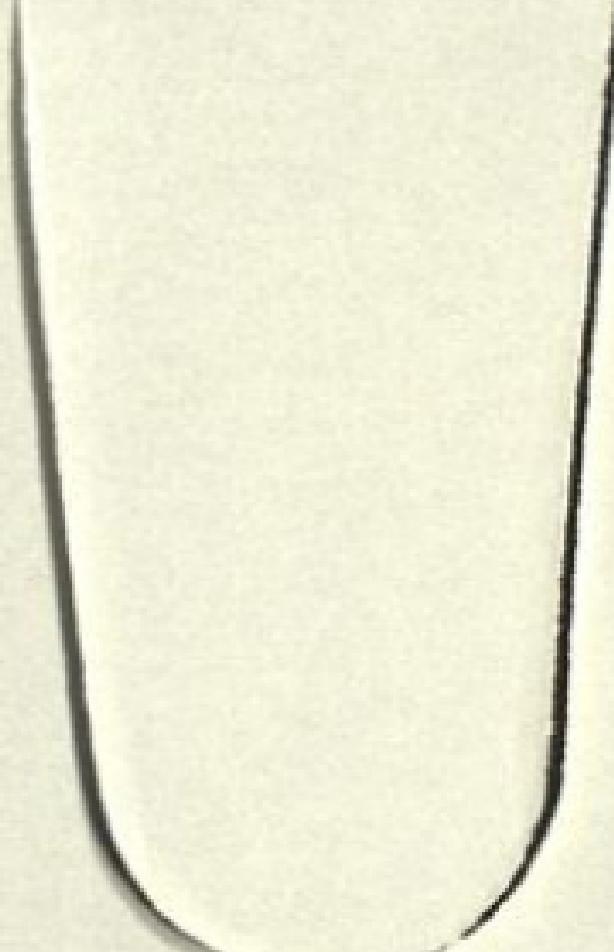


A2678+2018



Teaching with Zines

nicole acosta nemergut

july 2018



introduction

I love zines.

They are beautiful and punk rock, sloppy and earnest, delicate and bold.

They are short (or sometimes long) love letters to friends, ancestors and your self.

They give you a thread to hold on to and connect across generations and continents.

They are a place to scream and cry into when there isn't a physical one.

They are the secret skills that are whispered to one another for survival.

They are the stories that no one else will make room for. They are questionings and reckonings, flares for others to find.

But, if that isn't super helpful,

Zines are small, self-published, and easily reproducible magazines.

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I made this zine for a workshop for educators about zines in this classroom at Brooklyn organized by Laura Winick.

A Little Background

Contemporary zines have their roots in the punk and riot grrrl scenes of the 80s and 90s. When people would go to shows they would trade them, or mail them to their friends.¹

There are also models of zines going even further back. There are some science fiction zines going back to the 1930s.² There is a proto-zine coming out of the Harlem Renaissance.³ The Combahee River Collective pamphlets feel like zine ancestors to me.⁴ I recently saw the Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom exhibit at the King Juan Carlos Center at NYU. This might be a stretch, but Aponte's long lost *Libro de Pinturas* also feels like a zine-like ancestor.⁵

bb sci fi zines!



1 Brief History of Zines

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/88911/brief-history-zines>

2 The Amazing Zines that Kicked Off Geek Fandom

<https://www.wired.com/2015/02/amazing-zines-kicked-geek-fandom/>

3 FIRE!!

<http://poczineproject.tumblr.com/post/54610448518/izm2013-zine-must-read-fire-devoted-to-younger>

4 Combahee River Collective Pamphlets

<http://songsforgorgons.tumblr.com/post/115182390583/combahee-river-collective-pamphlet-eleven-black>

5 Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom

<http://www.kjcc.org/news/exhibit--visionary-aponte--art-and-black-freedom/>

Teaching with Zines

As a teacher I see zines as offering two broad possibilities: zines as sources and zines as assessments.

As Sources

Zines are amazing texts to introduce to students.

Depending on the age level, it is a kind of source they may or may not be familiar with, but almost certainly haven't encountered in an academic setting. This is especially appealing to me because zines are products of youth culture and often written by young people, people of color, women, gender non-conforming, and queer people. These are all voices that are actively excluded from academic canons and what is seen as legitimate sources of information.

