

MAKE A ZINE!

Zines can trace their roots back to the sci-fi fanzines that first emerged in the late 1920s. “Short for magazine or fanzine,” Barnard College’s zine library notes, “zines are self-publications, motivated by a desire for self-expression, not for profit.” With the rise of DIY countercultures in the ‘70s, zines became an appealing and accessible way to self-publish in communities that received little-to-no mainstream public recognition. At this time, publishing was one of relatively few mediums that could reach a widespread audience; however, publishing was typically restricted to privileged, culturally normative communities. Zines allowed information to travel within, across, and between specific communities that did not have a voice in the mainstream. Zines continued to be a staple of alternative movements well into the late ‘90s, when the rise of the internet made it easier to widely distribute information on a mass scale. While they have waned a bit in popularity in the 21st century, zines to this day remain a critical component of DIY communities around the globe.

YOUR TASK

The true beauty of a zine (as a medium) lies in its flexibility and accessibility, making it rich in rhetorical value and opportunity. Since you’re spending the whole quarter getting intimate with the rhetorics of one of your own discourse communities, **I want you to create a zine either for that community or about that community that responds to a kairotic exigence.** While the exigence itself *can* be a larger national or global issue, your zine should purposefully utilize/engage the media, material, and environmental rhetorics surrounding your particular discourse community. *The content, goals, and audience are yours to decide.* Remember, the rhetorical choices you make throughout your zine should be ones that serve your *specific* goals in the context of your *specific* rhetorical situation. Think about the way you use language and visuals, how your audience interacts with the physical object, how you use the space of the page, etc.—all of the ways a reader reacts to, forms options about, and ultimately interprets (makes meaning of) your message.

You’re probably thinking...

HOW THE [BLEEP] DO I DO THAT?!?

There are a few things you’ll want to determine early on in the process to make it easier for you in the end. The first thing to consider is *why* you are creating a zine in the first place (other than the fact that I assigned it and you’re trying to pass): *What are your goals? What do you hope to accomplish? What do you think is important or deserves attention?* Choose *one* aspect of your community to center your zine around. Think about what is kairotic, what’s timely, what’s useful *right now*. This will help you focus your content. Then, narrow your focus to a specific *audience*: *who exactly are you writing this for?* Choose an audience that would be appropriate for your goals. This audience should guide and shape all of the choices you make as a writer. Lastly, as you fill your zine with content relative to your audience and goals, consider the following (partial) list of characteristics and the rhetorical choices you could

make as a writer: language, what to include and exclude, material*, space of page, mood and tone, visual style (font, color, arrangement, etc.), interest and appeal, and usability.

I know, I know; it's a large task. The good news (depending on your perspective) is that you'll be submitting a proposal for your zine that tackles these very issues, so you'll have a general direction in place by the end of October. The question remains, though...

YOU'LL GRADE THIS...HOW?

I'll give you a grading rubric after you turn in your proposals, but for now, know that I'll be looking at these 5 areas: zine conventions, timeliness, engagement with community-specific rhetorics, effectiveness of rhetorical choices for your situation, and publish-readiness.

*A NOTE ON MATERIAL

While electronic zines do exist (typically as PDF editions of print zines), *the form is rooted in and intrinsically tied to material concerns*. Historically, zines are designed to be cheaply made and easily held, displayed, and shared. You are more than welcome to *compose* your zine entirely by hand, entirely with technology, or with a healthy mix of both. No matter how you compose, though, ***you will need to submit a physical copy of your zine***. Given this class is about media, material, and environmental rhetorics, I am looking not just at your ability to *analyze* and *discuss* said rhetorics, I am looking to see how you *utilize* these rhetorics to *produce* a consciously complex artifact. **Please bring your paper copy to our final on Monday, December 10th @ 8:30am.**

ZINE PROPOSAL

A zine is a large undertaking, larger than it might seem at first. Developing a plan early on will help you manage the stress and anxiety of unexpected disruptions as the deadline looms closer. And since I imagine all of your zines will be radically different from one another, not only will this proposal get *you* thinking deeply about your zine early in the quarter, it will also give *me* a sense of your direction for this project so I can support you in the particular ways you'll need as you work. So, the more details you can provide me now, the better I can understand your particular vision and give you useful feedback to help you bring it to life. Think of it as the start of a conversation around your zine—the more you give me, the more I have to respond to, simple as that.

For your proposal, please answer the following six questions with *at least one well-crafted paragraph each*. Part 1 (3 questions) has you thinking about the larger rhetorical situation surrounding your zine that will guide the choices you make, while part 2 (3 questions) has you brainstorming a creative plan for the zine itself.

Part 1: Defining Your Rhetorical Situation

1. **Purpose:** What *exigence* are you responding to, and what makes it *kairotic*? What are your goals or aspirations for your zine? What are you trying to do or say with it? Why are you going this particular direction?
2. **Audience:** Who is the audience for your zine and why? What is the connection between your purpose and this audience? What are some important characteristics or traits about this audience you need to keep in mind as you make content and design choices?
3. **Context:** What is the context in which your zine gets distributed or circulated? How do you get eyes on it? Is this something freely given (which means you're footing the bill)? If so, where and how will it get into the hands of your audience? Is this something you'd sell, ideally recouping the cost of production? If so, how will you market and distribute your zine? Where will you vend?

Part 2: Creative Vision

1. **Content:** What types of linguistic and visual content would be appropriate, challenging, or useful for your situation? Why include that content? For example: infographics could convey multiple related statistics within a single, easy-to-understand context.
2. **Aesthetics/Design:** What are some aesthetic or design choices that could be effective for your situation? How will you make your zine visually interesting and appropriate? How will the design *appeal* to your audience (think logos, ethos, and pathos, here)? Are there any choices you know would *not* be effective? Are there any special considerations you need to make? For example: if you're writing for an elderly audience, using a small typeface will make the content more difficult to read, so you'll need to use larger, easy to read fonts.
3. **Potential Roadblocks:** What are you concerned about? What worries you about this project or your plan? What could potentially go wrong? What can you do now to help ease the impact of these roadblocks if they occur? For example: If you decide to make your zine by hand, you will need to budget in time for assembling content (cutting, arranging, gluing/taping) on the page and (potentially) re-doing whole pages if you change your mind.