what's a zine?

Reflections on a zine assessment

This is a zine about making zines in Encountering Cities - a Geography Honours Option. The course uses zines - handmade, DIY, self-published magazines as a creative method of assessing the students.

Our zine gathers materials, experiences and perspectives from the course organiser and the students to reflect on the introduction of this unusual and unfamiliar assessment. It tells the story of how and why zines were introduced into the course, and the students learning experience as they researched, collaborated, wrote, drew, cut, pasted and shared...

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WHAT:
ENCOUNTERING CITIES
explores the everyday geographies of cities. Questioning how we understand cities, the course introduces diverse theoretical approaches to the city and examines different, modes of research and representing cities. Much like zines the course pays attention to the mundane details of everyday life. It seeks out marginalised, overlooked and silenced voices and perspectives. It finds political potential in the humdrum and practices of everyday life.

ZINES
are self-published magazines. They provide a medium for people to express themselves freely and creatively. Many zines celebrate the quirks of everyday life and the idiosyncrasies of places. Some build subcultures. Others are crafted as part of political movements.

ZINES ARE:
• DO IT YOURSELF!
• DO IT TOGETHER!
• HANDMADE
• SPECIFIC, PERSONAL, POLITICAL
• A WAY OF SHARING KNOWLEDGE THAT DOESN’T FIT INTO A DOMINANT NARRATIVE
• OFTEN EXIST AS THE ONLY REPRESENTATION OF EPHEMERAL OR UNDOCUMENTED SPACES
• EASY TO MAKE AND SHARE. ALL YOU NEED IS A PEN, PAPER, SCISSORS AND GLUE.
• ZINES CAN BE DISRUPTIVE.
WHY:

zines as an authentic assessment

authentic assessment
creativity

engaged pedagogy

But excitement about ideas was not sufficient to create an exciting learning process. As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognising one another's presence.

(hooks, 1994, p.8)

sharing knowledge

Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show.
(Walter Benjamin in file on methods)

research methods

The core idea at the heart of experimental geography is that we make the world and, in turn, the world makes us.
(Thompson, 2009)

If this is an awful mess... then would something less messy make a mess of describing it?
(Law, 2004, p.1)
embedding zines as an assessment for learning

contexts

I need to explain WHY I'm using zines. This will feel like an unusual assessment.

making: zines workshop

Workshops and group focusing on making and doing will help develop skills and understanding...

making: group mapping

They get it! The students understand the task and are engaging with the zine format.

fieldwork

They don't all get it! I need to clarify my expectations and how the zines will be assessed.

peer & formative feedback

Student feedback

bespoke marking criteria

clarifying expectations
In groups, we set off to the Union Canal, Fountainbridge, to undertake our research.

With inspiration from the Situationists, alternative ways of mapping the city was our point of departure. This gave us the freedom to explore the area from a variety of angles of inquiry.

Gentrification, Geographies of Fear, Spaces of conviviality were all explored by different groups.

We used a variety of research methods that we had learned in previous courses: ethnographies, interviews, but also archival research in the lead up to making the zine.
Zines are time-consuming! Creating them took longer than writing an essay would. However, it was a more collaborative process.

Partly, we were working together to try and figure out what we were supposed to do. We shared ideas, craft materials, and ideas on what worked/didn’t work.

Working together helped us boost our confidence in asserting what constitutes academic knowledge. Finding new ways to present our findings in an accessible, creative way -(whilst fulfilling the stereotype of geographers and their love of crayons)
I enjoyed the assessment on this course, and how Dan encouraged us to think beyond the boundaries of what academic work can look like.'

It has been very valuable having creative ways of being assessed such as the zine. I have found this has helped me in how I am able to understand the key course themes, applying them and using different strategies in comparison to other courses.'

**READING:**


HOW TO FOLD A SHEET-O-PAPER INTO A 8-PAGE ZINE