Here are some notes on how you might use zines in your class. I think about these mostly through the lens of a social studies or humanities teacher, but there are connections to be made across all disciplines.



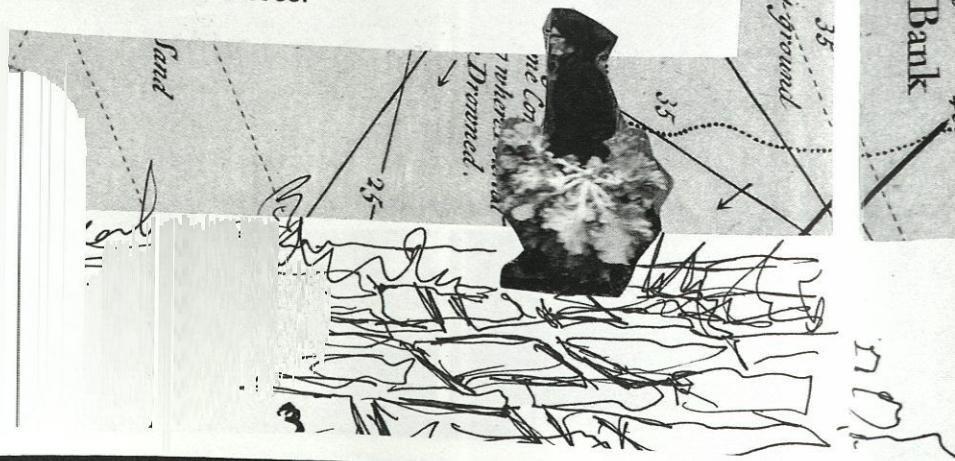
Zines as Primary Sources

As a history teacher I hope to have my students interpret historical events or time periods through primary materials. Whether we start the historical time line of zines in the 90s or the 30s they are beautiful and accessible artifacts to share with students.

This is an excellent way to address standards that ask students to read text for critical understanding and identifying evidence.

Perzines, or zines about personal information and experiences can be great primary sources to learn about power, politics, experience, coming of age, identity, whatever from the time period they were written. You might read it similarly to a diary or journal, but think about the expectation of an audience, even a small one.

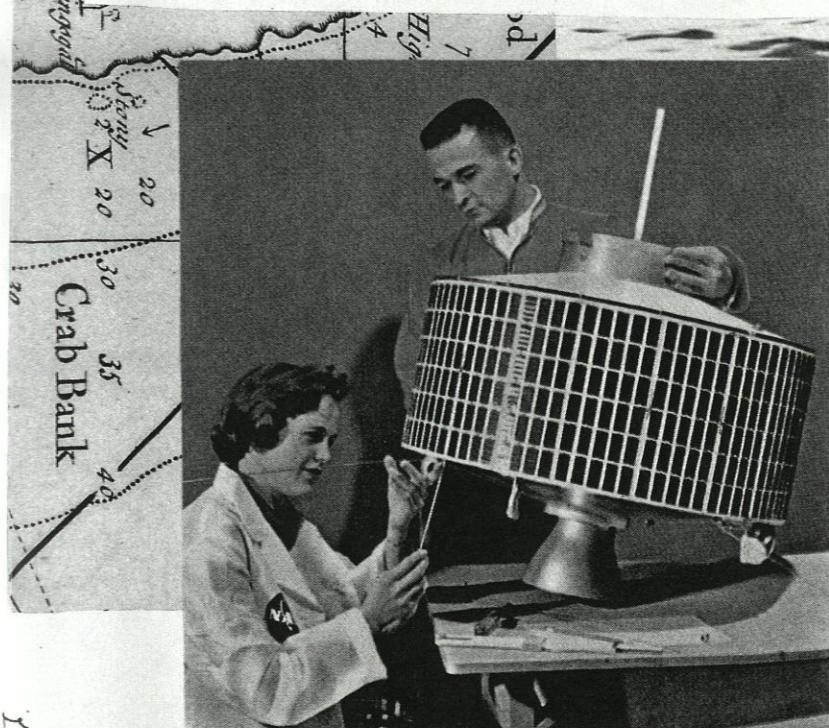
Some zines are more instructional. This can give amazing insight into what knowledge was available to who and how? What skills or technology people had access to or wanted to have access to? There are a number of DIY health zines that could be fascinating for a science class or health and wellness classes.



