

BCB SPRING SEMESTER 2025

FA325 The Photo Zine: A Subversive Phenomenon

Seminar Leader: April Gertler

Course Time: Tuesdays: 2 - 5.15pm

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Office Hours: by appointment - please contact me!

Course Description

The concept of a "Zine" (pronounced 'zeen') references small-circulation (typically an edition of 100 or less), self-published works of original or appropriated images and texts, often reproduced using a copy machine / printer / duplicator. Zines, or 'fanzines' can be traced back to the 1940s. They were rooted in the science fiction world initially and were created by fans who created small self-published magazines about the science fiction they loved. Zines famously played a significant role in the punk movement of 1970s as a way to explore subversive topics and ideas around the movement. Zines have continued to be found in many subcultures and have always played a crucial role as a means of communication within those diverse subcultures. They often embrace a "do-it-yourself" ethos, challenging the established norms of professional design and publishing. Zines offer an alternative, confident, and self-aware mode of expression. Photography is an essential component to most Zines. The Zine works as a space for visual story telling, but can also be used to create a preview of an ongoing photographic project. Historically the diversity of photography used in Zines is very wide reaching; from personal photographs created specifically for the inclusion in a Zine to found images from any source.

This class will work with printers, copy machines and a RISO duplicator to create text and image based Zines and explore the joys of the limited edition Zine and how it can manifest into an important mode of self expression. We will work with image and text; both using found images and also found text to creating photographs and text specific for the formats we will explore.

At the end of this class, each student will leave the class with a small library consisting of both their own Photo Zines and those made by the other students in the class with a total of about 40+ zines! Please note that this class is a lot of work and expected out of class time does range from 4 - 8 hours depending.

What are Zines?

Stephen Duncombe wrote the first scholarly book on zines (Notes from the Underground, Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture, 1997) and described them as: "Non-commercial, nonprofessional, small circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish and distribute by themselves." They are "scruffy, homemade pamphlets that are filled with rantings of high weirdness and exploding with chaotic design".

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Use the designated printing times given to each student at the beginning of the semester. If the time is not used, please contact the Professor.
- Be prepared to present artworks / assignments / presentations without reminder.
- Engage in critiques and discussions.
- Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff outside of class time when assistance is necessary.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails and/or text messages from the Professor in a timely manner.
- Inform Professor at beginning of semester if photos of student, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and any personal belongings before the final inspection of the arts spaces during completion week. Failure to remove works and / or clean spaces used will result in final grade penalization. Donating artworks or art materials (unrequested) at anytime is not permitted and will still be considered student's property that will be expected to be uninstalled and removed.
- Students are expected to purchase 36 exposure Black and White film and photographic paper as needed for class assignments.

Attendance and Special considerations for FALL 2025:

Students & instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill.

- Attendance of ALL classes is expected.
- More than one absence (that is, absence from one three-hour session per week) in a semester will affect the participation grade for the course.
- Students are expected to attend all off-campus classes punctually, from start to finish.
- If there is a scheduling/travel conflict, the Professor must be informed in advance.
- Tardiness after five minutes will be considered an absence unless the Professor is contacted at least 1/2 an hour before class.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). Professor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where the Professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it must be submitted within two weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than a C.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

This class is based on the simple principle of doing the best you can in class.

That means; handing your work in on time, coming to class on time, participating in class and cleaning / maintaining the darkroom and finally, being prepared and ready when in class. You will get a written assessment of every assignment you do.

Corita Kent, the artist and former nun wrote a very apt list titled:

10 RULES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

I follow this list quite closely - (see the rest of the list at the end of the document)

Rule Number 7 says; The only rule is work. If you work it will lead to something.

It is the people who do all the work all the time who eventually catch to things.

You can fool the fans — but not the players.

Keep this in mind during this class. Although you are needed to be in class to get grades and pass the course — much more importantly you are needed to help make the class what it is. The structure is there for you and you are also part of the structure; your contributions help shape the class.

Assessment

Students are also assessed on their ability to work independently and responsibly. They will be graded on their ability to communicate with the Professor as well as amongst themselves. This also includes their ambition to create artworks as well as their willingness to budget their time for all requirements connected to this class. This assessment also includes preparation, production, and cleaning up of spaces used at P98 at Bard College Berlin.

During the semester, all assignments will be graded and commented on. If you feel that you are unsure of your grade and want clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me, I am always happy to discuss.

Anticipated Costs for this Class

Each student will be expected to purchase their own paper - which can include cover stock or other types of paper one might want to use for their Zines in this class. The other costs incurred could be thread (for sewing a Zine together) and the price of photocopying the Zine. The costs should not go over 50€ - 150€ for this class.

