

ZINES IN THE CLASSROOM
PETAL Faculty Showcase Learning Circle 2025
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THE MULTIMODAL TURN IN EDUCATION

- We're increasingly being asked to help our students learn to communicate in ways beyond the traditional essay or research paper
- Many of us turn to the in-class PowerPoint presentation
- The issue with many multimodal projects these days, including PowerPoint, is that students can either use a template or straight up have AI design the entire thing.
- But, if you part of your goal is for students to think critically about audience, language, visuals, messaging and how to get all of that across successfully while having fun, creative flexibility, then the Zine is a great choice

HISTORY OF ZINES

<https://westportlibrary.libguides.com/zines>

“Zines can be difficult to define.... Zines also have roots in the informal, underground publications that focused on social and political activism in the '60s. By the '70s, zines were popular on the punk rock circuit. In the '90s, the feminist punk scene propelled the medium and included such artists as Kathleen Hanna, who produced riot grrrl out of Olympia, Washington.

“A zine is most commonly a small circulation publication of original or appropriated texts and images. More broadly, the term encompasses any self-published unique work of minority interest, usually reproduced via photocopier.”

<https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2023/10/lifestyle-nc-zine-culture>

“Zines evade strict definitions. They are journals with stapled and glued ephemera. They are digital collages. They are small poetry anthologies and folded pieces of paper full of doodles.

Pronounced as in “magazines,” zines are roughly described as self-published DIY booklets that feature — often underrepresented — personal, social or political expressions.

““It was, in its origins, about radical communication and dissemination of information,’ zine artist and UNC alumnus SamLevi Middleton-Sizemore said. ‘So civil rights movements, the feminist movement, the early gay liberation movement, all used zines.’

“Because of their loose definition, zines can look as experimental, professional or messy as an artist likes. Their messages, like their media, come in a variety of shapes and sizes, from music reviews to quirky satires and political calls to action.”

MANY BENEFITS OF ZINES!

1. Introduce students to the resources available to them on campus (Kislak center)

I have students browse through the UM Library's collection of Zines. They must pick a couple of titles that look interesting (and that are copy-heavy), read/skim through them, and be prepared to discuss which ones they looked through & what they noticed about them (style, content, imagery, etc.).

<https://digitalcollections.library.miami.edu/digital/collection/zines>

2. Introduce them to the history of underground communication and engage in discussions about censorship

I give a PowerPoint on the history of underground/ samizdat communication & discussion questions on how to communicate in the face of media and literary oppression

3. Allow students to be as analog or digital as they want.

4. Produce a physical manifestation of their work, something to hold & keep, to pass around the room—we do a zine showcase

HOW CAN WE INCORPORATE THE ZINE INTO OUR CLASSES?

The zine can be an entire research project—which is what I do—or it can be a small mini-lesson, or a way to reflect on something that they learned in class.

Brief timeline of a full Zine project:

Pre-project work: Readings and discussions about the topic they will be researching (1-2 weeks)

Week 1: Background: Students read background articles on the history of zines; do PowerPoint on the history of and need for underground communication in the face of oppression; look at the University of Miami's online zine collection; visit the Kislak center

Week 2: Work on annotated bibliography and research proposal

Week 3: Work on Zines in class

Week 4: Zine showcase

ACTIVITY & DISCUSSION

Discussion Questions

- What multimodal projects do you already do with your students? What has gone well about them, and what limitations or drawbacks did you face?
- Can you imagine using zines in your classroom? Why might it be appealing? What can such a project offer to you and your students?
- What might a shorter zine assignment look like (one that does not take the place of an entire research paper)?

Activity:

Think of a lesson you already do in your classroom. How might you add a zine component to it?