

Reading Advice for Don DeLillo's *Underworld*. (New York: Scribner, 1997.)
AMST 445, The Cold War and American Culture

DeLillo's *Underworld* is a highly structured novel – some find it extremely rewarding, others find it daunting. Every one will identify different parts of the novel as the “best stuff” – the best way to find out is to read. I don't want to spoil the reading experience, but I think the following observations will help you situate yourself in the text without taking away very much of the surprises that are in store:

- The novel is framed by a Prologue (pp. 11 - 60) and an Epilogue (pp. 785 - 827). The Prologue takes place in 1951; the Epilogue takes place in the Internet Age. The Prologue is long and very different from the central parts of the novel (so it's natural to feel a little disoriented moving from the Prologue into Part 1).

- The central body of the novel is divided into six parts, which occur in reverse chronological order:

Part 1	Spring-Summer 1992
Part 2	Mid 1980s -Early 1990s
Part 3	Spring 1978
Part 4	Summer 1974
Part 5	1950s and 1960s
Part 6	1951/1952

- After each of the odd numbered parts is a “Manx Martin” section, each of which is set in 1951 and concerned with characters that are only tangentially related to the characters in the main parts.

Manx Martin 1	(pp. 137 - 150)
Manx Martin 2	(pp. 349 - 366)
Manx Martin 3	(pp. 641 - 656)

The Manx Martin sections read very much like the Prologue – baseball fans and students of race relations will want to pay close attention to these.

Finally, some pragmatic advice (for those really pinched for time or for those who are really not DeLillo fans):

In Week 12, we will probably spend most of our time talking about
Prologue
Part 1
Part 2, especially chapters 1-5

In Week 13, we will probably spend most of our time talking about
Part 5
Epilogue

The cold war themes in the book are subtle at times, overt at others. They run the spectrum from conventional to original and controversial. Read the novel as an organic whole – we'll take it apart in class.