

Fall 2026
ENGLISH 4615/5615: TEXT IN CONTEXT
Infinite Jest
 TuTh 12:30PM-1:45PM
 Johnston Hall 417

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I had a teacher I liked who used to say good fiction's job was to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable. I guess a big part of serious fiction's purpose is to give the reader, who like all of us is sort of marooned in her own skull, to give her imaginative access to otherselves.... We all suffer alone in the real world; true empathy's impossible. But if a piece of fiction can allow us imaginatively to identify with a character's pain, we might then also more easily conceive of others identifying with our own. This is nourishing, redemptive; we become less alone inside.

—David Foster Wallace

This course explores the literary, cultural, and intellectual legacy of David Foster Wallace (1962-2008), widely considered by admirers and detractors alike to be among the most influential and important writers of his generation. In particular we will study his magnum opus, *Infinite Jest* (1996), thirty years old this year, a book which not only continues to speak with shocking relevance and delightful irreverence to our present, but which seems, in many ways, to have accurately predicted it, from Trump to TikTok. Slowly and carefully reading Wallace's epoch-defining novel together will open up a window on the last thirty years of American life, letters, entertainment, and art, while the unavoidable shadow cast by his 2008 suicide will raise important questions for us about literary celebrity, biographical criticism, and the often troubled relationship between public personae and the real, lived lives of writers and artists.

Infinite Jest has not only influenced an entire generation of American writers, thinkers, and artists, but become a personal and communal touchstone for the tens of thousands of readers it has inspired, delighted, consoled, and perplexed. For many people—myself included—it is a book that they return to over and over again across their lives; students from the 2016 version of this class repeatedly reach out to me, still wanting to discuss it after all this time. Even for those readers who only experience it once, *Infinite Jest* belongs to that rare class of book that a person never forgets.

LEARNING GOALS

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Speak with authority about the major literary and philosophical work of David Foster Wallace, especially *Infinite Jest*;
- Apply techniques of critical analysis to *Infinite Jest* and related works;
- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural, historical, and political contexts in which the major work of David Foster Wallace was produced, read, celebrated, and critiqued;
- Use literary study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing.

THIS COURSE AND LIFE AFTER MARQUETTE

Marquette identifies seven key career preparation skills that its courses teach across disciplines, which it calls the Professional Formation Competencies:

- **Problem Solve with Curiosity:** You solve problems with conscience and curiosity, using critical thinking.
- **Develop Career Management Skills:** You approach career management with attention to self-awareness, intentional effort to grow knowledge related to profession, quiet reflection, and action toward fulfilling your unique purpose.
- **Collaborate for Solidarity:** You collaborate for solidarity, prioritizing working for the good of the group and acting as a person for and with others.
- **Communicate Responsibly and Ethically:** You approach ethical communication with the intent of identifying reliable sources, taking responsibility for what and how you communicate, and reaching shared understanding.
- **Lead for the Common Good:** You demonstrate leadership through self-initiative and the empowerment of others to advance solutions for the greater good of all.
- **Commit to Justice, Equity, and Belonging:** You understand biases and advocate for an environment that fosters belonging of diverse people, appreciation of differing perspectives, and action toward justice, equity, and belonging.
- **Adapt in Discipline and Technology:** You adapt in your discipline and relevant technologies, knowing the tools available to you and participating in advancements in your profession.

Our collective study of *Infinite Jest*, including our discussions of its meaning and messages and your self-guided development of some critical response to the novel, will intersect with many of these professional formation competencies, and could even ultimately form one example of the sorts of skills and values you developed during your time in college at a future job interview.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND PERSONAL EMERGENCIES

Everyone at Marquette recognizes that this continues to be an extremely difficult time which may be filled with many different sorts of uncertainty as we move forward with the academic year. Your safety, health, and well-being are our primary concern and we want to be able to support you in any way that we can.