Note that the Depth of Water at some Bar are but little the Depths of Water are see down in feet at high and low Water, and to be known from Fathoms there is th

some questions to ask

- When and where was this zine produced?
- Who produced this zine?
- What is the author's relationship to the content?
- How and to who was this zine distributed?
- What can that tell us about community and social relationships?
- What is the author's relationship to power or privilege?
- What can this zine tell us about the time period?
- How do our experiences and expectations of the present color our reading of this zine?
- What historical events seem to impact the author? Has the author participated in any of them?



Zines as Personal Narrative

Zines, particularly perzines, are a rich source when teaching about memoir or personal narrative. They often highlight voices that are not often published and express ideas that are not edited to be easily digestible.

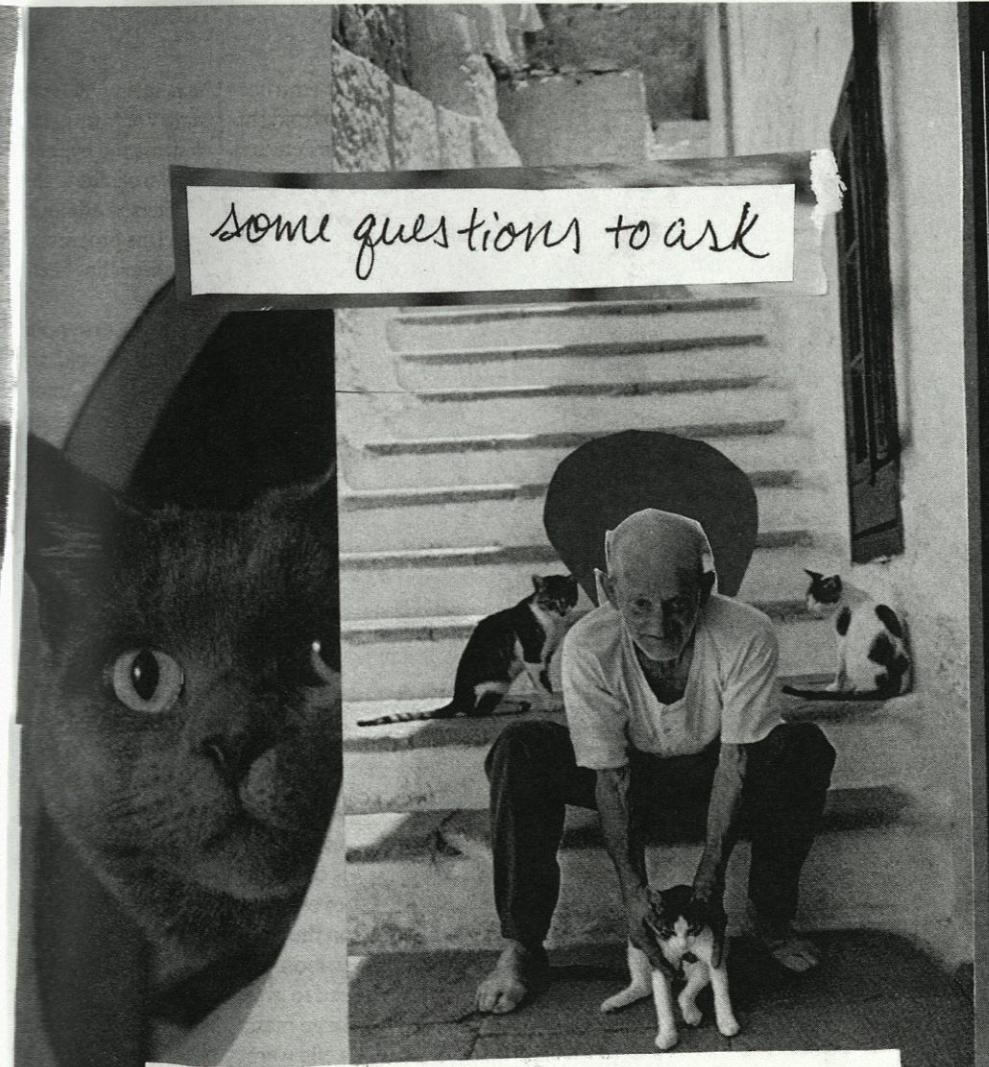
These can also be helpful models if you are planning to have students create their own zines.

