CULTURE CLASH

Sometimes cultures collide. We know this. History can be constructed as a history of warring cultures. You might see this when you see people from different cultures confront one another. Critic Mary Louise Pratt has written about “contact zones” or “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.” You have seen this, perhaps, in classrooms. Begin by identifying a contact zone.

We are often subject to such spaces. In fact, we are subjects of our contexts and multiple cultures—we might consider ourselves contact zones. Sometimes we might find ourselves at war with the different factions within us—conventions of one culture and values of another. Given that reality, you will examine a culture clash in this paper. What cultures clashed? What values were at stake? And was there a reconciliation, a negotiation, a truce, or a war as a result?

Here are some questions to consider as you craft your own essay:

• Inspired by the Mellix, Tan, and Staples essays, what happens when one inhabits more than one culture or is alienated by one culture? How must you engage in literal or figurative code switching?
• Hooks meditates on the ritual of hair straightening and the complex meaning of this fashion. In what way do you succumb to a particular fashion and how might you interrogate or explain your surrender?
• Hughes demonstrates his refusal to surrender. In what ways have you challenged convention? What made it possible for you to go against the grain?
• The film Persepolis embodies how a person can experience cultural conflict in diverse ways.
• What cultures have you seen come into contact and then clash and engage in conflict?

The Process:

• Once you have decided on an essay as inspiration and a prompt, brainstorm to identify a single incident or 3 or 4 linked experiences to illustrate the broader point you wish to make.
• Once you have these ideas mapped out, try to articulate a thesis. A rough formula might look like this for a starting point: The significance of this_____and this______culture clashing is ______________Of course, your thesis should be crafted and finessed.
• Look to these essays we have read to consider how you might structure this discussion. Block out potential sections that allow for detailed descriptions and anecdotes as well as synthesized analysis of the significance.
• Now that your purpose and structure is roughed out, free write through a draft addressing these points.
• Step back and return to your introduction considering the detailed advice in your Word by Word book. Make a strategic choice about how you will draw your reader in.
• Consider the discussion in the “Development and Style” chapter in Word by Word. How will you expand your details and paint a precise picture of your scenes?
• Return to your transitions and topic sentences to hit home your purpose. Consider taking time to synthesize your argument throughout your discussion.
• Remember information is mediated by the outside world—your paper would probably benefit from citing one or more sources. Choose at list one! Introduce your support and cite it.
• Revise. Take time to make your language precise, specific, and crafted. Be a writer, be an artist!
• Proofread. Proofread and attend to all grammar issues, particularly those you have had trouble with in the past!
• Seek outside readers and do it all over again!

An A paper will address the above issues and satisfy the requirements as outlined in the departmental grading policy. Your essay must be 4-5 double-spaced pages. It should have 1 inch margins. It should be in a reasonable professional font like Times New Roman 11 or 12 point or Garamond 11 point (which you see here). If you are tempted to achieve length via a technicality, DON’T. See me instead.

10.2 PAPER 2 DUE/ Culture Clash Exercise; Persepolis
10.3 LAST DAY TO DROP WITH A “W”
10.4 Persepolis; View a film or show that involves a clash of cultures—be prepared to discuss that clash after fall break.
10.9 NO CLASS; FALL BREAK
10.11 Cabistan, “I am American!” (64-67); Iyer, “Where Worlds Collide” (206-217); Tan, “Mother Tongue” (331-337); VISTA Mellix “Outside In”
10.16 hooks, “Straightening Our Hair” (79-86); Griffin, “Black Like Me”(193-205); Staples, “Black Men and Public Space” (337-340); Naylor, “Mommy, What Does Nigger Mean?” (423-425)
10.18 WORKSHOP DRAFT DUE
10.23 PAPER 3 DUE