Materials list

Basic tools for Zine are provided to every students in the Zine Bag. Those materials include;

Matt, box cutter, thread (black and waxed cream thread), bobbins, hole punch, bone folders, scissors (2 pairs - one small for sewing and one large for paper), awl, seam ripper, metal ruler, needles, glue stick, pencil, paint brush (for liquid glue), eraser and a pencil sharpener.

Outside of those materials, specialty papers/threads that the student might want and copies for each assignment will be the cost incurred by the student.

Making a zine layout online

There are many free online programs you can use to do layouts for your zines, including; Canva and Scribus

Please note that the paper sizes in Germany use the DIN Series format: A4 (similar to 8.5" x 11"), A5 (which is half of A4) Here is more info on that:

<https://www.visual-graphics.de/en/customer-care/paper-sizes/>

Zine making includes the **imposition of pages** which can be described as:

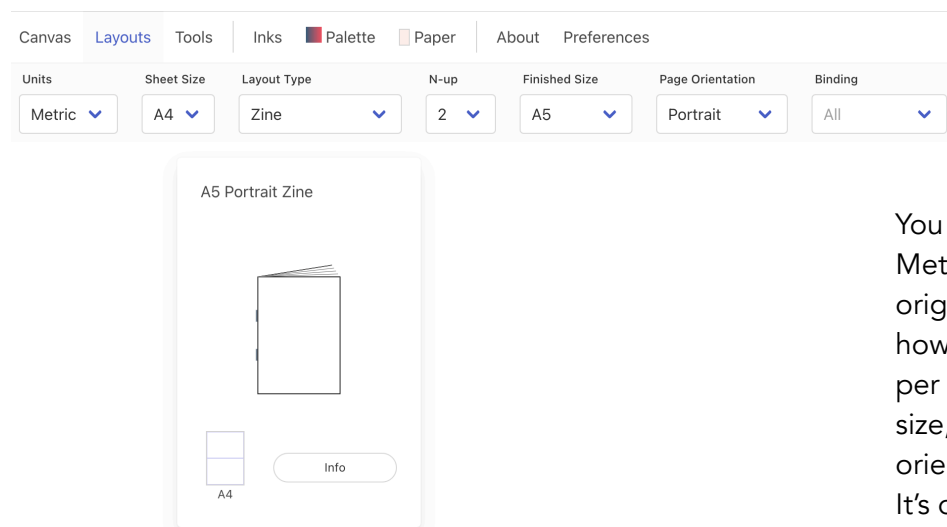
The process of arranging individual pages onto a larger sheet of paper in a specific order, so that when the sheet is printed, folded, and trimmed, the pages will be in the correct sequence. **It's a crucial step in prepress production**, especially for creating booklets, brochures, or any multi-page document that requires folding and binding.

Here is more info: <https://printninja.com/printing-resource-center/printing-academy/pre-press-production/imposition-pagination/>

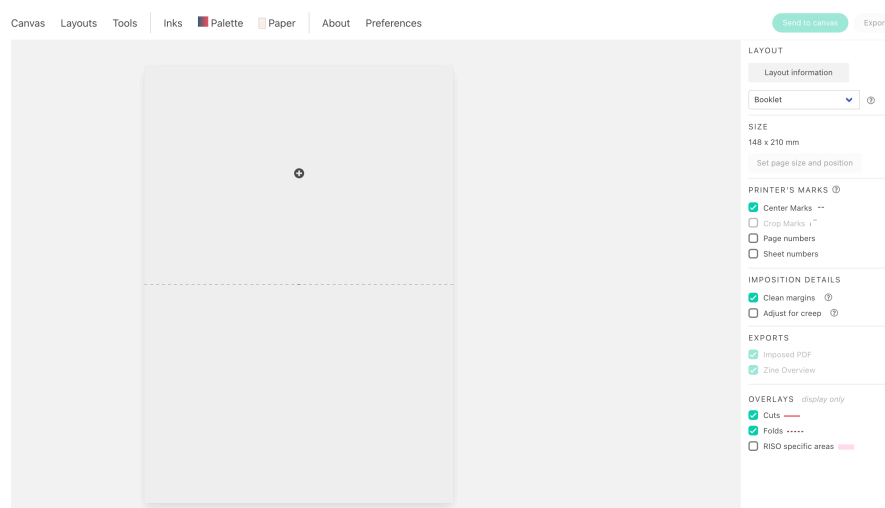
If you want a quick and very seamless way to impose your pages - download this app (for Macs only unfortunately): <https://spectrolite.app/>

In Spectrolite you can do a very quick imposition of your pages (BUT your document has to be in a PDF format for this to work correctly) Use the LAYOUTS tab in the menu bar;

Here is an example of what it could look like if your chosen output for your zine is A5:



You can see what is chosen: Metric, A4 paper which is the original file document size, how many pages do you want per page, what the finished size, and finally the page orientation
It's quite intuitive to use.



