

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...

dan Swanton Meo Bishop et Al

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.

COURSE AIMS

- On completion of this course you will be able to:
- evaluate how different research methods, conceptual frameworks and modes of representation shape how we know and understand cities
 - demonstrate a critical understanding of key concepts including the everyday, encounters, emotions, and materiality
 - employ a range of writing and analytical skills to identify and analyse complex issues facing contemporary cities with originality
 - demonstrate skills in working independently and collaboratively

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

David Gauntlett
creativity

'Authentic learning experiences are those that are personally relevant from the learner's perspective and situated within appropriate social contexts.'
Stein, Issacs & Andrews, 2004, p.239

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

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)

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

sharing knowledge

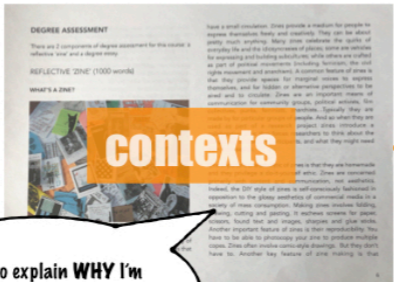
research methods

multiple ways of knowing and multiple sets of meaning, to allow differently situated voices to be heard to speak to (or past) each other as well as to the contexts from which they emerge and to which they contribute
(Pred, 1995, p.25)

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

HOW:

embedding zines as an assessment for learning



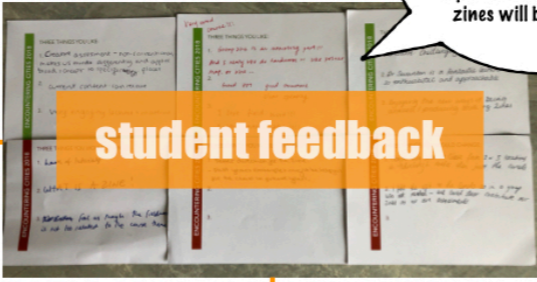
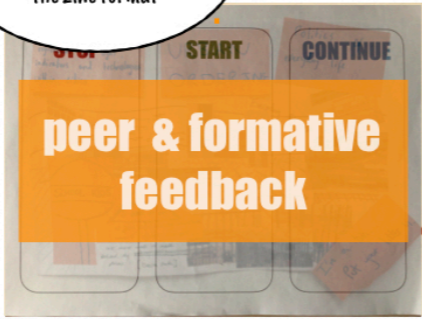
I need to explain WHY I'm using zines. This will feel like an unusual assessment!



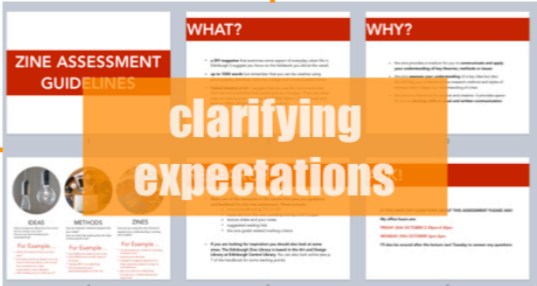
They get it! The students understand the task and are engaging with the zine format



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



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



clarifying expectations

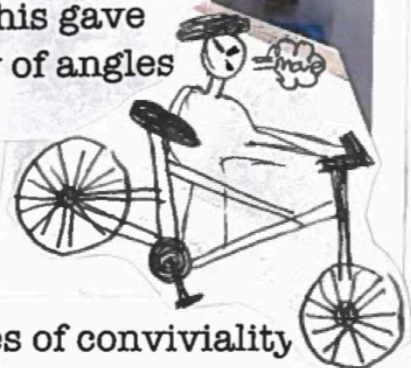
The fieldwork

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.

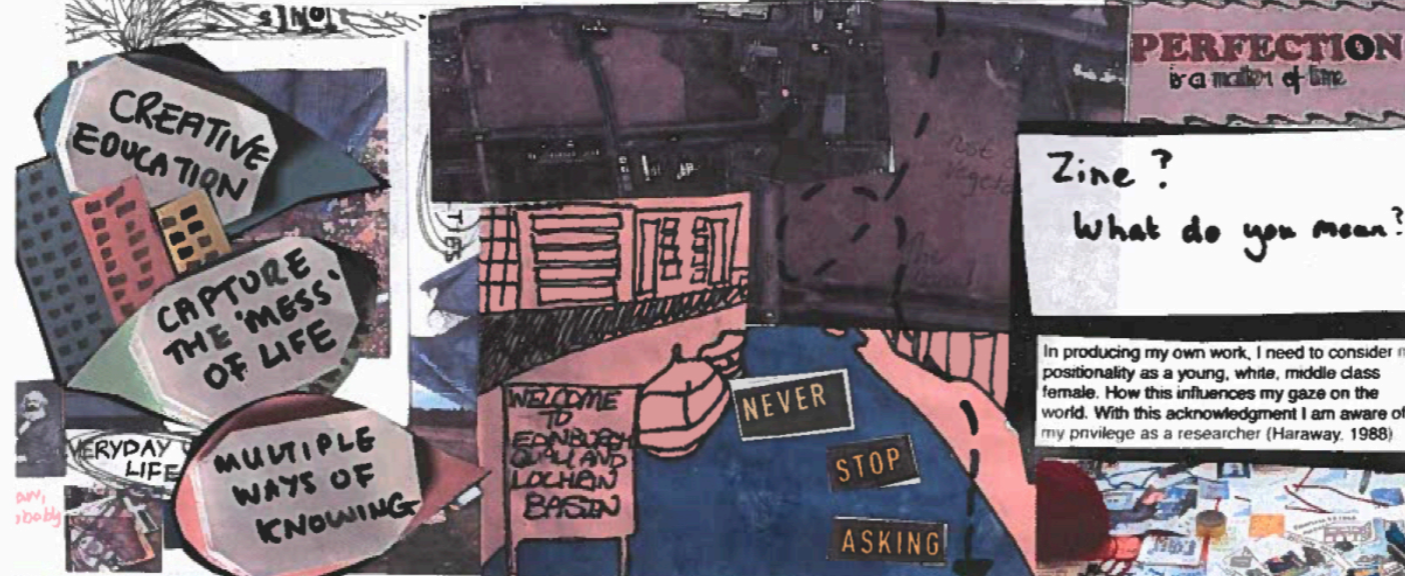


THE MAKING

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.

