

**zINES**

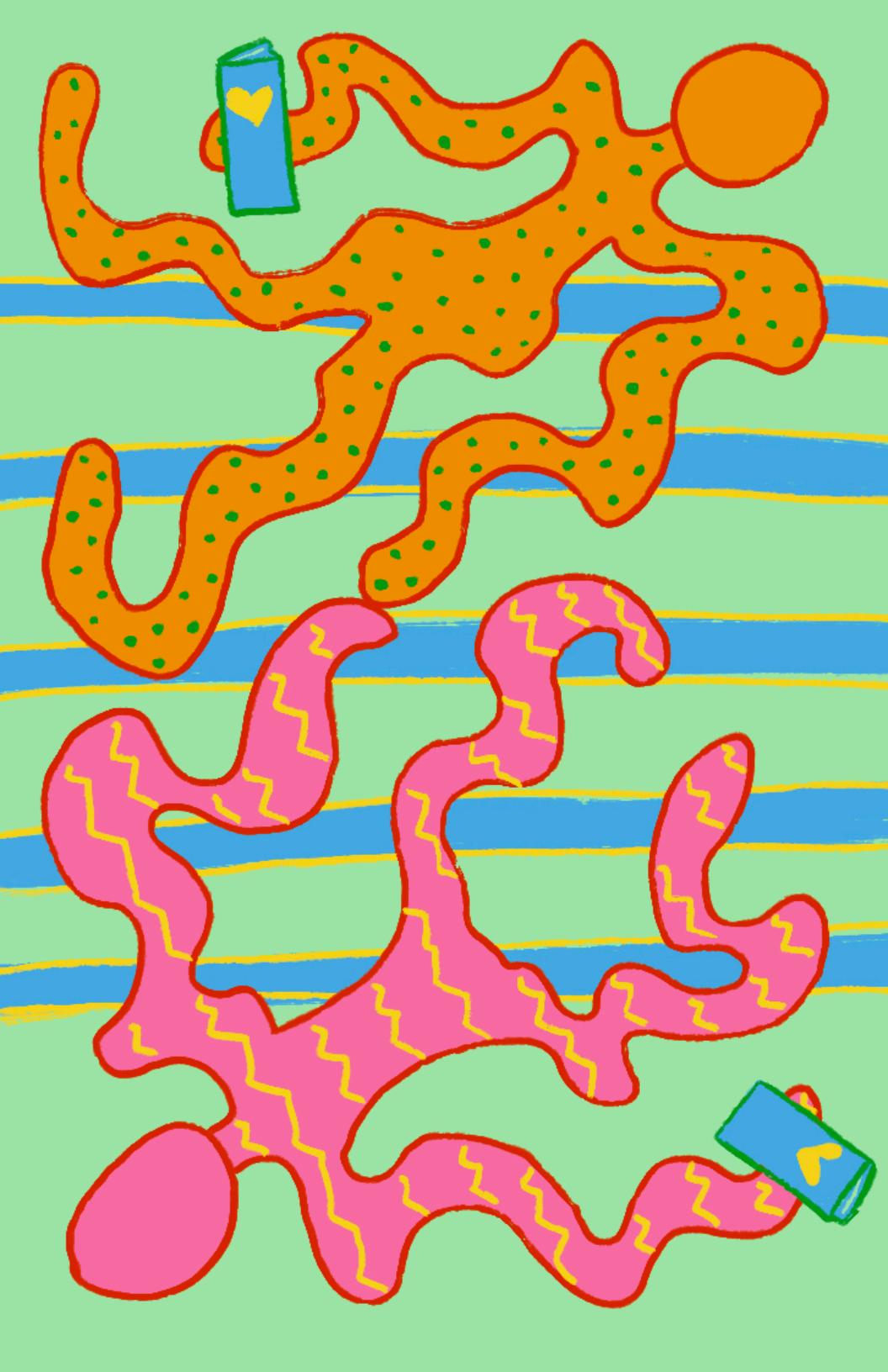
AS A

**LIBERAT-**

**ORY**

**PROJECT**

A SYLLABUS



# WHAT IS A ZINE?

Zines are paper pamphlets made out of cheap, widely accessible materials.

They are scanned to be reproduced and distributed quickly and inexpensively.

