COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will focus on the evolution and cultural significance of the notion of “self-making” in nineteenth-century American literature. We will study the figure of the self-made man through exemplary texts and then consider what happens to the self-made ideal when it is adapted for non-white and/or non-male figures. Through close reading, analytical writing, and online discussion forums we will work together to develop an understanding of the relationship between self-making and nation-making and to investigate the role played by gender in the development of cultural ideals.

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 from the library for the duration of the course. Please be sure to get the specific editions listed below, and please be sure to use paper texts—not electronic readers—unless you can find these specific editions in electronic format. This will ensure that the pagination is consistent across all of our texts so that we can all easily reference page numbers throughout the course.

The best way to ensure you get the correct edition is to check the ISBN number. If you’re ordering online from Amazon, you can type the ISBN’s I’ve provided into the search bar and the correct edition should appear as your first result.

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 demonstrating regular, engaged participation in online discussion boards; completing brief, structured writing assignments; and composing two short formal essays and a longer final essay.

Due to the online format of this course, your ability to express yourself clearly through writing is of the utmost importance. You will complete a lot of writing during this course, so consider yourself forewarned!

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.

Discussion Board (posts + comments): 3 points each (x13 total = 39 points)
Writing Assignments: 5 points each (x9 total = 45 points)
Short Essays: 8 points each (x2 total = 16 points)
Final Essay: 12 points (x1 total = 12 points)
TOTAL # of points available: 112

At the end of the semester, I calculate averages out of 100 points (rather than out of 112), so essentially there are 12 bonus points already built in to the grading schema. (You’re welcome!) Additionally, there’s another opportunity to earn up to 6.5 bonus points described later in this syllabus (hint: Discussion Boards).

Grading Scale
A 93-100
A- 92
B+ 91
B 84-90
B- 83
C+ 82
C 75-81
C- 74
D 66-73
F 65 or below

GRADING POLICIES:

Skipped Assignments: “Skipping the assignment” includes submitting late work or submitting something that does not meet the minimum assignment requirements stipulated in the prompt.
There is an additional penalty for skipping the short essays or the final essay—in addition to the 0 points awarded for the missing item, you will also be docked the total point value of the grade.

For example: Imagine that at the end of the semester you have earned 84 points before the Final Essay (30/39 points for the Discussion Board, 40/45 points for the Writing Assignments, and 14/16 points for the Short Essays). If you do not submit the Final Essay, you will obviously earn 0/12 points for that item, PLUS you will be penalized an additional 12 points for skipping the assignment. This will result in a final grade of 72 (a D) for the course. If you do submit the Final Essay, however, your final grade will be no lower than 84 (a B), regardless of how well you perform on that essay.

There is no additional penalty for missing Discussion Board posts or Writing Assignments—you will simply receive 0 points for those items.

Late Assignments: Late work is typically not accepted. It is penalized according to the “skipped assignments” policy described above.

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:

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.

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).*
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!

COURSE SCHEDULE:
(Key: PPT = Powerpoint; WA = Writing Assignment; DB = Discussion Board; Readings are listed following the Course Schedule)

Readings can be completed at any point in the unit—in fact, I encourage trying to frontload your reading as much as possible within each unit so that you have more time to “digest” the material during the virtual discussion and the writing assignments!

**May 30-June 24**  **Orientation + Module 1**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>June 2</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Orientation tasks due</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1—Origins of the Self-Made Man</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 6</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>DB 1 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete Readings 1.1-1.2</td>
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<td>Complete PPT1A</td>
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<td>Complete PPT1B</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 9</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>WA 1 due</td>
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| **Unit 2—Horatio Alger, Ragged Dick** | | |
| June 12 | Monday | DB 2 due |
| Complete PPT2 | |
| Complete Readings 2.1-2.4 | |
| June 15 | Thursday | DB 3 due |
| Complete Reading 2.5 | |
| June 19 | Monday | DB 4 due |
| June 20 | Tuesday | DB 5 due |
| June 23 | Friday | WA 2 due |

**June 24-July 12**  **Module 2**

| **Unit 3—Louisa May Alcott, Work: A Story of Experience** | | |
| June 27 | Tuesday | Short Essay 1 due |
| Complete PPT3A | |
| Complete Reading 3.1 | |
| June 29 | Thursday | WA 3 due |
| Complete Reading 3.2 | |
| Complete PPT 3B | |
| July 3 | Monday | DB 6 due |
| Complete PPT 3C | |
| Complete Reading 3.3 | |
| July 5 | Wednesday | WA 4 due |
| Complete Reading 3.4 | |
| July 7 | Friday | WA 5 due |
July 11       Tuesday       DB 7 due
July 12       Wednesday     DB 8 due

**July 13-August 5**  **Module 3**
Unit 4—African American Self-Making

**July 17**  **Monday**       **Short Essay 2 due**
*Complete PPT4*  
*Complete Reading 4.1*
July 19       Wednesday     WA 6 due
July 20       Thursday      DB 9 due
*Complete Reading 4.2*
July 24       Monday        DB 10 due

Unit 5—Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes: or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*

*Complete PPT5*
*Complete Reading 5.1*  
July 26       Wednesday     WA 7 due
*Complete Reading 5.2*  
July 27       Thursday      DB 11 due
July 28       Friday        WA 8 due
*Complete Reading 5.3*  
July 31       Monday        DB 12 due
August 1      Tuesday       DB 13 due
August 4      Friday        WA 9 due
**August 8**  **Tuesday**     **Final Essay due**

**LIST OF READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

1.1 Excerpts from Benjamin Franklin, C.B. Seymour, H.B. Stowe (doc)
1.2 “The Self-Made Man: The story of America’s most pliable, pernicious, irrepressible myth” (pdf)

2.1 “Street Children” (James D. McCabe, Jr.) (Norton 139-141)
2.2 “Outcast Children” (Edward Crapsey) (Norton 141-143)
2.3 “Homeless Boys” (Charles Loring Brace) (Norton 143-145)
2.4 *Ragged Dick* chapters 1-12
2.5 *Ragged Dick* chapters 13-27 (end)

3.1 Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood” (pdf)
3.2 excerpts from *The American Woman’s Home* (Beecher and Stowe) (doc)
3.3 *Work* chapters 1-9
3.4 *Work* chapters 10-20 (end)

4.1 Douglass, “Self-Made Men” (doc)
4.2 Henry Louis Gates on Madam C.J. Walker (doc)

5.1 *Behind the Scenes* Preface
5.2 *Behind the Scenes* Chapters 1-8
5.3 *Behind the Scenes* Chapters 9-15 + letters from Mrs. Lincoln

GUIDELINES FOR COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL WRITTEN 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.

ESSAYS
- 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.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
- all the General Guidelines listed above apply for all Writing Assignments
- stick to the prompt and follow the instructions carefully
- keep your writing within the prescribed word count for each assignment

DISCUSSION BOARD
- 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 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.
- *to encourage discussion on the discussion boards, I will award up to ½ of a point (for each DB assignment) to any student who, in addition to submitting their own required post, also comments constructively upon other students’ posts within 24 hours of the DB deadline. This means that you could earn up to an additional 6.5 points toward your final grade!*