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 Office Hours: TuTh 2-3 pm
 Wed. 1-2 pm and by appointment

English 485: Senior Seminar: *Infinite Jest* and American Fiction
 After Postmodernism
 TuTh 9:30-1:45, Buckman 330

Required Texts

Infinite Jest, David Foster Wallace
Girl with Curious Hair, David Foster Wallace
A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again, David Foster Wallace
A Reader's Guide to Infinite Jest, Stephen J. Burn
The Marriage Plot, Jeffery Eugenides
Pastoralia, George Saunders

Reading Assignments

Aug	27:	Introduction	20:	FALL BREAK
			22:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 854-941
Sept	1:	John Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse," "The Literature of Exhaustion"	27:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 941-End
	3:	Wallace, "E Unibus Pluram," "My Appearance"	29:	<i>Pastoralia</i> , pp. 1-88
			30	Paper 2 Due
	8:	Wallace, "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," pp. 233-308	Nov	3: <i>Pastoralia</i> , pp. 89-end
	10:	Wallace, "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," pp. 308-373		5: <i>The Marriage Plot</i> , pp. 1-127
	15:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 109-219	10:	<i>The Marriage Plot</i> , pp. 131-293
	17:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 219-258	12:	<i>The Marriage Plot</i> , pp. 297-end
	18	Paper 1 Due	13	Proposals Due
	22:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 258-342	17:	Workshop Proposals
	24:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 342-398	19:	Individual Meetings
	29:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 398-503	23:	Annotated Bibliography Due
Oct	1:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 503-553	24	Workshop Bibliographies
	6	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 553-662	26	THANKSGIVING BREAK
	8:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 663-711	Dec	1: Presentations
	13	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 711-808		3: Presentations
	15:	<i>Infinite Jest</i> , pp. 809-854		8: Presentations
			14:	Final Paper Due, 3 pm

POLICIES FOR 485

COURSE DESCRIPTION: When it was first published in 1996, David Foster Wallace’s 1079 page novel *Infinite Jest* was instantly recognized by critics as “the next step in fiction” (Sven Birkerts), though few critics could articulate what that “next step” was, exactly. Set in the future and focusing on a mythical film that is so entertaining that watching it leads to catatonia, the novel takes on such disparate issues as drug addiction, film theory, Alcoholics Anonymous, Jamesian pragmatism, existentialism, terrorism, game theory, theoretical mathematics, and tennis—lots and lots of tennis. Nearly two decades later, *Infinite Jest* remains the signature text for writers of Wallace’s generation. As its influence continues to deepen and spread, so, too, do the contours of the post-postmodern novel begin to clarify. In this course, we will read Wallace’s gargantuan novel as well as a selection of contemporary novels written under Wallace’s influence in order to trace the trajectory from modernism to postmodernism and beyond. The course will culminate in a major research project.

ASSIGNMENTS: You will write two 3-4 page papers, one on the preliminary readings and one on some aspect of *Infinite Jest*, as well as a final 20-page research paper that will constitute the culmination of both this class and your English Major. This final paper may expand upon a subject introduced in one of the shorter paper. Finally, you will turn in for formal evaluation both a 2-3 page seminar paper proposal and an annotated bibliography, and deliver at semester’s end a formal presentation of your final project.

I will also periodically administer pop “quizzes” on the assigned reading. A passing grade on one of these quizzes will not affect your grade and will not even be recorded, whereas a failing grade on the quiz will be recorded as an absence. (See below under ATTENDANCE.)

GRADING: All assignments—both formal papers and presentations—are subject to the honor code. This means that, at the end of each assignment, you will write out the honor pledge *in full* and sign it. All work will be evaluated on the basis of the grading scale outlined on page 74 of the current Rhodes College Catalogue. Your final grade for the course will be computed as follows:

Short Paper 1	15%
Short Paper 2	15%
Proposal/Annotated Bibliography	10%
Paper Presentation	10%
Seminar Paper	50%

ATTENDANCE: Because I place a great deal of emphasis on the daily readings and our discussions of them, your attendance and participation in class is mandatory. Failure to bring your book to class will result in an absence. Failure to pass the day’s pop quiz will also result in an absence. You are allowed two (2) absences free-of-charge. You are to use these absences in the event that you are sick, away on a college-related event, or unable to attend for whatever other reason. In other words, there are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences, per se. You may simply miss class

two times, free of charge. After you have used up those two absences, each absence beyond those two will cost your *final course* average two tenths of a point. If you miss more than sixt (6) classes—three weeks of the semester, in other words—you will fail the course. Simple as that.

NOTE: I reserve the right to alter this policy in the face of special circumstances, such as a prolonged, unexpected illness or the like.

LATE PAPERS: All papers are due on the day stipulated on the syllabus. Any unexcused late assignment will be penalized a two-tier reduction per day late; in other words, an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B-, and so on.

PROBLEMS? You can send me a voice mail, an e-mail, or even an old-fashioned hand-written a note. **Do not abuse the email system.** Don't email to ask me a question about something that is on your syllabus, that you could ask me in person, or that a fellow student in the class can answer. Don't email me to ask what you missed in class that day. And don't email me to set up an office visit *unless you have classes scheduled during my office hours*. Otherwise, email is the way to go.

PAPER REQUIREMENTS: All formal papers in this class are to be typed, double-spaced, and pledged in full. You will use the MLA documentation format, which we'll discuss in class.