

050:261

American Bestseller

Fall 2008

The bestseller is a social phenomenon and, thus, a valuable window into American cultural history. We will read several representative popular novels, beginning with Susannah Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1791), the first American bestseller, and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and continuing with a range of twentieth-century blockbusters, paying specific attention to the ideology of success and reward, the construction of masculinity and femininity, and the ever-dominant themes of sexuality, marriage, violence, race, class envy, and money. Authors may include (final list to be determined) Owen Wister, Margaret Mitchell, Lillian Smith, J.D. Salinger, Vladimir Nabokov, Jacqueline Susann, Philip Roth, and Stephen King. Course work will consist of several reading quizzes, 2-3 short papers, and a final exam.