I love perzines. They are mostly what I write. They are an important medium for me to process events, personal and historical and share that process with others.

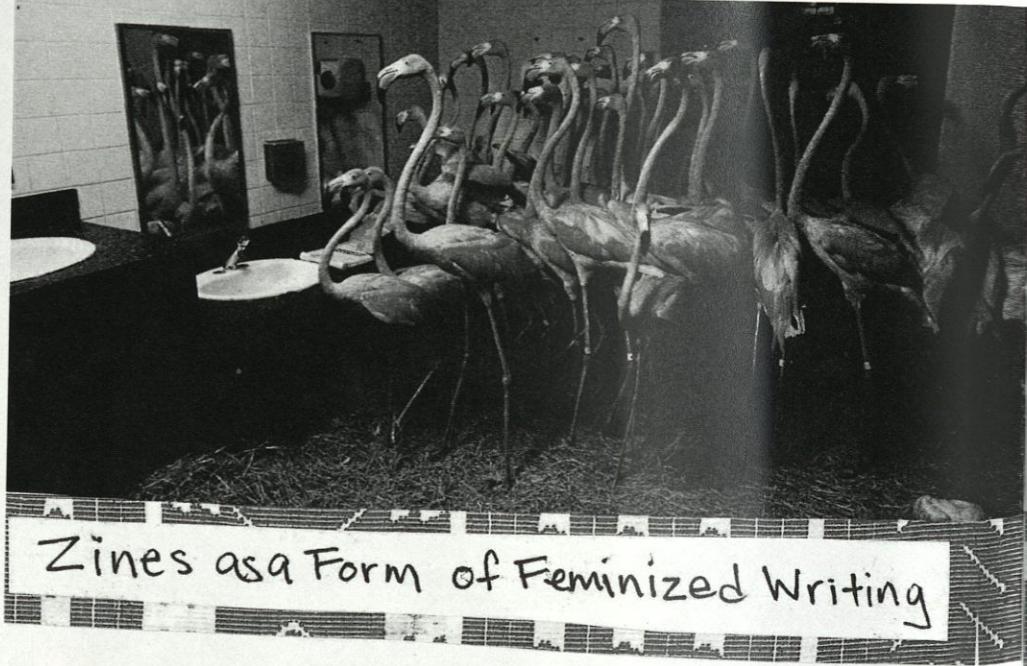
I did not previously think about zines as memoir before but I had an amazing time visiting Illeana Jimenez's English elective on memoir at LREI. She introduced me as a memoir writer and guest speaker to her class and it was a fascinating shift for me. I would definitely encourage English and literature teachers to consider zines as they teach personal narrative.



some questions to ask



- When and where was this zine produced?
- Who produced this zine?
- What is the author's relationship to the content?
- How and to who was this zine distributed?
- What can that tell us about community and social relationships?
- What is the author's relationship to power or privilege?
- Could this narrative have been published in a different format? Why or why not?
- How does the author use text and layout?
- What do you find compelling?
- What do you find challenging?



Zines as a Form of Feminized Writing

Women and femmes' writings have often been barred from prestigious or mainstream publications. Rather they tend to flourish in more informal or popular forms from lady's magazines, to blogs, to snapchats. Spaces that women and femmes carve out to share their work is often dismissed as trivial or unimportant, lacking objectivity and rigor.

