

Typography and Letterforms / DESMA 25 / Fall 2009

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Consider the letterform. The shape of the letter doesn't really resemble the sound we associate with it; it's a mark with which we've entered into an agreement with regard to what it represents. Letters are ordered and strung together into words, words into phrases, and sentences, paragraphs—to communicate messages and meaning. We take in and routinely see/read/process the typographic landscape untold times each day rarely pausing—or even needing—to reflect on this activity.

Typography is meant to be read AND looked at.

The project

Design front-cover, back-cover, spine and inside pages for the novel *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace.

course aims

This course is an introduction to typography and effective typographic expression. The course consists of discussions and a step-by-step project involving a process of increasing complexities. We'll examine the micro and macro of typographic practice, from the letterform and what defines its distinct character, to exploring the (inter)relational considerations of working with and manipulating typography.

In addition to introducing you to working with typography, a goal of this course is to develop a critical appreciation for how typography works. We'll frequently discuss how/why manipulating the form in deliberate ways, affects the esthetics, reading (legibility) and the "read" (intent, language and meaning). Beyond setting type and creating layouts, the discipline and practice of typography is an interrelated exploration of language and ideas and communicating and form.

The course will include several Indesign practicals. By the end of the course, you should be able to work with the software and have gained basic knowledge about working with typography, setting up a grid, column settings and intelligent visual editing.

This is a studio and critical discussion course about a living and changing practice. Regard yourself and your work for this class seriously and as one component of a life-long field of study.

content

Infinite Jest is a 1996 novel written by David Foster Wallace. David Foster Wallace's low-key, bookish appearance flatly contradicts the unshaven, bandanna-capped image advanced by his publicity photos. But then, even a hipster novelist would have to be a serious, disciplined writer to produce a 1,079-page book in three years. *Infinite Jest*, Wallace's mammoth second novel, juxtaposes life in an elite tennis academy with the struggles of the residents of a nearby halfway house, all against a near-future background in which the US, Canada and Mexico have merged, Northern New England has become a vast toxic waste dump and everything from private automobiles to the very years themselves are sponsored by corporate advertisers. Slangy, ambitious and occasionally over-enamored with the prodigious intellect of its author, *Infinite Jest* nevertheless has enough solid emotional ballast to keep it from capsizing. And there's something rare and exhilarating about a contemporary author who aims to capture the spirit of his age. —excerpted from *David Foster Wallace, a SALON Interview*, by Laura Miller

class mechanics

8 assignments will be handed out, each one building on the previous assignment, from simple to more and more complex. You will create 10 designs for each assignment.

Tuesdays are reserved for class reviews, practical software demonstrations and information on typography. There will be an additional project in November and a bookbinding demonstration.

presentation

Select 5 of 10 designs and hang them in tabloid format (landscape), 1 inch between each sheet. Work must be in presentation mode (hairline rule around "live area," output using the Indesign print menu "Page Information" checked, name your file with your name and assignment #). All sketches should be saved as digital files and printouts kept and filed showing the process.

final project

Present a selection of all the work, compiled and hand-bound in the form of a book.

resources

(see links on course website as well)

* *Thinking with Type* by Ellen Lupton (also online at <http://www.thinkingwithtype.com>)

* *Stop Stealing Sheep & Find Out How Type Works* by Erik Spiekermann

* *Designing with Type: An Essential Guide to Typography* by James Craig

Elements of Typographic Style by Robert Bringhurst

Type & Typography by Phil Baines and Andrew Haslam

* books that are very helpful for this course

General class rules

attendance

Class will start at 2 pm sharp. Please hang your work before class begins. On all-class critique days, work that isn't pinned up by the time we begin the discussion will not be critiqued (and you'll miss the benefit of your colleagues' comments and suggestions) plus, you will be marked absent. Repetitive lateness will lower final grade by half a grade each time. Each unexcused absence lowers the grade by one whole grade. Three unexcused absences results in a FAIL for the course.

grading

Your work in this class will be evaluated on the basis of the following, with each category weighted equally: class participation, presentation (quality of craft, skills, finish), and exploration and resolution of projects. The final grade will be determined by averaging all the grades in combination with attendance.

Extra credit opportunities are available during the term.

other things

Please remember to silence your cellphone.

Kindly refrain from sending and receiving email during discussions.

Please no food, drinks are OK.

The success of this class—and the community of which you're a member—relies on discussion and participation in critiques. Speaking about your work and your fellow designers' work, will develop critical and crucial skills to analyze, judge and further your own work. This conversation and critical discourse are essential to the practice. If you are wildly shy, please see the TA or the instructor to discuss.

If anything is unclear or the course isn't going well for you, please communicate this as soon as possible.