The university also understands that you may be facing personal obstacles that may make it difficult to meet your typical academic goals. Please know that faculty and staff are here for you. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by a situation outside of class, please don't hesitate to talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. You are not alone.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The only required text for this course is *Infinite Jest*, which is available at the BookMarq bookshop on 16th Street, though you are not required to purchase it there. All editions of *Infinite Jest* (including the Kindle edition) use the same pagination, so please feel free to purchase whichever version you like. (I do however recommend *against* the audiobook, simply because it's hard to get a proper sense of the footnotes that way; I would use it as a supplement only.)

Additional readings and course materials will be made available via D2L, or during class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Class Participation	20%
Personal Reading Journal	10%
D2L Posts	20%
Discussion Inauguration	10%
“Convergence”	10%
Final Project Prospectus	5%
Final Project	25%

Additional details all on major assignments in the course are detailed on a separate page below.

Graduate students will have different assignments and expectations; these will be discussed separately.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Graded assignments will follow the following rubric:

* To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A C essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. C essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.

* To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.

* To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An A essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.

* A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.

* **AB, BC, and CD** grades fall squarely in the gaps between the above categories.

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Your personal reading journal, D2L posts, discussion inauguration day, “convergence,” and final project prospectus will all be graded on an extra-credit / pass / low-pass / fail basis:

- Fulfilling all the requirements of the assignment will earn you full credit;
- Failing to do so will earn you half-credit (at best) or *no* credit (at worst);
- Going beyond the terms of the assignment in an especially ambitious or creative way can earn you extra credit.

QUIZZES

I do not like to give reading quizzes; I think they infantilize the college-level scholar. However, this is by necessity a very reading-intensive class; if it seems to me that people are not keeping up with the reading, pop quizzes may become necessary despite my philosophical objections. You have been warned.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Your final paper should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your last name* in it, for example, incandenza-finalpaper.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even forum comments. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments. Please give your final paper an original title, and include your name, assignment, and due date in a header on the first page.

All sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.

PAPER SUBMISSION

The final paper should be submitted via D2L’s Dropbox by class time on the due date, Tuesday, December 15, by 12:30 PM. Your other written work (which will primarily take the form of forum posts) will be posted on the D2L forums in the designated “sandbox” forums.

Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

EXTENSIONS

Although the work in this course have a sufficiently long timetable to allow you to plan and complete all assignments in a timely manner, I nonetheless recognize that each of you has a unique schedule and that some of the due dates I have selected could occasionally prove problematic for individual students in the course, especially in the context of the pandemic. **If you find that you will need an extension on a particular assignment due to this kind of conflict, please contact me to arrange an alternative due date.**

There is no need to concoct an elaborate story to justify this, or to lie to me; simply tell me the truth about what’s going on and we can work out an alternative that works for you.

TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often; save backup copies of essential documents, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is therefore crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

Consequently, attendance in this class is absolutely mandatory. You should plan on attending every class. Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you ever find you will need to miss a class meeting.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>. You are allowed **two absences** over the course of the summer semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by a letter grade for each additional absence.** Upon the fifth absence, you will receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

Merely being present is insufficient to earn an “A” for class participation. Each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough.

COVID PROTOCOLS

Everyone in this class will be expected to follow the current COVID-19 policies in effect on campus, including current guidance on quarantines and on masks.

DISCUSSION INAUGURATOR

Each member of the class will have one day in which they are expected to inaugurate our discussion by articulating a brief (but detailed) five-minute response to the day's reading. The requirements for this are necessarily very loose, as each day of the course will have a very different type of text to be discussed; in general, however, the discussion inaugurator will be asked to (1) articulate a thoughtful and critical response to some aspect of the material and (2) direct our collective attention to one or two problems in, questions about, or particularly important moments from the reading for that day.

A signup sheet for this role will be distributed in class after drop/add ends.

D2L DISCUSSION FORUMS AND SANDBOX POSTS

This course will make extensive use of the forums on D2L, where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over.

The forums are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions with the class. I will be reading it before every meeting of the course and I

ask you do the same. You may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates.

