

Sequence Two Major Paper: Meeting, Clashing, Grappling Film

engl 131 / sec. A7 / fall quarter 2005 / chang



Your second sequence of assignments continue to build on the cultural, ideological, and identificatory work of the first sequence. Pratt's essay "Arts of the Contact Zone" offers as its central project a way to understand and critique literacy, cultural production, language, community, learning, writing, and teaching. Pratt hopes for a classroom and for a world where "exercises in storytelling and in identifying with the ideas, interests, histories, and attitudes of others" (596) are important and are made explicit. Pratt argues for "experiments in transculturation and collaborative work and in the arts of critique, parody, and comparison...[for] ways for people to engage with suppressed aspects of history (including their

own histories)...ground rules for communication across lines of difference and hierarchy that go beyond politeness but maintain mutual respect" (596). In other words, she (and our class) argues for the imagining and implementation of channels, materials, and practices that allow us to talk about, think about, and democratize social locations such as race, gender, class, sexuality, education, language, and nationality.

Goal and Outcomes

For this **5- to 7-page** formal paper, you will locate and choose one of the following feature-length films:

Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)	Powder (1995)
The Breakfast Club (1985)	The Sound of Music (1965)
Lilo and Stitch (2002)	Boys Don't Cry (1999)
The Empire Strikes Back (1980)	Kids (1995)
Good Will Hunting (1997)	Do the Right Thing (1989)
The Searchers (1956)	The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Bring It On (2000)	ET: The Extraterrestrial (1982)
Joy Luck Club (1993)	The Matrix (1999)

Drawing upon your quarter's work and upon Pratt's essay, reconsider the questions posed by Short Paper 2.4: Video as Contact Zone and formulate a further, deeper intervention for your major paper. For this assignment, you must consider and answer and analyze **two key** questions:

1) How does your chosen film represent, depict, or imagine Pratt's concept of the contact zone? In other words, what contact zone is in play in the film? What rhetorical purpose, narrative purpose, or ideological purpose do it serve? How does the film construct, frame, edit, and narrate the contact zone?

2) Furthermore, how does your chosen film itself function as a contact zone? Lister & Wells reminds us that as cultural critics we must pay attention to the production, consumption, distribution, and construction of meaning for cultural artifacts, including images and films. Therefore, your film is a product of its time, place, history, directorial and national imaginary. How do these factor play into the film as contact zone? In other words, what is the relationship between the film and audience, between the film's creators (director, actors, cinematographers, producers) and the audience, between the film's images and the film's meanings? Analyze and express how the film you watched serves as a site, a place where cultures "meet, clash, and grapple."

Think and write deeply about how your film presents and complicates culture and identity, how it represents and investigates ideas about race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, citizenship, or nation. You may also wish to consider how Pratt's further concepts of autoethnographic text, transculturation, imagined community, and safe house enrich the film's contact zone? Remember that the above questions should not be a laundry list for you to simply run down the answers. Be selective and focused about what you wish to write about and then generate your own **original claim** about your film.

Screen the film at least twice. Much like the exercise of close reading, view the film once for plot, characters, and general content. Then, with your research question and argument in mind, watch the film again with your finger on the pause button in order to make notes, take down verbatim quotes, sketch scenes, and pose questions for yourself.

Your paper by necessity will include a very brief narration of the film (assume your audience is familiar with the film) and will demonstrate your ability to **close read** both film and research. You are required to include at least **five outside sources** including Lister & Wells and other texts read for this class, scholarly journals, and credible newspapers and magazines and websites. Like your previous papers, you will be expected to **critically analyze** your film and **persuasively articulate** how it reveals something significant about your culture.

Keep in mind the **course outcomes** as you work and write. To summarize, you should be prepared to make a solid and relevant claim using a well-developed and clearly organized analysis of your artifact by situating it within a particular and meaningful context, with clear evidence to support your argument.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Audience: You will write for an audience that includes a general academic community, which includes your instructor, your classmates, and the authors of the essays we have read. Keep in mind that your audience is varied in many ways, including academic experience and familiarity with the texts, so you'll need to consider of what information each type of reader will need to make sense of your essay. Another good way to think about your audience is to imagine the publication in which your essay could appear such as the *Reading Contexts* anthology or e.g. website or a scholarly journal.

Format: This assignment is a formal, academic paper and should follow the manuscript guidelines outlined in the course policies:
formal title page, appropriate title for your paper
5-7 pages, typed, double-spaced, with MLA citations, stapled
1 paragraph describing your audience
bibliography, correct MLA format

Targeted outcomes:

Paper Proposal/Conference Memo: Bring to your conference on _____ your Conference Memo (Short Paper 2.5 to be assigned), which identifies your overall claim, chosen film, and a rough outline of your main ideas.

First Draft: Please bring 3 copies of your paper for peer workshopping to class on TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2005.

Final Draft: Make revisions based on comments and responses from me and your peers and hand in the revised final draft in class on TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2005.