Enjoy the process.

schedule

Thurs Sept 24	introduction
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Tues Sept 29	indesign practical: getting started, setting up a file / work in class on assignment #1
Thurs Oct 01	indesign practical / Work in class on assignment #2
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Tues Oct 06	critique assignments #1 & #2 / all class wall critique / Work in class on assignment #3 / Find type samples to bring Thursday (we'll talk about it in class)
Thurs Oct 08	discuss samples / indesign practical /
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Tues Oct 13	work in class on assignment #4
Thurs Oct 15	work in class on assignment #5
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Tues Oct 19	critique assignments #5 / individual meetings / revise and reprint earlier assignments so all layouts are printed uniformly: with file information "on" and .25 rule defining page.
Thurs Oct 22	grids / work in class on grids and assignment #6
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Tues Oct 26	critique assignments #6 (show 5 full covers plus 5 first spreads) / all class wall critique
Thurs Oct 29	Work in class on assignment #7
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Tues Nov 03	critique assignments #7 / individual meetings
Thurs Nov 05	work in class on assignment #8
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Tues Nov 10	critique assignment #8 / all class wall critique / NEW: Project-Thing "Writing your way into the Thing"
Thurs Nov 12	Project-Thing in-class discussion of writings
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Tues Nov 17	Project-Thing / in-class discussion of layouts
Thurs Nov 19	critique of Project-Thing
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Tues Nov 24	bookbinding demo
Thurs Nov 26	Thanksgiving holiday
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Tues Dec 01	chapter dividers / cover / binding
Thurs Dec 03	presentation

The project

Design front-cover, back-cover, spine and inside pages for the novel *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace.

DESCRIPTIONS AND PARAMETERS

#1 composition + space

Design 10 very different front covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING Helvetica Neue 55 roman / Helvetica medium only.
9 point size only.
type black on white.

Typeface and size are set. Give order to book title, author's name, publishing house, ISBN number, and intro. Open for manipulating: leading, letterspacing, and so forth.

#2 composition + space + lettersizes

Design 10 very different front covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING Helvetica Neue 55 roman / Helvetica medium only.
any single point size per design (for example one design uses all 14 pt., another, 6 pt.).
type black on white.

Typeface and your choice of one size per design. Make sure you give order to book title, author's name, publishing house, ISBN number, and intro. Open for manipulating: leading, letterspacing, and so forth. Explore the entire space of the book cover. How small can you make the type and it still maintains legibility? How large can you go and still fit in all the copy?

#3 differences in light+ bold type

Design 10 very different front covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING Helvetica Neue 45 light / Helvetica Neue 75 bold / Helvetica light + Helvetica bold.
any single point size per design (for example one design uses all 14 pt., another, 6 pt.).
type black on white.

Typeface and your choice of one size per design. Make sure you give order to book title, author's name, publishing house, ISBN number, and intro. Open for manipulating: leading, letterspacing, bold + light type, and so forth. Look at the covers you made for assignment #2 and enhance by adding some bold type somewhere.

#4 roman / light bold / italics

Design 10 very different front covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING 3 different selection from Helvetica Neue / Helvetica family / NO CONDENSED OR EXTENDED FONTS.
any single point size per design (for example one design uses all 14 pt., another, 6 pt.).
type black on white.
Typeface and your choice of one size per design. Make sure you give order to book title, author's name, publishing house, ISBN number, and intro. Open for manipulating: leading, letterspacing, bold + light + italic type, and so forth. Look at work from #3 and enhance those by using three different Helvetica fonts.

#5 typesize combinations

Design 10 very different spines (2-inch), back- and front-covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING 3 different selection from Helvetica Neue / Helvetica family / NO CONDENSED OR EXTENDED FONTS.
any point size combination.
type black on white.

Typeface and your choice of one size per design. Make sure you give order to book title, author's name, publishing house, ISBN number, and intro. Use blurbs for back cover. Open for manipulating: leading, letterspacing, bold + light + italic type, size, and so forth. Look at earlier work and develop further using size combinations.

#6 rules + blocks

Design 10 chapter opens (as a spread). Use 5 different grid structures.

Design 10 very different spines, back- and front-covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING 3 different selection from Helvetica Neue / Helvetica family / NO CONDENSED OR EXTENDED FONTS.
any point size combination.
introduce the following elements: rules and solid blocks of black.
4 designs with rules only.
4 designs with blocks of black and reversed type.
2 designs with both rules and blocks.
type black on white.

Look at earlier work and develop further using rules and blocks and reversed type.

#7 adding 1 spot color

Design 10 chapter opens (a spread).

Design 10 very different spines, back- and front-covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING Helvetica Neue / Helvetica family / NO CONDENSED OR EXTENDED FONTS.
any point sizes.
rules and solid blocks of black by choice.
add one color, may use all values of new color plus black.

Look at earlier work and develop further using additional spot colors.

#8 adding 2 spot colors + photographic images

Design 10 chapter opens and intro spread (write the intro).