Traditionally, zines are spaces for communities to share radical ideas with each other; certain groups make zines because the mainstream media does not want to publish

their ideas. At the heart of zine culture are the following ideas:

## anti capitalism:

Zines are inherently anti-capitalist and anti-copyright; they operate from the belief that all knowledge should be free and accessible to everyone. A zinester believes that everyone should be creators of knowledge and media, not just consumers.

## necessity:

Marginalized communities started making zines because they had ideas that the mainstream media refused to publish. Zines were and continue to be a necessity to disseminate information, keep communities safe and informed, and provide a place for marginalized groups to express themselves without the censorship of mainstream media.

## accessibility:

At every step of the zine creation and distribution process, zinesters should be finding ways to minimize barriers to someone coming into contact with their zine. Think cost, location of distribution, presentation of content, etc.

## distribution:

Zines are meant to be shared! After reading a zine, the reader is supposed to pass it on to someone else or drop it in public for a stranger to find.

# the LIBERATORY POTENTIAL of QUEER ZINES

Zines are a media form that allows the author to be completely unfiltered and true to their thoughts and feelings. For decades, queer people have used zines as a site of creative expression, theory development, and community building. In queer zines, we hear directly from the queer community—unfiltered and unedited. Bypassing mainstream media entirely, queer zines allow a pure peak into the minds and hearts of queer people, what they believe the most pressing issues in their community are, and what they envision for themselves in the future. Queer zines are a gift and an opportunity to read queer theory from firsthand experiences.

## RATIONALE

This syllabus was created to honor the brave, creative work done by queer zinesters, to uplift this medium as an important and relevant form of knowledge creation, and to encourage others to engage with zines as such.

# course description

In this syllabus, you will find a collection of zines that highlight different discussions in the queer community, along with secondary sources to learn more about zines themselves. I have paired these materials together in order to encourage conversations both about the issues facing the queer community, as well as to highlight zines as a medium capable of holding nuanced critiques and envisioning imaginative futures.

## intended learning outcomes

Understand and celebrate the varied ways in which zines are used in the queer community.

Engage in discussions about queer critiques of the state and potential avenues to queer liberation.

Contribute to efforts of envisioning queer futures by creating your own zines!

## acknowledgements

This syllabus is the result of years spent in the queer zine community. I have immense love for those that have invested their energy into this work - I would not have found confidence to publish my own ideas if it weren't for their efforts. I would like to especially acknowledge Radical Reprints, a zine archive that has made revolutionary ideas, including many of the zines in this syllabus, accessible to our community.

The goals and effects of queer zines are not easily categorized. For the sake of this syllabus, a selection of queer zines has been split into three broad categories:

# TEACH

Zines that explain concepts about the queer community and facilitate conversations about societal perception.

# CRITIQUE

Zines that critique societal conceptions of queer issues and facilitate conversations about the necessary deconstruction of certain systems.

# ENVISION

Zines that imagine the future of the queer community and facilitate conversations about how to move forward with liberatory projects.



**Scan to access copies  
of all zines in the syllabus!**

\*digital copy available through qr code, physical copies to be purchased

\*\*only available via purchase of physical copy

# TEACH

"WHAT IS GENDER?"

Explains gender through the lens of leftism.

"NONBINARY IS NOT A THIRD GENDER!"

Pushes back against narratives that suggest "nonbinary" is a third gender, rather than an identity outside of the gender binary entirely.

"TURNS OUT I WAS A LESBIAN ALL ALONG  
(AND YOU MIGHT BE TOO!)"

A more nuanced "am I gay?" quiz that tackles the difference between cultural and biological attraction to men.

"FRAGMENTS OF LESBIAN KNOWLEDGE"\*\*

Sold by QueerAntics on Etsy

Comments on and synthesizes the work of multiple lesbian writers, creating new meanings about the power of the lesbian identity.

# CRITIQUE

"THE STATE'S REGULATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY"\*\*

Sold by QueerAntics on Etsy

Outlines the ways in which queerness is criminalized. Advocates for abolishing criminalization to ensure gender and sexual self determination.

"RACE, CLASS, GENDER:

A NEW THREE-HEADED DIVINITY"

Critiques liberal conceptions of intersectionality, instead advocating for a more nuanced understanding of our positionalities and experiences.