After class on Thursday, September 3, every student is required to take the following actions:

- (1) upload a picture of their face or some other symbolic image to their profile;
- (2) post an “About the Author” about themselves in the designated forum;
- (3) write a short, reflective response about our roundtable discussion about “sadness and the classroom” on Thursday.

Students will also have mandatory D2L posts due after class on Thursday, September 10, and Tuesday, September 15, following similar “roundtable” class discussions on those days, and *before* class on Thursday, September 17, with your detailed response to some aspect of the first fourteen pages of *Infinite Jest*.

In addition to the four mandatory posts, students must write **four more short posts (approximately 150-250 words)** across our discussion of *Infinite Jest* (or approximately one every other week). These posts are intended to register your critical and/or emotional response to some element of the work under discussion. These posts should be completed either by midnight before one of the class discussions devoted to that text, or by the midnight before the following class. These can overlap with other assignments, like the reading journal, the discussion inauguration day, the convergence, and your final project.

Up to two additional posts beyond the required eight will count towards extra credit on your final grade. Additional posts beyond that number, and posts that respond substantively to other students’ arguments, will be looked upon very favorably when I calculate your final grade. I encourage you to kill multiple birds with a single stone; you can use the same text for your reading journal, your D2L post, your discussion inauguration, your convergence, and so on.

LAPTOP POLICY

In-class use of laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. is permitted for access to electronic versions of our texts and for notetaking. However, students *must* refrain from non-class-related computer use, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. I reserve the right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. No use of cell phones will be permitted during class time, except in highly unusual circumstances cleared with me in advance; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once a day, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions. I endeavor to respond to all emails within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night before they are due and expect an immediate reply.

CONFERENCES

All students are required to meet with me in a short one-on-one conference at my office at least once during the semester to discuss the course and your work within it. Please know I am very happy to meet with you individually to discuss either graded work or work-in-progress in excess of this requirement as many times as you like. Simply come to my weekly office hours, or see or email me to set up an appointment.

FLEXIBILITY

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to the above.

WRITING CENTER

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center, located in Raynor Library Room 240, at any stage of the writing process. Please visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.marquette.edu/english/writingcenter> to find out how to schedule an appointment and to access the studio's online resources.

ACCOMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met. I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting the Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building). ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at ods@marquette.edu.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course.** No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*
- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*
- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette's academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate stories. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS (“AI”)

You are expected to produce your own text for all coursework for this class. Unmarked use of LLMs (like ChatGPT) for any assignment violates academic integrity. Incorporating any part of an AI-generated response in your work for this course without permission falls under the definition of plagiarism and will be treated accordingly.

“Our own present culture,” Wallace wrote, “has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom to be lords of our own tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the center of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it. But of course there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talked about in the great outside world of winning and achieving and displaying. The really important kind of freedom involves attention, and awareness, and discipline, and effort, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them, over and over, in myriad petty little unsexy ways, every day. That is real freedom. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default-setting, the ‘rat race’— the constant gnawing sense of having had and lost some infinite thing.” Please, don’t let the chatbots take any part of your infinite thing.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

RESPECT

This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here.

Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** negatively impact your class participation grade.

DON’T GIVE UP

Look, there’s just no getting around it: it’s a long book. Try your best not to fall behind, and try just as hard to catch up quickly if you do. Talk to me if and when you need to. We’ll work it out.

CONTENT NOTE

Infinite Jest may well be the greatest work of American literature that has been produced in the last thirty years (if not much longer). Love it or hate it—and you are certainly free to do either or both!—it is an staggeringly ambitious work of art, and many who have read it would say it is the product of a transcendent creative genius.

Part of *Infinite Jest*’s power originates in its unflinching exploration of very important and very difficult questions. It is a clever, funny, and inventive book about what it means to be human at the dawn of the twenty-first century—but it is also a book about depression, about pain, about addiction, about interpersonal violence of all kinds, and at times about suicide.

Great literature isn't candy; it isn't always easy to consume, and it doesn't always taste good. But we still need it.