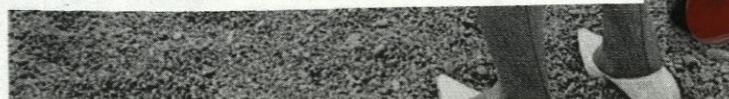
Zines are an amazing medium to explore gendered forms of writing. Even though they have a history with the extremely masculinized punk movement they were often a rebellion against the patriarchy and white supremacy of those spaces. They are also all about affect. Zines are traded or mailed. There is an element of care in their production and distribution. This ties in to the study of zine communities as networks.

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some questions to ask

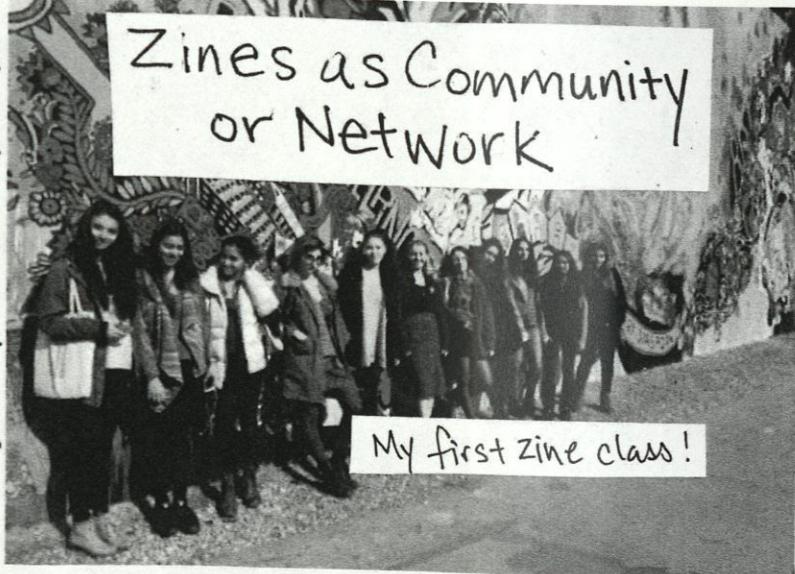


- Are there gendered kinds of writing?
- Which genres or formats do we consider masculinized or feminized writing forms?
- What characteristics of writing to we associate with gendered writing?
- Are their queer forms of writing? If so, what would that be?
- Does the gender of the author have to do with the way me might gender the text?
- How does race intersect with our understanding of gender and writing?



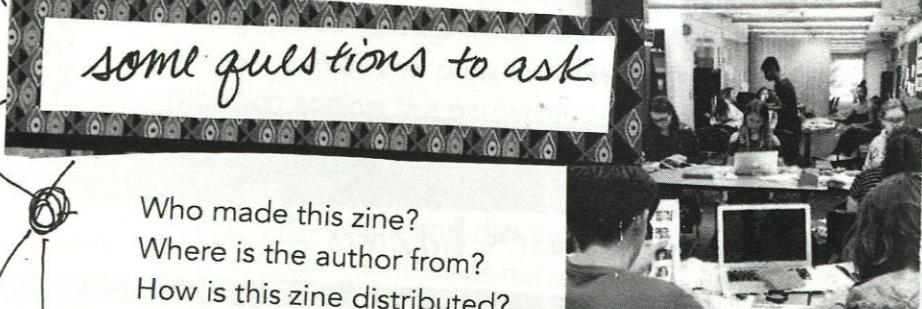
Check out Alison Piepmeir's Girl Zines for more on this.

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Alongside zines as feminized writing, is the idea of zines as structuring a community. I like to look at zines through this lens when we discuss histories of nationalism and national identity development. I often introduce Benedict Anderson's idea of print capitalism as essential for the development of nations and national identity.

Zines circulate largely through physical mail or tabling at events or shows. The way the objects themselves move through space define the community and bring people into contact with one another through shared experiences.



- Who made this zine?
- Where is the author from?
- How is this zine distributed?
- How did you come into contact with this zine?
- What communities might be touched by this zine?
- What communities might be formed by this zine?

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this was such a sweet moment to share with a former student!

and another former student!