"ON MARRIAGE ABOLITION:

A CRITIQUE OF HOMONATIONALISM"

Discusses the problematic roots of legal marriage. Critiques homonationalism in sectors of the queer community that uphold marriage as governmental validation of their relationships.

"SETTLER SEXUALITY"

Uses Scott Morgensen's term "settler sexuality" to discuss the ways in which colonization enforced rigid sexual standards on Indigenous populations that endure today.

"GENDER NIHILISM:

AN ANTI-MANIFESTO"

Upholds gender nihilism as a practice of radical negativity essential to queer liberation.

"TRANS PESSIMISM#2:

WHEN DOES IT FEEL GOOD?"\*\*

Sold by QuinnMilton on Etsy

Critiques liberal political agendas for trans rights and discusses the limits of trans pessimism.

"COMMUNICATION AND THE ABOLITION OF GENDER"

Discusses the ways in which capitalism and the gender binary are necessarily intertwined.

# ENVISION

“FRIENDSHIPS AS RESISTANCE:  
CREATING COMMUNITIES OF CARE”\*

Sold by femmefilthpress on Etsy

Celebrates and evangelizes the power of friendship networks.

“QUEER MASCULINITY ZINE”\*

Sold by QueerAntics on Etsy

Documents and uplifts the experiences of queer masculine people in the Twin Cities.

“MY GENDER IS LESBIAN”\*

Sold by nolightss on Etsy

Artistically imagines lesbianism as a gender identity validating to the author.

“BEYOND NEGATIVITY:

WHAT COMES AFTER GENDER NIHILISM?”

Sequel to “Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto.” Critiques the first zine and focuses on efforts to move forward from gender nihilism.

“SO YOU “SUPPORT SURVIVORS” BUT DON’T HOLD THEIR ABUSERS ACCOUNTABLE...”

Advocates for practices of transformative justice in community as an alternative to carceral systems and neoliberal feminism.

“OWNING YOUR PARTNER ISN’T SEXY:  
VIEWING MONOGAMY AS A COLONIAL PROJECT”

Connects colonial history to current practices of monogamy in American relationships. Envisions polyamory as a relationship structure with the potential to decolonize relationships.

“ABOLITIONISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY:  
FROM COMMUNIZATION AS THE END OF SEX, TO REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFEMINISM”

Discusses the ways in which communization and abolition are necessarily intertwined with the abolition of all gendered categories.

# SECONDARY MATERIALS

## more ways to Learn about zines

Biel, Joe and Phil Sano, directors. \$100 & a T Shirt: A Documentary About Zines in the Northwest. Microcosm Publishing, 2004.

A short documentary introducing the viewer to the thriving zine community of the American Northwest. Includes interviews with dozens of zine makers, explanations of the inner workings of zine communities, and ideas about the future of zines.

Creasap, Kimberly. "Zine-Making as Feminist Pedagogy." *Feminist Teacher*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.5406/femteacher.24.3.0155>.

Creasap advocates for the use of zines in the classroom, sharing her experiences and research about their effectiveness in learning environments. Contextualizing the practice of zine making in the broader realm of feminist pedagogy, this article offers insights relevant to this syllabus and how it might be presented in a classroom setting.

Piepmeier, Alison. *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism*. New York University Press, 2009.

Piepmeier celebrates the tradition of girls zines, situating it within the feminist movement and advocating for its continued relevance. The book describes and references dozens of zines, offering great examples of the possibilities of the medium.

Robinson, Lucy. "Zines and History: Zines as History." *Ripped, Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, M1, 2019, pp. 39–54.

This chapter calls attention to the relevance of zines to historians; Zines are primary sources that help historians understand the politics of identity and community. If history is written by the winners, zines are invaluable resources that ensure the history of certain subcultures is preserved.