Design 10 very different spines, back- and front-covers for the book with the following parameters:

USING Helvetica Neue / Helvetica family / NO CONDENSED OR EXTENDED FONTS.
any point sizes.
rules and solid blocks of black by choice.
add two colors to the mix, may use all values of new colors plus black.
use given image of author and/or make or find other images.

Look at earlier work and develop further.

final DESIGN A BOOK

Choose format, make a grid. Make a selection of 5 designs in every category ($5 \times 8 = 40$), design chapter dividers for each chapter describing the parameters as mentioned in the assignments. Design a cover. Write an intro text and design an introduction page. Other necessary page to add will follow. Bind and present in the best way possible.

Enjoy the process.

COVER INFO

INFINITE JEST

a novel

DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

ISBN: 0-316-92004-5

INTRO TEXT

A gargantuan, mind-altering comedy about the Pursuit of Happiness in America Set in an addicts' halfway house and a tennis academy, and featuring the most endearingly screwed-up family to come along in recent fiction, *Infinite Jest* explores essential questions about what entertainment is and why it has come to so dominate our lives; about how our desire for entertainment affects our need to connect with other people; and about what the pleasures we choose say about who we are.

Equal parts philosophical quest and screwball comedy, *Infinite Jest* bends every rule of fiction without sacrificing for a moment its own entertainment value. It is an exuberant, uniquely American exploration of the passions that make us human—and one of those rare books that renew the idea of what a novel can do.

EXCERPT FROM FIRST CHAPTER

YEAR OF GLAD

I am seated in an office, surrounded by heads and bodies. My posture is consciously congruent to the shape of my hard chair. This is a cold room in University Administration, wood-walled, Remington-hung, double-windowed against the November heat, insulated from Administrative sounds by the reception area outside, at which Uncle Charles, Mr. deLint and I were lately received.

I am in here.

Three faces have resolved into place above summer-weight sportcoats and half-Windsors across a polished pine conference table shiny with the spidered light of an Arizona noon. These are three Deans—of Admissions, Academic Affairs, Athletic Affairs. I do not know which face belongs to whom.

I believe I appear neutral, maybe even pleasant, though I've been coached to err on the side of neutrality and not attempt what would feel to me like a pleasant expression or smile.

I have committed to crossing my legs I hope carefully, ankle on knee, hands together in the lap of my slacks. My fingers are mated into a mirrored series of what manifests, to me, as the letter X. The interview room's other personnel include: the University's Director of Composition, its varsity tennis coach, and Academy protector Mr. A. deLint. C.T. is beside me; the others sit, stand and stand, respectively, at the periphery of my focus. The tennis coach jingles pocket-change. There is something vaguely digestive about the room's odor. The high-traction sole of my complimentary Nike sneaker runs parallel to the wobbling loafer of my mother's half-brother, here in his capacity as Headmaster, sitting in the chair to what I hope is my immediate right, also facing Deans.

The Dean at left, a lean yellowish man whose fixed smile nevertheless has the impermanent quality of something stamped into uncooperative material, is a personality-type I've come lately to appreciate, the type who delays need of any response from me by relating my side of the story for me, to me. Passed a packet of computer-sheets by the shaggy lion of a Dean at center, he is speaking more or less to these pages, smiling down.

'You are Harold Incandenza, eighteen, date of secondary-school graduation approximately one month from now, attending the Enfield Tennis Academy, Enfield, Massachusetts, a boarding school, where you reside.' His reading glasses are rectangular, court-shaped, the sidelines at top and bottom. 'You are, according to Coach White and Dean [unintelligible], a regionally, nationally, and continentally

ranked junior tennis player, a potential O.N.A.N.C.A.A. athlete of substantial promise, recruited by Coach White via correspondence with Dr. Tavis here commencing . . . February of this year.' The top page is removed and brought around neatly to the bottom of the sheaf, at intervals. 'You have been in residence at the Enfield Tennis Academy since age seven.'

I am debating whether to risk scratching the right side of my jaw, where there is a wen.

'Coach White informs our offices that he holds the Enfield Tennis Academy's program and achievements in high regard, that the University of Arizona tennis squad has profited from the prior matriculation of several former E.T.A. alumni, one of whom was one Mr. Aubrey F. deLint, who appears also to be with you here today. Coach White and his staff have given us—'

The yellow administrator's usage is on the whole undistinguished, though I have to admit he's made himself understood. The Director of Composition seems to have more than the normal number of eyebrows. The Dean at right is looking at my face a bit strangely.

