Texts and Contexts:  
Winners and Losers in American Literature  

ENGL 2000  
ONLINE  
Prof. Julia Cosacchi  
May 26-August 4  
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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 using the ISBNs provided). This will ensure that pagination is consistent across all of our texts so that we can all easily reference page numbers throughout the course. These texts have NOT been ordered by the Fordham Bookstore, so please arrange to locate them by another means (i.e. your local bookstore, online booksellers, etc.)

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

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There is no way to truly 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 four types of assignments: twice-weekly online discussion board posts; weekly structured writing assignments; six reading quizzes; and three longer essays.

GRADING:

Course grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</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>
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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. Here’s an overview of point values per assignment category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Category</th>
<th>Points Available</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Board Posts (DB1-20) AND Orientation Module tasks (OM1-3):</td>
<td>1 point each (x23 total = 23 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments (WA1-10):</td>
<td>3 points each (x10 total = 30 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (Q1-6):</td>
<td>3 points each (x6 total = 18 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Essays (E1-3):</td>
<td>10 points each (x3 total = 30 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL # of points available:</td>
<td>101 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The course grade will be calculated out of 100 points, so this means that there’s already one extra or “free” point built into your grade. You might think of this as a “free” skip for a DB post or response – kind of like an allowed “absence” from an in-person class.

There are three Extra Credit opportunities worth 2 points each, for a total of 6 extra credit points over the length of the course. Due dates for Extra Credit assignments will be posted to the course Blackboard page within the first week of the course.

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 DB, WA, and Q assignments are automatically awarded 0 points. PLEASE NOTE: 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 basic formal requirements) for Essay 3, however, your final grade would be no lower than 91 (B+), regardless of how well you perform on that essay. It is better to submit something than nothing at all, especially for the Essay assignments.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES:

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty or plagiarism is a serious offense, even if it occurs unintentionally. Any instance of plagiarism or cheating on the written assignments will be reported to the Class Dean. You will fail the relevant assignment, and you may also fail the entire course. If this is not your first plagiarism, you may be suspended or expelled from the College. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me as soon as possible by email.

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.
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/. 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. Please note that the Writing Center usually has a smaller staff during the summer, so you should expect limited availability and plan ahead to schedule your appointments.

Me!:
Though I won’t be holding in-person office hours, I welcome the opportunity to correspond about your work via email or via prearranged Skype video chat appointments. I’ll do my best to respond to email queries within 24 hours.

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.
- Include your name, my name, course name and section, due date, and word count (not including headings or works cited) as your essay header.
- Written work must be double-spaced, 12-point standard font (Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri), standard margins, with numbered pages. Departures from these conventions will result in point deductions.
- All quoted material should be cited parenthetically according to the MLA style guide. To support good habits, you should always include a works cited page at the end of your work (WA and E assignments only).
- 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.
- Essays should 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.
- Essays should always have original, descriptive, and engaging titles.

DISCUSSION BOARD (DB1-20) GUIDELINES

- Odd-numbered DB assignments require original posts from each student; even-numbered DB 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 (DB1, DB3, DB5, etc.). I will monitor the threads each week to make note of your responses to each other for the even-numbered post assignments.
- I strongly recommend that you compose your DB 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.
- Posts should generally be between 50-150 words and should always clearly and thoroughly address the given prompt.
- Posts and responses should also always be well-written and well-edited, with few to no grammar or punctuation errors, sound logic and rhetoric, and a firm grounding in textual evidence/examples to support your ideas, analysis, or questions.
  - Posts and responses should go deeper than summary of the course readings – the DB is your space for discussion about interpretation and significance of the materials.
  - While I do value your unique perspective on each text, your response needs to focus on the text itself, not on personal stories or unrelated associations. You are also welcome to bring in outside sources that you find relevant to the topic under discussion, but please do not stray from a clear focus on the course texts.

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