# MAKE A ZINE!

After working through these course materials, I encourage you to create your own zine! Perhaps you could even facilitate a “zine drop:” leaving large numbers of a zine around a space to disrupt its normal flow and encourage people to take and read the material.



how to make a zine

# FIND MORE ZINES

Etsy (check if zinesters have their own site before purchasing from Etsy)

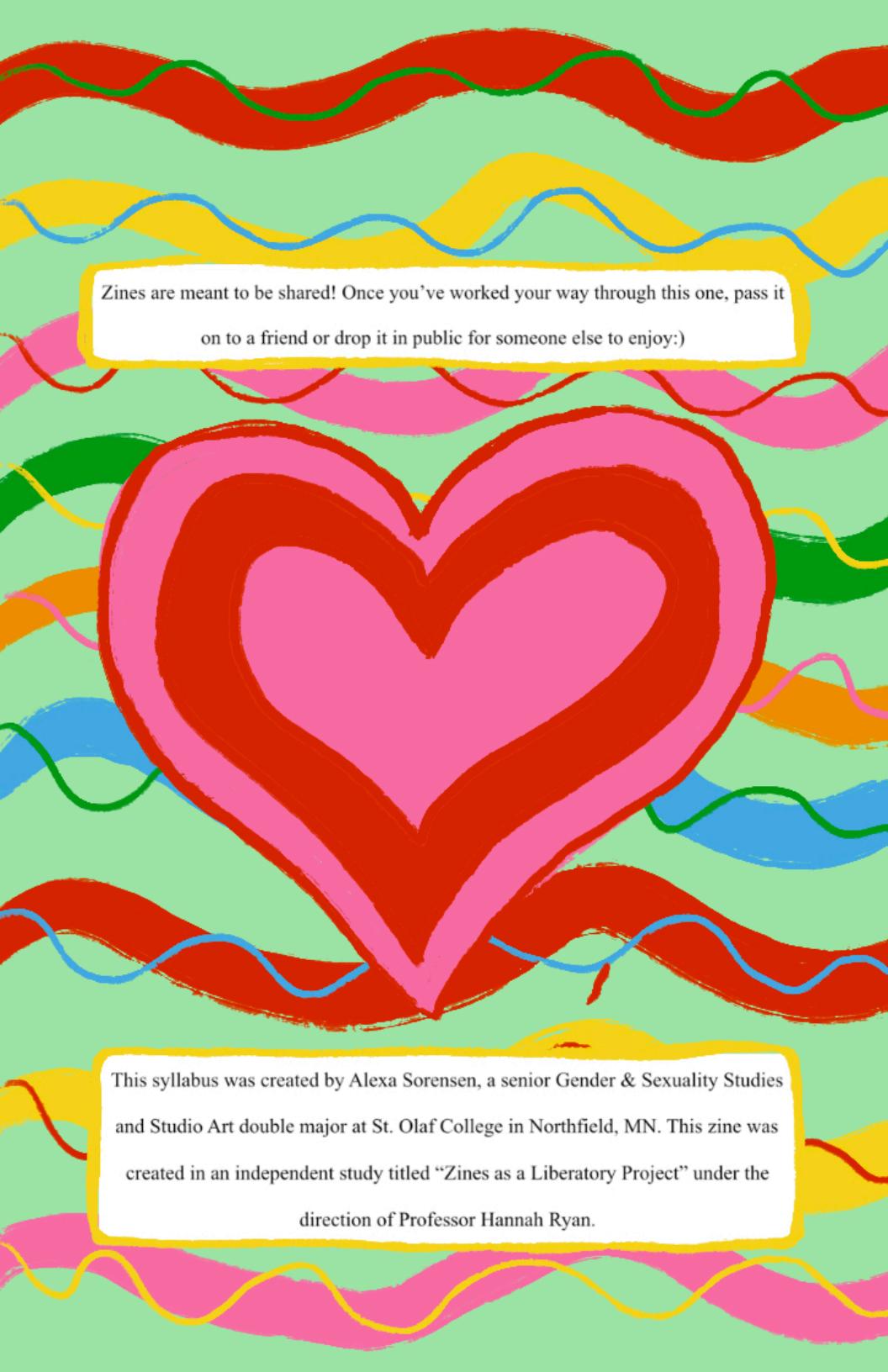
Zine fests in your local city

Online zine distros (zine distribution platforms)

Archives in your local library or college

Follow zine review accounts on Instagram, Twitter, or Tik Tok

Local art centers (to find, make, and/or distribute zines)



Zines are meant to be shared! Once you've worked your way through this one, pass it on to a friend or drop it in public for someone else to enjoy:)

This syllabus was created by Alexa Sorensen, a senior Gender & Sexuality Studies and Studio Art double major at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. This zine was created in an independent study titled "Zines as a Liberatory Project" under the direction of Professor Hannah Ryan.