CHECK OUT @ femme_mache

CHECK OUT @ duneskasuannette

72 likes

femme_mache this is @nico.antillana, the first person who ever taught me (lili) about zines and zinemaking in high school and brought me to the Barnard zine library (where i eventually graduated from and where we are tabling). the world can be small and tender and we are v grateful to be tabling together at the #nycfeministzinefest 🌟🌟🌟 pick up one of nico's beautiful zines here until 6pm!!!

duneskasuannette The world is so small. I am almost 100% sure she was my humanities teacher in middle school.

nico.antillana @duneskasuannette Hi Duneska!!!

duneskasuannette @nico.antillana hi!! I followed you! Would rather not bombard @femme_mache notifications by asking how you are here haha

femme_mache @duneskasuannette we love it

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Zines as a Way to Discuss Knowledge Production and Epistemology

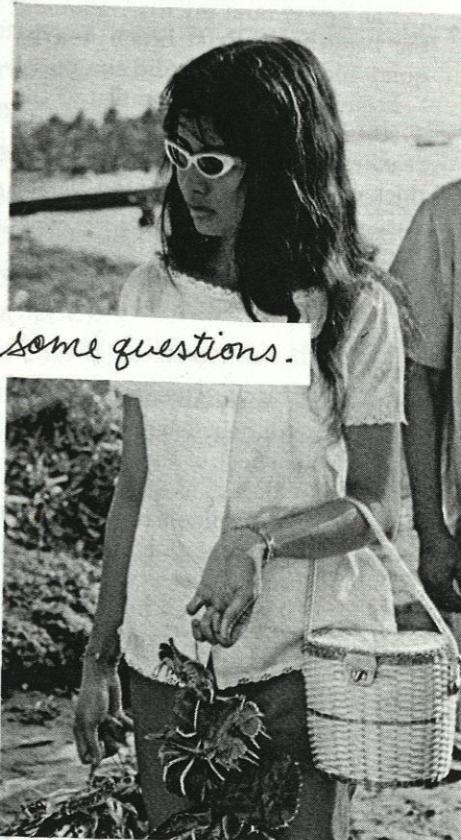
Knowledge production is an important theme in my Modern World History class. We ask questions like, who is producing information? Whose information and learning is seen as legitimate? What knowledges are marginalized or erased during the modern period?

Zines are an amazing and contemporary way to explore these questions. Since zines are not peer reviewed nor even edited and published through a commercial channel, they are often not seen as legitimate sources of information. Yet, there is a rich history of instructional zines or DIY zines. Zines themselves are DIY.

Many of the topics in instructional zines are not always legal nor would they have a big market, and yet they impart essential skills and survival.



Some questions to ask



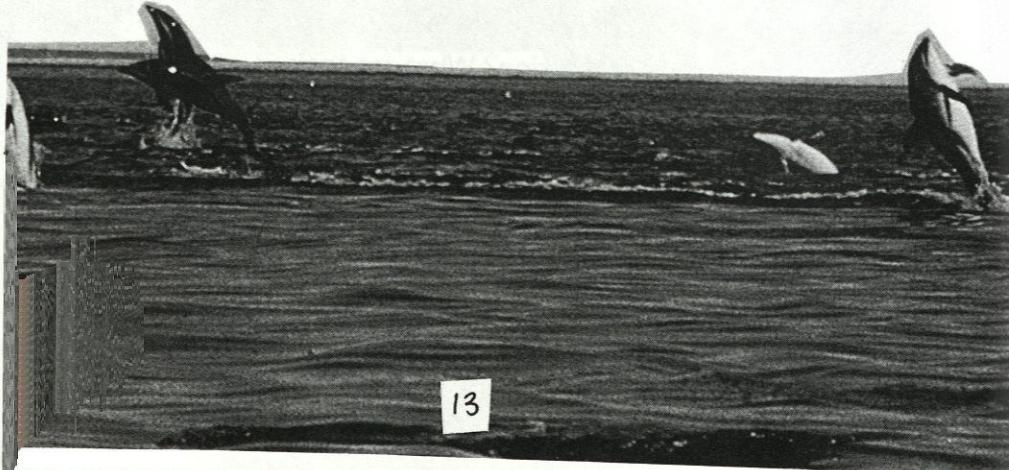
Whose information do we trust? Why?
Who is the author of the zine? What are their credentials?
Why might they have chosen to publish their work in a zine format?
Could this exist in another format?
Why might it not exist in another format?

