assignment” includes the obvious – not submitting an assignment at all – as well as submitting an assignment late without proper documentation to excuse the tardiness or submitting something that does not meet the minimum assignment requirements stipulated in the prompt. This includes but is not limited to: following the given instructions for what to write about, how to structure your writing, and staying within the length requirements (my general rule is +/- 25 words—so if the length requirement is 250 words, anything between 225-275 is acceptable).

Skipped BB and WA assignments are automatically awarded 0 points.

**There is an additional point penalty for skipping the Essay assignments:** Skipped essays (E1-3) will be assessed a -10 point penalty (the total point value of the assignment).

For example: Imagine that at the end of the semester you have earned 91 points before Essay 3 is due. **If you do not submit Essay 3, you will not simply earn 0/10 points for that item—you will ALSO be penalized an additional 10 points for skipping the assignment.** This would result in a final grade of 81 (C) for the course. If you do submit something (that meets the most basic requirements) for Essay 3, however, your final grade would be no lower than 91 (B+), regardless of how well you perform on that essay.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES:

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty or plagiarism is a serious offense, even if it occurs unintentionally. Any instance of academic dishonesty on your part will result in a failure for the course and a report to your dean. The easiest way to avoid plagiarism is to remember the golden rule of academic writing: always, always, always cite your source—the ONLY source you don’t need to consider citing is your own brain. If an idea originates there, you don’t need to cite it. Everything else should be cited from its original source. I'll let you know if you're citing too frequently in your writing.

University Statement on Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you need to register with the Office of Disability Services for Students (ODS) in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. Please contact the main ODS office at Rose Hill at 718-817-0655 to arrange services. Staff at ODS can walk you through the process and arrange registration appointments. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you need to register with ODS prior to receiving your accommodations. Please see me outside of class or if you have questions or would like to submit your academic accommodation letter to me if you are already registered for accommodations with Fordham.
SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

Purdue OWL:
I often encourage students to familiarize themselves with one of my favorite online resources, the Purdue OWL: [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/). This site contains tips and best practices for everything from research and citation to grammar and formatting.

The Writing Center:
Please take advantage of Fordham’s Writing Center, located on the first floor of the Walsh Library near the Reference desk. Writing Center services are entirely free of charge and are a great resource for all students. To schedule an appointment, visit [www.fordham.edu/wc](http://www.fordham.edu/wc).*

Me!
Though I don’t hold regular office hours, I welcome the opportunity to correspond about your work via email or, if both our schedules permit, via prearranged Skype video chat appointments. If you have questions, please ASK!

A detailed course schedule with assignment due dates will be available the week before the course begins.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL WRITTEN COURSE WORK

- Keep your writing within the prescribed word count for each assignment
- Stick to the given topic/prompt—don’t run off on a tangent
- Proofread your writing—typos, major grammatical errors, etc. make your work seem sloppy, which makes you seem like a careless scholar. This is ESPECIALLY important for an online course, wherein your written work is the SOLE basis of my evaluation of your academic progress.
- All quoted material should be cited parenthetically according to the MLA style guide
- This should go without saying, but... all ideas or interpretations presented must be YOUR OWN. Do not plagiarize from other sources. All essays will be vetted by “SafeAssign” software to ensure that material is not copied from existing sources.

ESSAY (E1-3) GUIDELINES

- All the General Guidelines listed above apply for all essays
- Should always be thesis-driven—you should have an original, interpretive argument for each of your essays
- Support your argument/thesis with quoted evidence from the text
- Surround your evidence with your own original analysis/interpretation of the material (the analysis is what connects the author’s words (evidence from the text) with the thesis (your own ideas))
- Make sure your writing is logically organized—i.e. it should proceed logically from topic A to topic B, each paragraph should begin and end with a clear connection to the overarching thesis, etc.
DISCUSSION BOARD (BB1-20) GUIDELINES

- Odd-numbered BB assignments require original posts from each student; even-numbered BB assignments require thoughtful, engaged responses to other students’ posts on the week’s thread. This means that there will only be odd-numbered threads on the discussion board (BB1, BB3, BB5, etc.). I will monitor the threads each week to make note of your responses to each other for the even-numbered post assignments.
- Posts should generally be between 50-150 words—sometimes the prompt calls for more detail or analysis, and sometimes it calls for only a brief response. Use your best judgment!
- I strongly recommend that you compose your BB submissions in a word processor, then copy and paste it into the Blackboard interface. That way, if something happens to the web browser (i.e. it crashes or freezes), you won’t lose your work if you haven’t yet clicked to submit!
- You should always read all previous posts before submitting your own—your grade will suffer if you post something too similar to another student’s earlier post. The whole idea of the discussion board is to share multiple viewpoints, so it’s important that our discussion forum doesn’t become a monotonous echo chamber.