Dedicating oneself to reading *Infinite Jest* was an intense and challenging experience even in the book's original context, but in 2026 our unhappy knowledge of Wallace's own eventual suicide now exerts a sort of extra-tragic gravitational pull upon the novel, dragging the mood down and threatening to crowd out any other possible interpretation—a tendency towards maximum pessimism that we will have to find ways to reckon with, account for, and resist.

By much the same token, our culture's idea of artistic creation has often seen genius and personal pain as being inextricably linked, misunderstanding deep suffering as the price that one has to pay for specialness, for sensitivity, for personal integrity, for greatness. I want to say at the outset of this course, very explicitly, that I truly reject this tradition of thought as being fundamentally flawed—as I believe Wallace himself did—and I urge you to do the same.

Depression is a serious, potentially life-threatening medical condition that can be treated with professional help—nothing more, and nothing less.

If you ever feel like you are in need of help for any reason, please know that the Marquette University Counseling Center is located on the 2nd floor of Holthusen Hall. Its phone number is (414) 288-7172. For emergency help at any time of day, contact Public Safety at (414) 288-6800.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 (or dial 988)

Online Chat: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/lifelinechat.aspx>

Crisis Text Line: Text "START" to 741-741

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the listed texts or chapters.

T	Sep 1	FIRST DAY OF CLASS <i>audiobook</i> : “This Is Water” (Commencement Address to the Kenyon College Class of 2005) (in class)
Th	Sep 3	“Alas, Poor Yorick” monologue from <i>Hamlet</i> , Act V, sc. i [D2L] George Saunders, “Informal Remarks from the David Foster Wallace Memorial Service in New York on October 23, 2008” [D2L] Jonathan Franzen, “Informal Remarks from the David Foster Wallace Memorial Service in New York on October 23, 2008” [D2L] <i>roundtable discussion</i> : How to Talk About Sad Things, Together (after class) Mandatory D2L Post #1

T	Sep 8	David Foster Wallace, “The Planet Trillaphon as It Stands in Relation to the Bad Thing” (1984) and Afterword by Kevin J. H. Dettmar (2016)
Th	Sep 10	David Foster Wallace, “Octet” (1997/1999) (after class) Mandatory D2L Post #2
T	Sep 15	David Foster Wallace, “Octet” discussion continues <i>Infinite Jest</i> forewords by Dave Eggers (2006), Tom Bissell (2016), and Michelle Zauner (2026) [D2L] <i>roundtable discussion</i> : How to Talk About Literature, Art, Artists, Genius, Greatness, Pretension, Ambition, “Trying Too Hard,” Success, Failure, Annoyance, Fondness, Commitment, Honesty, Community, Solitude, Work, Intellectual Experiences That Might (or Might Not) Change Your Life, &c. (after class) Mandatory D2L Post #3

INFINITE JEST

			<i>IJPPD(A)(NCF)*</i>
Th	Sep 17	<i>due by class time</i> : Mandatory D2L Post #4 <i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 17 <i>brief primer</i> : How to Read <i>Infinite Jest</i> [in class]	14
T	Sep 22	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 63	46
Th	Sep 24	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 109	46
T	Sep 29	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 151	42
Th	Oct 1	CATCH UP (OR GET AHEAD!) DAY—NO CLASS!	0!
T	Oct 6	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 198	47
Th	Oct 8	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 240	42
T	Oct 13	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 283	43
Th	Oct 15	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 321	38
T	Oct 20	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 374	53
Th	Oct 22	FALL BREAK—NO CLASS!	0!
T	Oct 27	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 418	44
Th	Oct 29	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 450	42
T	Nov 3	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 491	41
Th	Nov 5	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 548	48

T	Nov 10	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 589	41
Th	Nov 12	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 638	49
T	Nov 17	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 692	54
Th	Nov 19	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 736	44
T	Nov 24	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through p. 785	49
Th	Nov 26	THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS!	0!
T	Dec 1	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through 851	44
Th	Dec 3	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through 896	45
T	Dec 8	<i>Infinite Jest</i> through 941	40
Th	Dec 10	<i>Infinite Jest</i> (whole book) “Convergence” Discussion LAST DAY OF CLASS	40
T	Dec 15	FINAL PROJECT DUE ON D2L BY 12:30 PM	

