

BCB FALL SEMESTER 2026

FA325 The Photo Zine: A Subversive Phenomenon

Seminar Leader: April Gertler

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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 the 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; using both found images and text to create 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:

- 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.

Attendance and Special considerations for FALL 2026:

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.

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.

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 200€. See more info under Copy Shops below.

Materials list

Basic tools for the production of Zines in this class are provided to every students in the "Zine Kit". Those materials include;

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

If you loose anything from the Zine Kit please replace it!

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, Affinity 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 the pre-press production, especially for creating booklets, brochures, or any multi-page document that requires folding and binding.

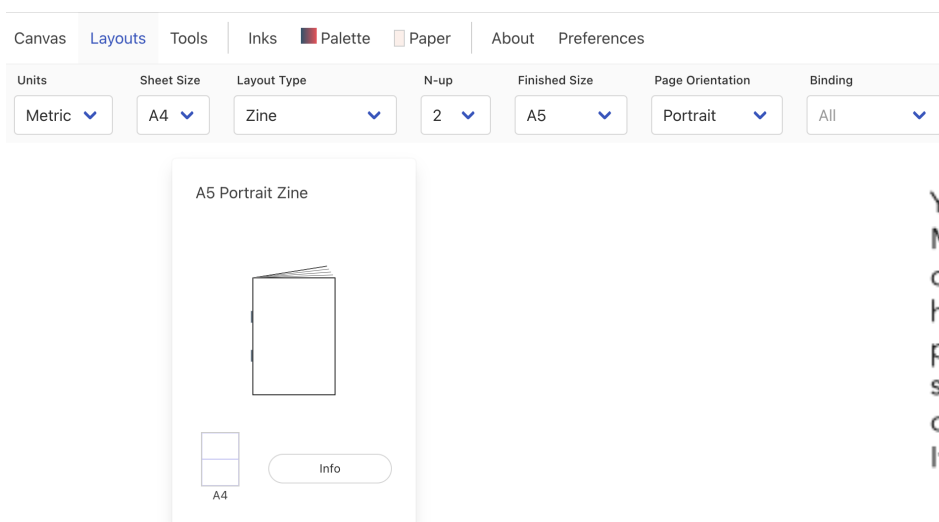
Here is more info:

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

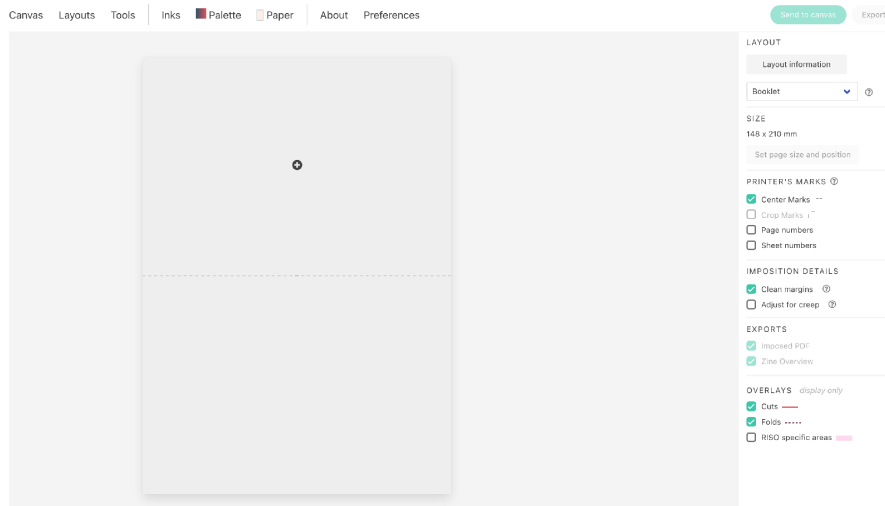
If you want a quick and very seamless way to impose your pages - download this app (for Macs only unfortunately): <https://spectrolite.app/>

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

Copy Shops

At the heart of this class is the copy shop! You will be spending lots of time at a copy shop - or various copy shops depending on a variety of issues.

Depending on the paper you use, the amount of color copies you do for this class, the amount of money you should expect to spend on this class can be between 100€ - 250€. Please be aware of that. As was mentioned earlier. If you choose to print with Miranda - the Riso machine at WIRWIR, you do not have to pay for copies although there will be some other limitations - like the fact that you can not choose the color she uses (currently she is using BRIGHT RED!).

Some things to know about copy shops;

- + They usually have a cutter on site that you can use, but often it is not very sharp.
- + You can pay them to cut your copies for you if you want but, the rule of thumb is:

ALWAYS do the final page trim AFTER YOU BIND YOUR ZINES!

- + Sometimes you pay more money if someone is helping you do the copying this isn't true everywhere, so check that in advance
- + Some copy shops have long arm staplers - so you can possibly bind your zines on site, but if not, we have a long arm stapler in the classroom

COPY SHOPS OPEN SUNDAYS!

Centralstation Druck & Kopie, Danziger Str. 173

CSV, Pappelallee 20 [Prenzlauer Berg], Warschauer Str. 72 [Friedrichshain], Breite Str. 29 [Pankow]

Copy Tiger, Oranienstr. 44 [Kreuzberg]

Copy shops where you can use your own paper (compiled by previous students):

That being said, some paper will absolutely not be accepted anywhere - it just depends.

Grand Berlin, Admiralstraße 38, 10999 Berlin-Kreuzberg

Solid Earth* (can only use your own paper sometimes, it might depend on who is working?)