Zines as Assessments

I love reading zines with students, but making them may be even more fun! I've used zines as assessments in elective classes and core required classes. I've taught classes on just zines and zine making and incorporated them as assessments in my 10th grade world history class.

Zines are incredibly flexible. They are an amazing way to differentiate for students abilities and interests.

You can create rubrics that meet your needs depending on the discipline, assignment or specific grade and subject level standards.

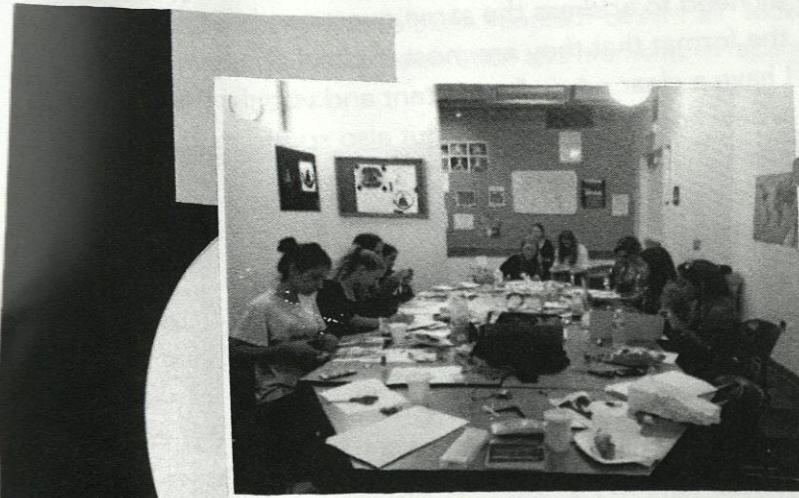


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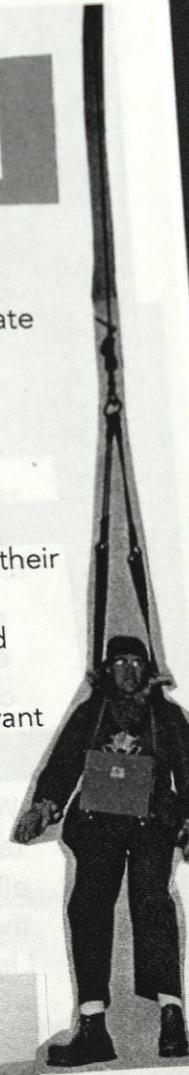
Skills Used in Zine Making

Zines are a beautiful way for students to demonstrate learning or mastery.

They must construct an argument or narrative.
They can research a particular topic.
They must organize their text in a logical way.
They must select and organize visuals to support their argument.
If the zine is collaborative they must organize and communicate clearly to carry out their vision.
If the zine is research based, they must find relevant sources and appropriately cite them.



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Creating Assignments

I've used zines as assignments in two ways, an open ended assignment to make a zine about any content the student chooses or a zine demonstrate learning about a specific topic.

When teaching zine making with a more open ended prompt, I mostly focus on the craft of zine making. I encourage students to write what feels interesting and compelling to them.

When using zines as an end of the class assessment it is usually presented as one option among many. Students all need to address the same questions but can choose the format that they are most excited about. In this case I have a clear rubric for content and visuals. We still review how to make zines, but also spend more time on how do you construct an argument both in writing and visually.



my last zine class ::

Some of my Favorite Student Zines

- A look at racial stereotypes in the Call of Duty video games
- A manual on Victorian etiquette with feminist commentary
- An exploration of histories of resistance in Okinawa with an interview with the author's grandfather
- A perzine on growing up with two dads
- An illustrated history about being slut shamed in different years of high school
- A student guide to New York
- A story about getting Plan B
- A collection of poems and photos exploring mixed race identity
- A split zine called "I Love Black People/F*ck All Y'all" looking at moments of joy and celebration and moments of racism and microaggression.