* *Infinite Jest* pages per day (approximate) (not counting footnotes)

FOLLOW FAME: FRIENDS AND ALUMNI/AE OF MARQUETTE ENGLISH

On Facebook (page): www.facebook.com/marquetteENGL

On Facebook (group): www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194

(search for “Undergraduate English at Marquette”)

On Twitter: @MarquetteENGL

On Instagram: @marquette_english

On LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/marquetteengl/

I will also be inviting you to English community events periodically during the fall and spring semesters. I hope you can attend!

Additional Reading

Other Works by David Foster Wallace

Other Novels

The Broom of the System (1987)

The Pale King: An Unfinished Novel (2011)

Short Story Collections

Girl with Curious Hair (1989)

Brief Interviews with Hideous Men (1999)

Oblivion: Stories (2004)

Literary Nonfiction

A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again (1997)

Consider the Lobster (2005)

Both Flesh and Not (2012)

String Theory: David Foster Wallace on Tennis (2016)

Other Nonfiction

Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity (2003)

This Is Water (2009)

Fate, Time, and Language: An Essay on Free Will (2010)

Retrospective Career Anthology

The David Foster Wallace Reader (2016)

Works about David Foster Wallace

Companions to Infinite Jest

Stephen J. Burn, *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide*

Greg Carlisle, *Elegant Complexity: A Study of David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest*

William Dowling and Robert Bell, *A Reader's Companion to Infinite Jest*

Wallace Studies Collections

Marshall Boswell and Stephen J. Burn, eds. *A Companion to David Foster Wallace Studies*

Samuel Cohen and Lee Konstantinou, eds., *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*

David Hering, ed., *Consider David Foster Wallace*

Interviews

Stephen J. Burn, ed., *Conversations with David Foster Wallace*

David Foster Wallace: The Last Interview: and Other Conversations

David Lipsky, *Although of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself: A Road Trip with David Foster Wallace*

Film

The End of the Tour (dir. James Ponsoldt, 2015)

ENGLISH 4615/5615 ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

☐ Discussion Leader

Date _____

☐ Reading Journal

- ☐ Week Two
- ☐ Week Three
- ☐ Week Four
- ☐ Week Five
- ☐ Week Six
- ☐ Week Seven
- ☐ Week Eight
- ☐ Week Nine
- ☐ Week Ten
- ☐ Week Eleven
- ☐ Week Twelve
- ☐ Week Thirteen

Submit your weekly reading journal of Infinite Jest using the following basic template:

- first bit: *What happened in this section of the book?*
- second bit: *How did what happen make you feel?*

* *These journals are private. Only I will read them.*

* *They do not have to be polished, “careful” writing.*

* *You can miss up to two without penalty*

* *You can submit your reading journal for a given week up to one week late without penalty.*

☐ “Convergence”

DFW: *“There is an ending as far as I'm concerned. Certain kind of parallel lines are supposed to start converging in such a way that an ‘end’ can be projected by the reader somewhere beyond the right frame. If no such convergence or projection occurred to you, then the book's failed for you.”*

In lieu of your reading journal for Week Nine, reflect on the parallel lines you see as converging and the end that you project for *Infinite Jest* “somewhere beyond the right frame.” Bring your personal map of this “convergence,” in whatever form you decide to craft it, to class with you on Dec. 10, and feel free to post it on the D2L forum as well.

☐ D2L Posts

- ☐ Mandatory Post #1 (due after class August 31)
- ☐ Mandatory Post #2 (due after class September 12)
- ☐ Mandatory Post #3 (due after class September 14)
- ☐ Mandatory Post #4 (due *before* class September 17)
- ☐ Free Post 1
- ☐ Free Post 2
- ☐ Free Post 3
- ☐ Free Post 4
- ☐ Extra Credit Post 1
- ☐ Extra Credit Post 2

These public discussion forum posts are intended to articulate some concrete, critical response to some element of the work under discussion on a given day of the course. They should be approximately 125-250 words long, and may overlap with your personal journal entry for the week, your discussion inauguration presentation, and/or your final project. Up to two extra posts will count towards extra credit.