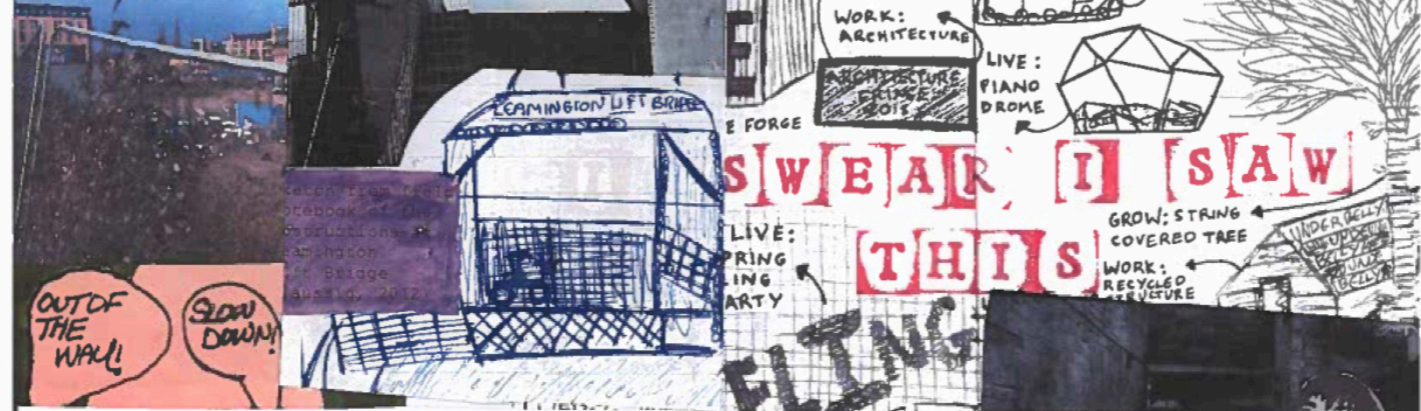


Working together helped us boost our confidence in asserting what constitutes academic knowledge. Finding new ways to present our findings in an accessible, creative way - (whilst fulfilling the stereotype of geographers and their love of crayons)



I took it. I swear I saw this
To understand an unintended landscape.

snapshot in the background is of an edging on the front and back covers of this metaphor for how dominant urban theory treats the back cover is a metaphor for the urban life. This zine understands that after a more messy. Zines are a form of knowledge technique for challenging dominant urban life of social research methods an understudy urban life can be made. To build every montage and sketches in order to intended landscape.



se pages show how the dominant representation overlooks and takes for granted the everyday urban present within this unintended landscape. Furthermore, urban materialities are not static, they have world of everyday life. This zine exemplifies the everyday life of a city through juxtaposing the literary lion that implies the unintended landscape needs to 'LIVE, WORK & GROW'. It does this by sketching ring working and growing. This uses Thussat's method of putting pen to paper to argue that readers need to aim 'I swear I saw this'. Within this zine, readers need to trust that 'I swear I have seen the complexity and unintended landscape'.

ZINES



Page 8 - conclusion
The canal does promote conviviality and exchange but subverts it through images - Guy Debord
at we should be asking is; can any so convivial? That would be unlikely by understanding of the difficulties; convivial urban space
if the interests in the space is at the space should be
Sharing leads to conflict' (Church does not necessarily need to be

The canal is a fun landscape to walk through, and ignoring that meaning signage is the only way to explore properly. Further down the canal has been heavily developed recently. Lots of new shiny things define its character. Signs summon you as a pedestrian. One waves 'WELCOME TO EDINBURGH QUAY' but its neighbour is far more hostile 'NO UNAUTHORISED ACCESS', and I feel slightly less welcome as a result. I notice the warning but ignore and wander where I'm told I shouldn't.

URBAN GEOGRAPHIES OF EXCLUSION

Barroughmuir High School
NION
CANAL
PEDESTRIANS Zine readers
and contestation!

Reflections

Collaboration



'I enjoyed the assessment on this course, and how Dan encouraged us to think beyond the boundaries of what academic work can look like.'

confidence

I am building an archive of student work on Edinburgh. This will be a resource for future students and anyone else who is interested...

Sharing

For the first time in my experience students were talking about how they had shared their assessment with friends, flat mates and family.

archive

Understanding

'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.'

MORE zines

READING:

Bagelman, J. & C. Bagelman (2016). 'Zines: Crafting Change and Repurposing the Neoliberal University' *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 15 (2), 365-92.

Duncombe, S. (2017). *Notes from the Underground*. Portland, OR.: Microcosm.

Sambell, K., McDowell, L. & Montgomery, C. (2013). *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.

Todd, M & Pearl Watson, E. (2016). *Whatcha Mean What's a Zine?* Boston, MA: Graphia

HOW TO FOLD A

SHEET-O-PAPER

INTO A

8-PAGE ZINE

