

Assignment One

In "Arts of the Contact Zone," Mary Louise Pratt proposes several terms and concepts to explain interactions across group boundaries, whether the groups are linguistic, cultural, national, or educational. In this sense, she is trying to develop the "arts" of her title, ways to communicate, teach, and learn in diverse communities. But what of her essay itself? Is it an example of the "arts of the contact zone"? Or does it collapse instead into the "perils of writing in the contact zone" (524-5)?

Write an paper in which you evaluate Pratt's essay in terms of the literate arts of the contact zone.

In your paper you will want to argue for the essay's success or shortcomings in terms of Pratt's concepts and ideas. Your goal is not to prove Pratt right or wrong; instead, your goal is to evaluate this essay in terms of your own experience as a reader.

Steps for Success

1. You will want to start by carefully reviewing what Pratt has to say about communication in the contact zone, including both her terms/concepts and her examples.
2. You will then want to apply these ideas to her own writing, noting specific places where her ideas connect back to her writing. For example, are there passages that show she is writing an autoethnographic text? Is her essay similar in any ways to Guaman Poma's letter? What are the keys to success in the contact zone and does she employ these keys? If not, why not? Why wouldn't she be using the literate arts of the contact zone?
3. Throughout the first two steps, you will want to make note of specific passages and quotations that guide your thinking.
4. Then you will want to spend some time forming an argument. This argument should be a single sentence that summarizes the point you want to make in your paper, the conclusion you want your reader to reach with you, the goal you hope to accomplish.
5. Each of your body paragraphs should clearly help you prove your argument or support your project. Use quotations to define terms and concepts and to offer examples of those ideas that support your argument.

Requirements

- Rough drafts must be at least 2.5 pages; final drafts should be 4 pages.
- Bring 4 copies of your draft to class on May 23.
- Use MLA citation for all quotations. Refer to the Wadsworth guide for help on MLA format.
- All drafts should be double spaced, printed, and proofread for error. Your name should appear on the first page and in the header of every page along with the page number.