☐ Final Project Prospectus

(due to me by Nov. 26—
the sooner the better!)

The prospectus is a half-page anticipation of the major thrust of your final project as you anticipate it taking shape. Generally speaking, it should lay out the aspect of Wallace’s work that you plan to discuss, and articulate a *central claim* which clearly and succinctly describes your planned intervention into Wallace studies. Remember: your prospectus is just your plan, not a contract or even a promise. It’s fine with me if the project changes.

☐ Final Project

(due to me by Dec. 15 at 12:30 PM; described on back)

FINAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A quarter of your final grade derives from your final project. Because *Infinite Jest* can be a daunting book, even or especially after one has completed it, I offer three divergent options for the final project:

OPTION #1 A traditional 10-to-12 page scholarly paper (roughly 3000 words) on some aspect of *Infinite Jest* or related works by David Foster Wallace. Potential approaches could include:

- close readings of some aspect of *Infinite Jest*, “This Is Water,” “The Planet Trillaphon as It Stands in Relation to the Bad Thing,” “Octet”, or some other DFW work;
- literary interpretations of *Infinite Jest*, in its totality;
- explorations of Wallace’s letters, essays, other fictions, or alternate drafts;
- comparisons between Wallace and other writers;
- interventions against or extensions of existing works of Wallace criticism by established scholars, either those we studied in class or those you find on your own.

OPTION #2 A smaller “thinkpiece”-style shorter essay (approximately 1500 words) appropriate to the model of digital publication employed at such online outlets as *Slate*, *Salon*, *The New Inquiry*, *Jacobin*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, etc., coupled with an annotated bibliography on Wallace scholarship with at least six scholarly sources organized around a specific subtopic.

Your **thinkpiece** should specify the venue the piece is intended for, as well as a “clickbait” headline and rhetorical framing that would encourage people to read it (“Why Everyone Needs to Read *Infinite Jest*”; “Why No One Should Ever Read *Infinite Jest* Again”; etc.).

Your **annotated bibliography** should **identify, summarize, and evaluate** the sources you have read. Give your annotated bibliography an appropriate title that describes the subtopic that organized its creation (“Mental Illness in David Foster Wallace”; “Drugs in David Foster Wallace”; “Animals in *Infinite Jest*”; “David Foster Wallace and the New Sincerity”; etc.).

For more information on how to write an annotated bibliography, you might consult this document from the Duke University Writing Studio:

<https://wrp.duke.edu/sites/wrp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/annotated-bibliography-1.original.pdf>

OPTION #3 A creative or curational project related in some way to David Foster Wallace and/or *Infinite Jest*, **proposed to me and approved by me no later than November 24, 2016.**

I am of course very happy to discuss your projects-in-progress with you at any stage of the writing process, from germ to prospectus to draft to finished product.

I cannot stress enough how open I am to your personal interests and approaches; I am genuinely open to any topic, any method, and any form that seems urgent and interesting to you (provided of course that it is the intellectual-labor equivalent of a 10-to-12-page scholarly paper, more or less). I sincerely want this paper to be something you are excited about and enjoy writing, *not* an unpleasant chore. I can’t wait to read them.

ENTRANCE SURVEY**NAME****YEAR****MAJOR****HOMETOWN**

The following three “Student Info Sheet” questions have been adopted from David Foster Wallace’s own syllabi (reprinted in *The David Foster Wallace Reader* [2016]).

PLEASE NAME TWO NOVELS THAT REALLY MEAN SOMETHING TO YOU AND EXPLAIN WHY.

READ ANY OF THE WORKS ON OUR LIST BEFORE, EVER? WHEN? WHAT DID YOU THINK?

If I remain enrolled in this course, I hereby promise to attend class faithfully, to complete all assignments in a timely and conscientious way, to participate fully in class discussions, and to contact Gerry C. promptly about any problems or concerns.

SIGNATURE & DATE _____