This class will be radically democratic. What that means is that you will all be responsible for what we do during class time. You will also all take part in constructing the syllabus, after which we will decide who will lead class when. If you are not that familiar with Wallace’s work, you should take some time over the summer to familiarize yourself with some of it. This might be the summer to read Infinite Jest, if you’ve always planned to do that (for suggestions on how to make a schedule for summer reading, see http://infinitesummer.org/archives/168). The website infinitesummer.org is, in general, a good resource, for reading IJ.

If you’re not planning to read IJ this summer, you could take a look at some of the other books, or some of the essays or short stories.

I will take the lead (along with any students who are comfortable with the material and want to help me) when we talk about the philosophy, but when we are talking about DFW’s work, class will be taught by pairs (or trios) of students. The weekly paper will be optional for the week that you are in charge of class discussion.

Readings:

I’ve had the bookstore order the following books; the ones I’ve put in bold are the ones that you will definitely need:

**Ludwig Wittgenstein**, *Philosophical Investigations*

**Ludwig Wittgenstein**, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

AJ Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*

Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*

J.M Coetzee et al *The Lives of Animals*

Cavell, Diamond, McDowell, Hacking, Wolf, *Philosophy and Animal Life*

David Markson, *Wittgenstein’s Mistress*

Wallace, *Broom of the System*

**Wallace, Oblivion**

Wallace, *Both Flesh and Not*

**Wallace, This is Water**

Wallace, *Girl With Curious Hair*

Wallace, *Everything and More*

**Wallace, Consider the Lobster and Other Essays**

I expect that we will also have some readings posted to Blackboard. You can find many of the Wallace essays and stories we’ll read here: 

http://www.openculture.com/2012/02/23_free_essays_stories_by_david_foster_wallace_available_on_the_web.html

However, if you do read them from this site, please bring a hardcopy to class. The same holds true for the Blackboard readings. As I’ve experimented with having students use electronic documents, I’ve found that it’s just not as easy to refer to passages and have everyone find them when we’re working with electronic documents. It’s not efficient, and too clunky. And since we will be referring to the texts of the works we’re reading pretty frequently during class, it will just be annoying if we can’t all do that easily and quickly together. The old fashioned technology of paper copies still seems to be the best for discussing texts in class.

Course requirements:
Class participation (40%) You will be asked to evaluate your own participation as well as that of your classmates in helping me come up with a grade for this component.

Weekly Papers due each Tuesday by the beginning of class: (20%) These should be your responses to the reading. When we read the philosophy, this should include what you understood to be the argument or important insights from the reading.

If all of these are turned in on time, you will get an A for this component of the class; if one is late, you will get an A-; if two are late, you will get a B+, etc. I want these to be your responses, and I don’t want you to focus on getting it right or playing it safe. So, for instance, when we discuss Wittgenstein, I want you to tell me what you think he’s saying without worrying that you’ll get a bad grade for getting it wrong. Since we will all have different academic backgrounds that will make us more or less comfortable writing about literature and philosophy, I want to make sure that you are not deterred from taking chances.

Final paper portfolio (40%): I suggest that this should consiste of 4 weekly papers that you revise and resubmit at the end of the semester. However, if you have other ideas for a final project, please talk to me about that. I am open to other possible ways of having you show me what you learned.