***Brief Wondrous Life* Wrap Up Questions – Day 1**

1. Discuss the ending of the novel. How do you interpret it? Consider the following things:
   1. Zafa and Fuku, Oscar’s insistence that he is doing something bigger than himself, man without a face, Yunior’s development, etc
2. How is magical realism a part of this novel? (See explanation below). What are a few key magical elements and to what extent are they important?
3. Diaz’s book is full of allusions. Overall, what is the effect of these allusions on the story? On the reader’s experience? Why might he be using so many?
4. Here are some of the questions we had before approaching the final part. Choose one question you are interested in exploring and discuss.
   1. What is the mongoose? What is the faceless man? Why does Diaz throw so much in here? What happens with Yunior? What happens to Oscar? Why is Yunior writing another family’s story? How does he know so much or what right does he have to do so?
5. Discuss Joe Fassler’s article “How Junot Diaz Wrote a Sexist Character, but not a Sexist Book.”
   1. What is the article’s main point?
   2. Which critical lens is this article written from/concerned with?
   3. How does Diaz (or this article’s author) respond to charges from readers that *Brief Wondrous Life* and his other writings endorse misogyny (the hatred or disregard of women)? Do you buy his response? What were your feelings of Diaz’s portrayal of gender relations in the book?

***Magic realism*** *or* ***magical realism*** *is an* [*aesthetic style*](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics) *or* [*genre*](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre) *of* [*fiction*](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiction)[*[1]*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism#cite_note-0) *in which* [*magical*](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magical) *elements are blended into a realistic atmosphere in order to access a deeper understanding of reality.* These magical elements are explained like normal occurrences that are presented in a straightforward manner which allows the "real" and the "fantastic" to be accepted in the same stream of thought. It has been widely considered a literary and visual art [genre](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre); creative fields that exhibit less significant signs of magic realism include film and music.

As used today, the term is broadly descriptive rather than critically rigorous: Matthew Strecher has defined magic realism as "what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something 'too strange to believe'".[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism#cite_note-1) However, it may be that this critical perspective towards magical realism stems from the Western reader's disassociation with [mythology](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythology), a root of magical realism more easily understood by non-Western cultures.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism#cite_note-Faris.2C_Wendy_B_pp._3-4-2) Westerners' confusion regarding the style of magical realism is due to the "'conception of the real'" created in a magical realist text; rather than explaining reality using natural or physical laws as in typical Western texts, magical realist texts create a reality "'in which the relation between incidents, characters, and setting could not be based upon or justified by their status within the physical world or their normal acceptance by bourgeois mentality."'[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism#cite_note-3) Today, there are many varieties of writers whose work is categorized as "magical realist", to such an extent that critics and readers alike are confused as to what the term really means and how wide its borders are.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism#cite_note-4)