Essay Prompt: What kind of poetic subject does Walt Whitman construct in a "Song of Myself"? Essay assignment (3 page double-spaced pages ) will ask you to conduct a close reading of at least one text in context, in which you analyze that text based on your own interpretation + thesis-driven argument.. Before each essay, I may give you a set of specific prompt options for those of you struggling to come up with a topic, or those who would rather have more structure and direction. Lastly, while you are not required to cite secondary sources in your essays, doing so can bolster your essay’s argumentation, and is thus recommended. Course summary: This syllabus is a writing-intensive course in which we focus on key texts representing important literary movements/moments in American literature starting from the early colonial period, American Renaissance, American Romanticism, Modernism and ending in Postmodernism.

Through these diverse but more or less chronologically selected texts, we will explore the the question of ‘self-hood’ in America and how it evolves from colonialism to postmodernism. The period explored will be from eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. We ask ourselves: Is there a through line of American selfhood that connects these texts with each other? Is there, in fact, a quintessential American ‘self’ or are they various levels of mythmaking? And if so, how do these myths and ideas evolve over time and differ across genres?

To this end, we will study different genres – the epistle, the autobiography, poetry, short story, essay. Finally, we ask ourselves how notions of ‘selfhood’ sustain across the vast cultural diversity of America, if at all they do. A+,A, A-: a) Focus: Purpose is clear b) Main idea/thesis: Clearly presents a main idea/thesis and supports it throughout the paper

c) Organization: Well-planned and well-organized, with title, introduction, paragraph transitions and conclusion d) Content: Well-argued and presented; ideas are detailed, well-developed and supported with relevant evidence e) Research: Good use of secondary research. Quotations and Works Cited conform to MLA style sheet. f) Style: Sentences are clear with excellent use of punctuation; style suited to audience and purpose; specific examples and descriptions g) Grammar and mechanics: Excellent grammar, spelling, syntax and punctuation