Here you can upload your design file in a PDF format into the document. It will automatically impose the files for you and then hit the green button: "Send to canvas" and it downloads to your computer

FALL 2025 WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

*There may be adjustments to the timing of assignments as course progresses. All students will be informed of any new expectations and/or deadlines.

Please note:

In light of zine culture, which is about trading, sharing and giving - **All work** produced in this class will be made in multiples. Every assignment is not complete unless you bring 11 copies of your Zine to class for each assignment. You will distribute your zine to the other members of the class and also hand one out to me. My copy of your zine will go into the BCB zine archive once I have graded the zine. Your zine will remain in the archive and **you will not get it back.**

September 2: Week 1

Introductions, expectations, rules, Zine examples

If you have a Zine or have made a Zine - BRING IT TO CLASS TODAY!!

In class exercise: Multiple one page zine format demo!

Assignment #1 (due 16 September): The Self-Portrait Narrative

Go to a photoautomat somewhere in Berlin

(map of various automats in the city: <http://www.photoautomat.de/standorte.html>)

and make 2 self-portrait photographic narratives that are continuous (4 'scenes' that complete one story line) in the photo booth. Each strip is a series of 4 images, so you will have to plan ahead. It will cost €3 for a strip of black and white photographs - bring coins with you although some machines have the option to pay by card.

September 9: Week 2

Starter Zine Kit handed out

In-class demos include: The Signature / binding options /paper grain

Slide Presentation on the photographic narrative

Let's look at some Zine samples today as well!!

+ 1 page zine folding variations

+ Exercise on imposition and creating a zine

September 16: Week 3

Assignment #1 due! Bring the 2 strips of photographs with you to class.

Critique and discussion about the photographic narrative.

Assignment #2 (due September 23); make a Zine (in an edition of 11)

using the photo strips but Do NOT cut them and use the originals - only use the copies of the originals.

September 23: Week 4

In progress review of the Self Portrait Narrative Zine and in class work time

+ Binding tutorials (spiral binding, sewn binding, staple binding)

+ Sewing machine tutorial

+ What is a colophon?

September 30: Week 5

Class meets at WIRWIR Today! - WIRWIR, Stuttgarter Str. 56, 12059 Berlin-Neukölln

Assignment #2 due! In class critique

Assignment #3 - Fan Zine printed in Risograph! (Due October 14!)

Create a Zine dedicated to your favourite band (this can be any band at all - your house-mates band even), this Zine must include one color component (can be hand coloured or can be a color photo copy or a color photograph inserted) and be in an **edition of 11**.

This zine will be printed on Risograph! We will be discussing how the Riso machine works during our meeting at WIRWIR

This assignment connects to the historical roots of the concept of the Zine.

The credits for the person who's submission you included in your Zine must be given in the colophon.

This Zine must include a 'submission' by someone else about the band.

Best option is to ask a friend to submit something (can be a drawing, poem, article, an interview - whatever you want) or you can find something online to submit.

This Zine must also be 8 pages long (it can be sewn or stapled) = 2 sheets of paper

The size and format of this Zine is up to you.

The big question we will address here is :

What is a Fan Zine and what is included in a Fan Zine?

Prepare for your presentation next week!

7 October: Week 6

In-class work time on your FanZine!

You should be ready to show the format of your Zine, basic info about the band, and an idea of the layout in a presentation format:

The 5-7min presentation should include:

- + 10 slides minimum about your band
- + Play your favourite song by the band
- + biographical background on the artist(s)
- + Have they made any zines or have any zines been made of them? what type of zines did they make? Or did they make any or do any currently exist?
- + Share with us your favourite Zine they made - can be a double page spread, or the concept for the Zine, etc If they don't have any Zines, show us what you plan on doing in your Zine.

October 14: Week 6 -

Assignment #3 - Fan Zines are due today!

FALL BREAK ———>20 - 26 October! Fall Break extra credit: Make a one page zine about TRAVELING! The extra credit only will count if you make an edition of 11 of your 1 page zine! - Due 11 November!

October 28: Week 8 - ZOOM CLASS!

