Assignments:

Students will be required to submit a series of assignments into the bestsellers database during the semester, focused on a single best-seller (chosen from the lists of bestsellers by decade, above, but not a book that has already been chosen by someone else, nor any of the required readings for the course). These assignments will comprise a bibliographical description of a first edition, a publication history (including performances in other media, if any), a biographical sketch of the author, a reception history, and a critical analysis of the work in its cultural and literary contexts. All of these assignments will be submitted online, using Web-based submission forms: they will become part of an ongoing project to compile a Web-accessible database of information about bestselling 20th-century American literature.

For each database assignment, students must also submit a list of the sources consulted in completing each subsection of that assignment, and indicate whether or not the source produced information. This complete list of sources should be submitted in LATTE. Please also include the names of sources that produced information for a particular assignment in the database submission for that assignment as well.

In addition to the database assignments, students will work in small groups to present each of the books that we read in common. These presentations must provide an overview of the following:

1. History and cultural significance of the book's publisher
2. Analysis of how this book relates to the theme that connects all the books we read in common, and what it tells us about that aspect of American culture and current events at the time of its publication
3. Points of connection on the fiction or non-fiction lists around the same time

Presentations may also include:

1. Highlights or oddities of the book's publication history
2. Highlights or oddities of the book's reception
3. Highlights or oddities of the author's biography

Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>(percentage of semester grade)</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographic Description</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>January 28th</td>
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Help documentation: http://unsworth.unet.brandeis.edu/courses/bestsellers/a1help.html
Readings: Bestsellers and the American Class System

Required:


On Reserve:


**Available in Latte:**
Critical essays (both required and optional) will be available for download from Latte.

*also available as a free ebook from Project Gutenberg and other sources
**also available as a Kindle ebook

**Week 1: Orientation to the course**

*Required:*
Wikipedia entry on Bestsellers

*Recommended:*

**Week 2: Upton Sinclair, The Jungle (1906)**

*Required:*
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*

**Week 3: Readings**

Database Assignment 1 due

*Required:*

*Recommended:*

*Resources for Database Assignment 1*
Typefaces presented as a Periodic Table File
Good examples of Assignment 1

**Week 4: Eleanor Porter, Pollyanna (1914)**

*Required:*
Eleanor Porter, *Pollyanna*
[Bestsellers DB Entry on Pollyanna](#)

**Week 5: Readings**

Database Assignment 2 due

*Required:*

Alice Mills, “Pollyanna and the Not So Glad Game,” Children's Literature, Volume 27, 1999, pp. 87-104.


Recommended:
Pollyanna: The Board Game (1915)
http://www.boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/2561/pollyanna

“Pollyanna, the glad girl; a four act comedy,” by Catherine Chisholm Cushing, founded upon "Pollyanna": the glad book ... by Eleanor H. Porter. New York, Klaw & Erlanger, 1915. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t49p3wx8f

Midterm Recess (February 17-21)

Week 6: Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt (1923)

Take-home Midterm due Feb. 25 in class

Required:
Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt
Bestsellers DB Entry on Babbitt

Week 7: Readings

Database Assignment 3 due

Required:


Resources for Database Assignment 3
Good examples of Assignment 3

Week 8: Lillian Smith, Strange Fruit (1944)

Required:
Lillian Smith, Strange Fruit
Bestsellers DB Entry on Strange Fruit

Week 9: Readings

Database Assignment 4 due

Required:

Recommended:

Resources for Database Assignment 4
Good examples of Assignment 4

Week 10: Edna Ferber, Giant (1952)

Required:
Edna Ferber, Giant
Bestsellers DB Entry on Giant

Week 11: Readings

Required:


Recommended:


Week 12: EL Doctorow, *Ragtime* (1975)

Required:

EL Doctorow, *Ragtime*

Bestsellers DB Entry on *Ragtime*

Passover and Spring Recess (April 15-22)

Week 13: Readings

Database Assignment 5 due

Required:


Recommended:


Resources for Database Assignment 5
Good examples of Assignment 5

Week 14: Final exam (May 5th, 6-9 pm)