Kastanienallee 91, 10435 Berlin- Prenzlauer Berg

Wörther Str. 29, 10405 Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg

*If you print yourself at Solid Earth you pay less than if they print your documents for you
(and this might be true for other copy shops - do ask and / or check the price lists)
Copy Trigger (apparently they are not helpful but you can use your own paper there)
Dresdener Str. 11, 10999 Berlin-Kreuzberg (OPEN SUNDAYS!)
Paper Twins (very nice people there, April's personal fav)
Urbanstraße 71, 10967 Berlin-Neukölln
Kopierladen (at Frankfurter Allee, they are very helpful there) (OPEN SUNDAYS!)

By far the CHEAPEST place to get color copies:
ZBL Library, Blücherplatz 1 10961 Berlin (near Hallesches Tor) (open til 9pm everyday)
Apparently it is only .20€ for color copies - (OPEN SUNDAYS!)
There are, of course, MANY more copy shops but these listed above have almost all been
tested and tried by previous students. If you have an addition to this list - please tell April!

FALL 2026 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 the work produced in
this class will be made in multiples. Every assignment is not complete unless you bring 12*
copies of your Zine to class for each assignment. You will distribute your zine to the other
members of the class and also hand two 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. At the end of the class you will have amassed your very own zine
archive of between 40 to 50 zines.

You are required to make 12 copies of every zine you make for this class.

1 September: Week 1

Introductions, expectations, rules, Zine examples

Have you made any zines or do you own any zines?

Bring them/it to class today and share!

In class exercise and workshop: Let's make a zine together!

We will go over multiple one page zine formats, imposition, and simple binding techniques.

Assignment #1 (due 3 February): Bring 12 copies of the zine we make in class together

8 September: Week 2

Assignment #1 due! Bring the zine copies to class to hand out.

Discussion about this first assignment!

Starter Zine Kit handed out - go over all of the tools in the zine kit

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

Slide Presentation on the Fan Zine!

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

+ folding demo

+ sewing machine demo

+ Cutting demo

+ Erika - the typewriter demo

+ Exercise on imposition and creating a zine

15 September: Week 3

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

Slide show presentation on your favourite band due on 22 September!

Assignment #2 (due 6 October) - make a Fan Zine (in an edition of 12)

Create a Zine dedicated to your favourite band (this can be any band at all - your housemates 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 12.

This zine can be printed on a Risograph machine! We will be discussing how the Riso machine works.

This assignment connects to the historical roots 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 (that you know) about the band.

Best option is to ask a friend/relative to submit something (can be a drawing, poem, article, an interview)

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?

In class tutorial on Miranda, the Riso machine in addition to a mini binding tutorial (spiral binding, sewn binding (a few different options here), staple binding)

Prepare for your presentations next week!

+ folding demo!

22 September: Week 4

Due today: Slide presentation on your favorite band!

The presentation must include your favorite song by that band.

The 5-7min presentation should include:

- + 10 slides minimum about your band
- + Play your favourite song by the band - the entire song!
- + 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
- + Everyone needs to send me a link to their favorite song.

Work time in class after presentations, if there is time left after the presentations.

29 September: Week 5

Artist talk by Serin, the mastermind behind *tutti frutti magazine*

https://www.instagram.com/tutti_frutti_magazine/?hl=en

Self described as: "The trashy zine about Berlin's band, DIY & queer scene"

6 October: Week 6

Assignment #3 - Fan Zines are due today - remember to bring 12 copies of your zine!

Assignment #4 - Perzine / One Topic / Political Zine (Due 27 October)

Choose one topic that is of interest to you, make a series (or find 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 - although minimal text can be used. Zine must be 8 pages long (using 2 sheets of paper folded), zine must include at least 8 photos. Please make a differently formatted zine than you made for your Fan Zine. The zine must also include something you have copied from someone else's Zine! Zine edition must be 11.

13 October: Week 7

Student Slide Presentation of one topic zines + work time

F A L L B R E A K* : 19 October - 25 October

*Make a one page zine for extra credit. Topic is open but you must make an edition of 12 for the extra credit to count.

27 October: Week 8

Online class today! With Critiques on

Assignment #4 - One Topic Zine Due Today!

Announcement of the final assignment for this class:

Assignment #5 - The Smell Zine (Due 8 December)

3 November: Week 9

Assignment #5 - The Smell Zine (Due 8 December)

You will be assigned a smell and explore your zine which ever way you want to go -

Academically, research based, more image based, text based (poetry or short story based)

But, you still need to make an edition of 12!

This zine **MUST** include a 3D element that compliments the contents of your zine.

This zine can be whatever you want it to be!

You can use the Riso duplicating machine for this assignment - but let's discuss who might want to do that.

Slide show on conceptual Zines.

10 November: Week 10

Do we meet at WIRWIR? Who wants to print on the Riso? Let's discuss!

Presentations of your smell and what you plan on doing with your zine - content focus, format, binding style, paper choice, what is your 3D element going to be?

Work time in class.

24 November: Week 11

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

Work time in class to continue working on the Smell Zine!

1 December: Week 13

Work time in class on the Smell Zine.

8 December: Week 14

Critique of Assignment #5 at WIRWIR coupled with soup!

Bring your Zine Kit to class - and please remember to replace anything you lost (you don't have to replace glues that you used though!).
This is the actual last day of class.

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 EVERYTHING. 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.