Uncle Charles is saying that though he can anticipate that the Deans might be predisposed to weigh what he avers as coming from his possible appearance as a kind of cheerleader for E.T.A., he can assure the assembled Deans that all this is true, and that the Academy has presently in residence no fewer than a third of the continent's top thirty juniors, in age brackets all across the board, and that I here, who go by 'Hal,' usually, am 'right up there among the very cream.' Right and center Deans smile professionally; the heads of deLint and the coach incline as the Dean at left clears his throat:

'—belief that you could well make, even as a freshman, a real contribution to this University's varsity tennis program. We are pleased,' he either says or reads, removing a page, 'that a competition of some major sort here has brought you down and given us the chance to sit down and chat together about your application and potential recruitment and matriculation and scholarship.'

'I've been asked to add that Hal here is seeded third, Boys' 18-and-Under Singles, in the prestigious WhataBurger Southwest Junior Invitational out at the Randolph Tennis Center—' says what I infer is Athletic Affairs, his cocked head showing a freckled scalp.

'Out at Randolph Park, near the outstanding El Con Marriott,' C.T. inserts, 'a venue the whole contingent's been vocal about finding absolutely top-hole thus far, which—'

'Just so, Chuck, and that according to Chuck here Hal has already justified his seed, he's reached the semifinals as of this morning's apparently impressive win, and that he'll be playing out at the Center again tomorrow, against the winner of a quarterfinal game tonight, and so will be playing tomorrow at I believe scheduled for 0830—'

'Try to get under way before the godawful heat out there. Though of course a dry heat.'

'—and has apparently already qualified for this winter's Continental Indoors, up in Edmonton, Kirk tells me—' cocking further to look up and left at the varsity coach, whose smile's teeth are radiant against a violent sunburn—'Which is something indeed.' He smiles, looking at me. 'Did we get all that right Hal.'

C.T. has crossed his arms casually; their triceps' flesh is webbed with mottle in the air-conditioned sunlight. 'You sure did. Bill.' He smiles. The two halves of his mustache never quite match. 'And let me say if I may that Hal's excited, excited to be invited for the third year running to the Invitational again, to be back here in a community he has real affection for, to visit with your alumni and coaching staff, to have already justified his high seed in this week's not unstiff competition, to as they say still be in it without the fat woman in the Viking hat having sung, so to speak, but of course most of all to have a chance to meet you gentlemen and have a look at the facilities here. Everything here is absolutely top-slot, from what he's seen.'

There is a silence. DeLint shifts his back against the room's panelling and recenters his weight. My uncle beams and straightens a straight watchband. 62.5% of the room's faces are directed my way, pleasantly expectant. My chest bumps like a dryer with shoes in it. I compose what I project will be seen as a smile. I turn this way and that, slightly, sort of directing the expression to everyone in the room.

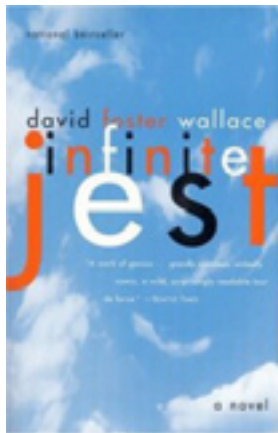
There is a new silence. The yellow Dean's eyebrows go circumflex. The two other Deans look to the Director of Composition. The tennis coach has moved to stand at the broad window, feeling at the back of his crewcut. Uncle Charles strokes the forearm above his watch. Sharp curved palm-shadows move slightly over the pine table's shine, the one head's shadow a black moon.

'Is Hal all right, Chuck?' Athletic Affairs asks. 'Hal just seemed to . . . well, grimace. Is he in pain?

Are you in pain, son?’

‘Hal’s right as rain,’ smiles my uncle, soothing the air with a casual hand. ‘Just a bit of a let’s call it maybe a facial tic, slightly, at all the adrenaline of being here on your impressive campus, justifying his seed so far without dropping a set, receiving that official written offer of not only waivers but a living allowance from Coach White here, on Pac 10 letterhead, being ready in all probability to sign a National Letter of Intent right here and now this very day, he’s indicated to me.’ C.T. looks to me, his look horribly mild. I do the safe thing, relaxing every muscle in my face, emptying out all expression. I stare carefully into the Kekulean knot of the middle Dean’s necktie.

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1ST EDITION PAPERBACK COVER



DAVID FOSTER WALLACE



PUBLISHER'S LOGO

BLURBS

Spectacularly good. . . . It's as though Paul Bunyan had joined the NFL or Wittgenstein had gone on 'Jeopardy'! *Infinite Jest* is that colossally disruptive. . . . Next year's book awards have been decided."
—*New York*

"God, I love this book. If you buy it on the strength of this review and don't grow to adore it, make a fetish out of it, keep it strapped to your body at all times . . . I personally promise to buy it back at full price."
—*Time Out New York*

"An acidic, free-styling 1,088-page encyclopedia of hurt. . . . *Infinite Jest* wrangles an enormous cast of engagingly wacked-out characters into a frequently hilarious but ultimately tragic epic."
—*Spin*