Unfortunately I will be traveling in MEXICO for an exhibition and will not be able to meet physically but we will be having a zoom class and I will be introducing Assignment #4 : The One Topic Zine! (Due November 18)

Choose one topic that is of interest to you, make a series of photographs (at least 8, but better 10 photos) of this topic: it can be anything from man hole covers to egg cups; whatever you can think of that has caught your attention.

Sequence the photos and create a Zine - this Zine is meant to be image based only.

Zine must be 8 pages long (using 2 sheets of paper folded), zine must include at least 8 photos. Zine edition must be 11.

November 4: Week 9

Artist talk today! Artist to be announced!

November 11: Week 10

In-class progress review on assignment #4 today

November 18 : Week 11

Assignment #4 - The One Topic Zine! DUE today!

Assignment #5 - The Political Zine! (Due)

This is a chance for you to promote your own political agenda.

What is it? How can you relate your ideas within your zine?

This zine can be whatever you want it to be! But you still need to make an edition of 11!

You can use the Riso duplicating machine for this assignment - but let's discuss who might want to do that. Slide show of examples of political and perzines will be shown.

November 25: Week 12

Personal one on one check in with everyone on their zines.

ARTSEEN submission information!

December 2: Week 13

Critique of **Assignment #5** at WIRWIR coupled with soup!

This is the actual last day of class

December 4: Week 13: install for open studio!

ARTSEEN submission information!

DUE: 28 November

***Please make a one A4 page featuring image(s) of your artwork, with your own layout / page design.

The zine will be printed in Full color, Portrait format on A4 paper with a plastic spiral binding on the left side.

The official size of A4 is 210 x 297mm.

Considering the 5mm white border on each side, the true workable size of your page is 200 x 287mm. Keep in mind while designing your page that the holes punched for the binding will intrude at least 1cm into the left side of the page.

The final design should be saved as either PDF or JPG.

The resolution or print quality should be 300 dpi.

The page* MUST include your name.

In addition to: work(s) title, date, materials, and size

The typical art caption info might appear like this:

Artist Name, "YOUR ZINE TITLE," 2025, *Dimensions (in cm)*

Or this:

Artist Name

YOUR ZINE TITLE, 2025

Dimensions (in cm)

This will be considered as part of your Final Grade.

Please email me (sooner rather than later) if you have any questions or need any help with designing your page.

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*If you are unclear as to how to do this; you can scan your desired image that you want to submit with your phone (using an App scanner) and then open the document in PREVIEW - you can add a text box on your image there and add the relevant information.

IMMACULATE HEART COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT RULES

Rule 1 FIND A PLACE YOU TRUST AND THEN
TRY TRUSTING IT FOR A WHILE.

Rule 2 GENERAL DUTIES OF A STUDENT:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR TEACHER.
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS.

Rule 3 GENERAL DUTIES OF A TEACHER:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR STUDENTS.

Rule 4 CONSIDER EVERYTHING AN EXPERIMENT.

Rule 5 BE SELF DISCIPLINED. THIS MEANS
FINDING SOMEONE WISE OR SMART AND
CHOOSING TO FOLLOW THEM.

TO BE DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A GOOD WAY.
TO BE SELF DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A BETTER WAY.

Rule 6 NOTHING IS A MISTAKE. THERE'S NO WIN AND
NO FAIL. THERE'S ONLY MAKE.

Rule 7 The only rule is work.
IF YOU WORK IT WILL LEAD TO SOMETHING.
IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO DO ALL OF THE WORK ALL THE TIME
WHO EVENTUALLY CATCH ON TO THINGS.

Rule 8 DON'T TRY TO CREATE AND ANALYSE AT THE
SAME TIME. THEY'RE DIFFERENT PROCESSES.

Rule 9 BE HAPPY WHENEVER YOU CAN MANAGE IT.
ENJOY YOURSELF. IT'S LIGHTER THAN YOU
THINK.

Rule 10 "WE'RE BREAKING ALL OF THE RULES. EVEN
OUR OWN RULES. AND HOW DO WE DO THAT?
BY LEAVING PLENTY OF ROOM FOR X QUANTITIES." JOHN CAGE

HELPFUL HINTS: ALWAYS BE AROUND. COME OR GO TO EVERY-
THING. ALWAYS GO TO CLASSES. READ ANYTHING YOU CAN GET
YOUR HANDS ON. LOOK AT MOVIES CAREFULLY, OFTEN.
SAVE EVERYTHING-IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY LATER.
THERE SHOULD BE NEW RULES NEXT WEEK.