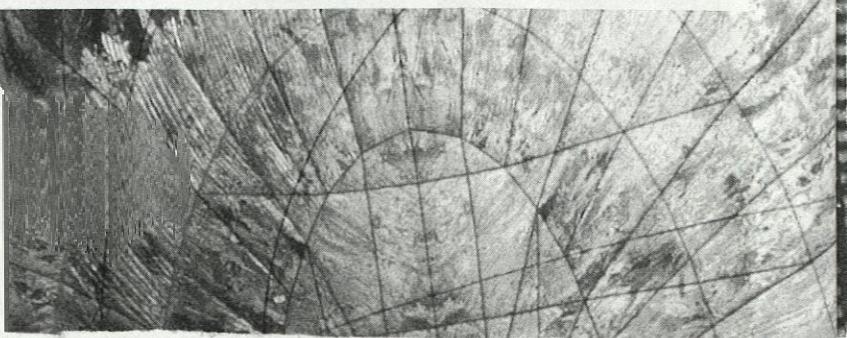


zines from my first zine class

Grading

There are few things more devastating that pouring your heart and soul into a zine and getting a B-. So, how do you actually grade these beautiful creations once they're made. For open-ended zines where the assignment is simply to make a zine, the context is usually only pass/fail. If I have to grade them more specifically I tend to focus on care, effort, and use of class time, rather than a specific set of writing or visual criteria.

When the zine content is meant to demonstrate knowledge of a specific topic I have a clear rubric and set of expectations. I grade looking at how well the student addressed the content of the assignment and how they utilized visual communication to support their goal or argument. It shouldn't just be an essay in a booklet. Otherwise, just write an essay. Rather it should include visuals and kinds of information that would not fit in a traditional essay that add to the readers' understanding. This could be maps, charts, photos, artwork, primary sources etc.



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So, Now What?

Now that you have created zine monsters here is a list of ways students (or you) can channel your new zine energy.

Students can host a zine fest at school.

Students can start a zine library.

Students can use zines as a fundraiser.

Students can table at other zine fests.

Students can share their zines with the larger zine community.

Students can donate their zines to a zine library.

I hope this is helpful as you consider zines as part of your class!



Let me know how it goes.

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Nicole Acosta Nemergut is an educator, artist, and parent. She's been making zines since college and planning on making zines since she was in high school, but couldn't quite get it together.

She's taught classes on zine making to young people and adults at
The Calhoun School
Caribbean Cultural Center and African Diaspora Institute
Liberty Partnerships at Hostos Community College
Little Red School House and Elizabeth Irwin High School
Progressive Education Network and Conference

She has tabled or read her zines at
The Feminist Zine Fest at Barnard College
La Liga Zine Fest
The Bettys Zine Fest
Hecho a Mano y Corazón - Fundraiser for Puerto Rico at
Word Up! Community Bookstore
Big She-Bang

nicole.acosta.nemergut@gmail.com

Why Zines Need to Be A Part of Your Curriculum
<https://www.theartofed.com/2017/12/14/zines/>

Scholastic: Zine Making 101
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/john-depasquale/zine-making-101/>

Teaching Tolerance: Engaging Students in Social Justice with Zines
<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/engaging-students-in-social-justice-with-zines>

POC Zine Project: Teaching with Zines Pros and Cons
<http://poczineproject.tumblr.com/post/53116350336/lets-talk-about-zines-in-the-classroompros-and>

Barnard Zine Library: Teaching with Zines
<https://zines.barnard.edu/teachingwithzines>

Feminist Zine Fest: Zines at the Calhoun School
<https://feministzinefestnyc.wordpress.com/tag/calhoun-school/>

Zine libraries in NYC
Barnard Zine Library
<https://zines.barnard.edu/zine-libraries>

ABC NoRio
http://www.abcnorio.org/facilities/zine_library.html

Where to buy zines in NYC
Word Up Bookstore – Washington Heights
Bluestockings Bookstore – Lower East Side

Other Helpful Stuff
<https://zines.barnard.edu/blog>
<https://issuu.com/>
<https://www.etsy.com/>

Resources

WE'RE
ALL IN THIS
TOGETHER

New York, New York

LEARNING
GOOD CONSENT
Building Ethical Relationships
in a Complicated World