

response paper

1.2 s o u n d s c a p i n g

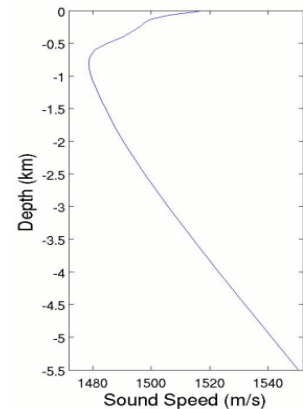
english 121b
instructor: Jentery Sayers
winter 2008

How does voice-over narration play a role in the composition of film and television? How does what or who we hear impact our reception of information and knowledge-making? And how do socio-cultural and political strategies function through the voices we hear?

The goals of this paper are to develop sonic literacy by:

- Practicing the analysis of sound's role in film or television.
- Continuing to explore why sound and voice matter.
- Understanding the role of "layering" or "mixing" in composition.
- Considering the intersections of voice, visuals, genre, and audience.

Part I: Pick a film or television clip of roughly three minutes in duration that has some degree of "disembodied" voice-over narration. Choose carefully. Select something that interests you, because this composition will become the focus of your Response Papers 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4, as well as your First Major Paper. (For ideas, consult the list of possibilities that I provided.) Your clip should be easy to share (on disc or on the Net) with a peer and at no monetary cost to her or him.



Once you select your clip, get to know it. Examine it closely from various angles. First, watch it with the sound off (e.g., hit "mute" or turn off the speakers). Then try it as is, with both sounds and visuals. Finally, listen to it without the visuals (e.g., turn off the screen or just don't look at it). As you do each, take notes. How do the angles differ? In your note-taking, consider your composition's intended audience, its genre, and its conventions.

Part II: When you are done, write a three-step analysis of your clip from each of your angles. (If possible, include the URL for your clip or a screen shot of it. This way, your audience will be able to see and/or hear your evidence.) Your paper should include three distinct and separate analyses—one paragraph on the clip with the sound off, one on the clip "as is," and one on the clip without the visuals. Each analysis should introduce your angle on the composition, explain the angle, and articulate the implications of your explanation. When considering the implications, you might ask: "How is voice (or its absence) functioning here?" "How does it (or its absence) draw attention to audience, genre, and socio-cultural and political strategies?" And, "How is the voice-over narration influencing how I read this composition?" Each of your implications should highlight HOW your composition says what it says. For example, attend to HOW your narrator speaks, rather than seeking meaning in what she or he says. Finally, there's no need for an introduction or a conclusion in this paper.

Part III: When are finished with your three analyses, at the end of your paper, please include three productive research questions about the voice-over narration for your clip that you want to pursue for the balance of the first sequence. Here's a string of example questions: In *Grizzly Man*, how does voice-over narration reveal a tension between Treadwell's and Herzog's relation to "nature"? How is the audience supposed to negotiate this tension? And how might a different approach to the voice-over or "sound-script" resolve this tension?

Your audience for this assignment includes your English 121 peers and me. As you write, you should consider what your audience needs to know and what they probably already know.

Targeted Outcomes

1: Your three-step analyses should show an understanding of the conventions of your chosen media (e.g., film and TV), and the tone and style of your writing should also be appropriate for its audience.

2: Your three-step analyses should demonstrate an awareness of sound and voice, an attention to rhetoric, and knowledge of how to unpack and synthesize multiple perspectives on evidence with particularity.

Sounds Like This Is Due Soon: Your paper should be two to three pages with one-inch margins, typed using twelve-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and spell-checked. It is due to me via the class drop box and to your peer by e-mail by the end of Thursday, January 24th. On Tuesday the 22nd, I will ask you for the title of your selected film or TV show.