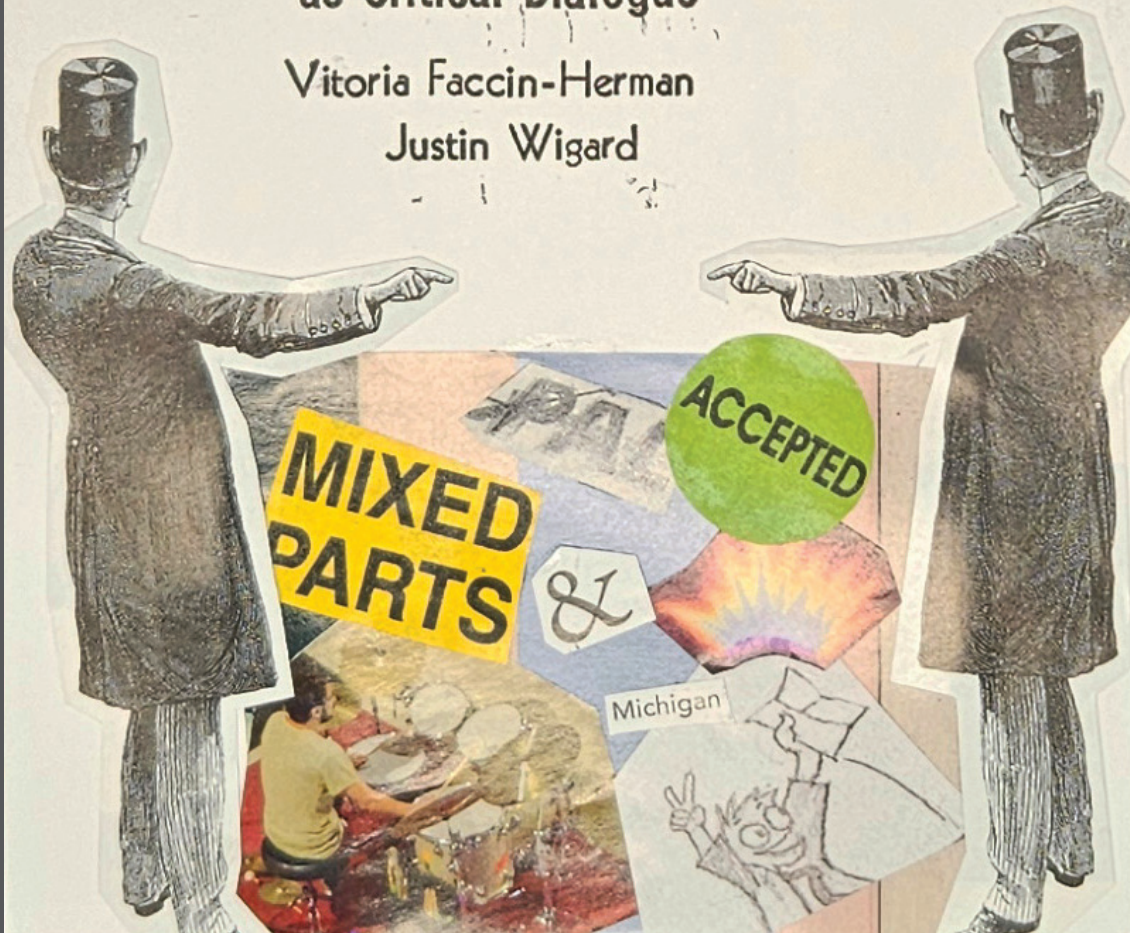


Exploring Zine Making as Critical Dialogue

Vitoria Faccin-Herman
Justin Wigard



Exploring Zine Making as Critical Dialogue

Vitoria Faccin-Herman

Justin Wigard

2025

Hi!

MY NAME IS VITORIA,
I'M THE ASSISTANT PROF.
OF GRAPHIC DESIGN
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH DAKOTA.

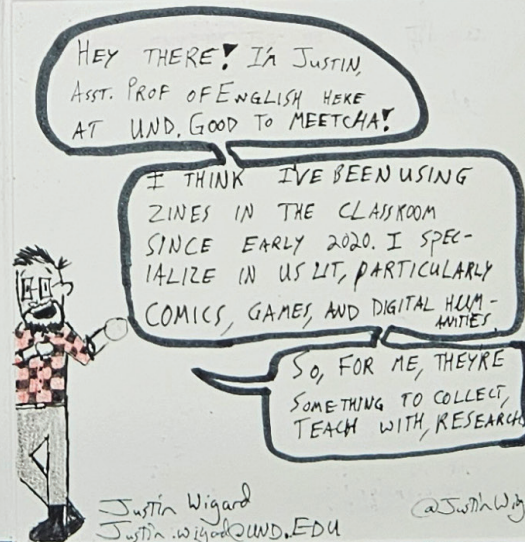
FOR YEARS NOW, ZINES'
VERSATILITY AND
EPHEMERALITY HAVE
FASCINATED ME.

I HAVE USED THEM IN
MY CLASSES FOR SIX
YEARS AND STUDENTS
ALWAYS SEEM
EXCITED TO EXPLORE.

IN THIS ZINE, WE
WILL EXPLORE AND
SHARE HOW ZINES
HAVE IMPACTED
US, NOW, BRINGING
IT INTO RESEARCH.

VITORIA FACCIN-HERMAN
vitoria.faccin@und.edu vitorianoc.com

Let's TALK+MAKE Zines



Hi!

Let's talk and make zines

My name is Vitoria, I'm the assistant prof. of graphic design at the University of North Dakota. For years now, zines' versatility and ephemerality have fascinated me.

I have used them in my classes for six years and students always seem excited to explore.

In this zine, we will explore and share how zines have impacted us, now bringing it into research.

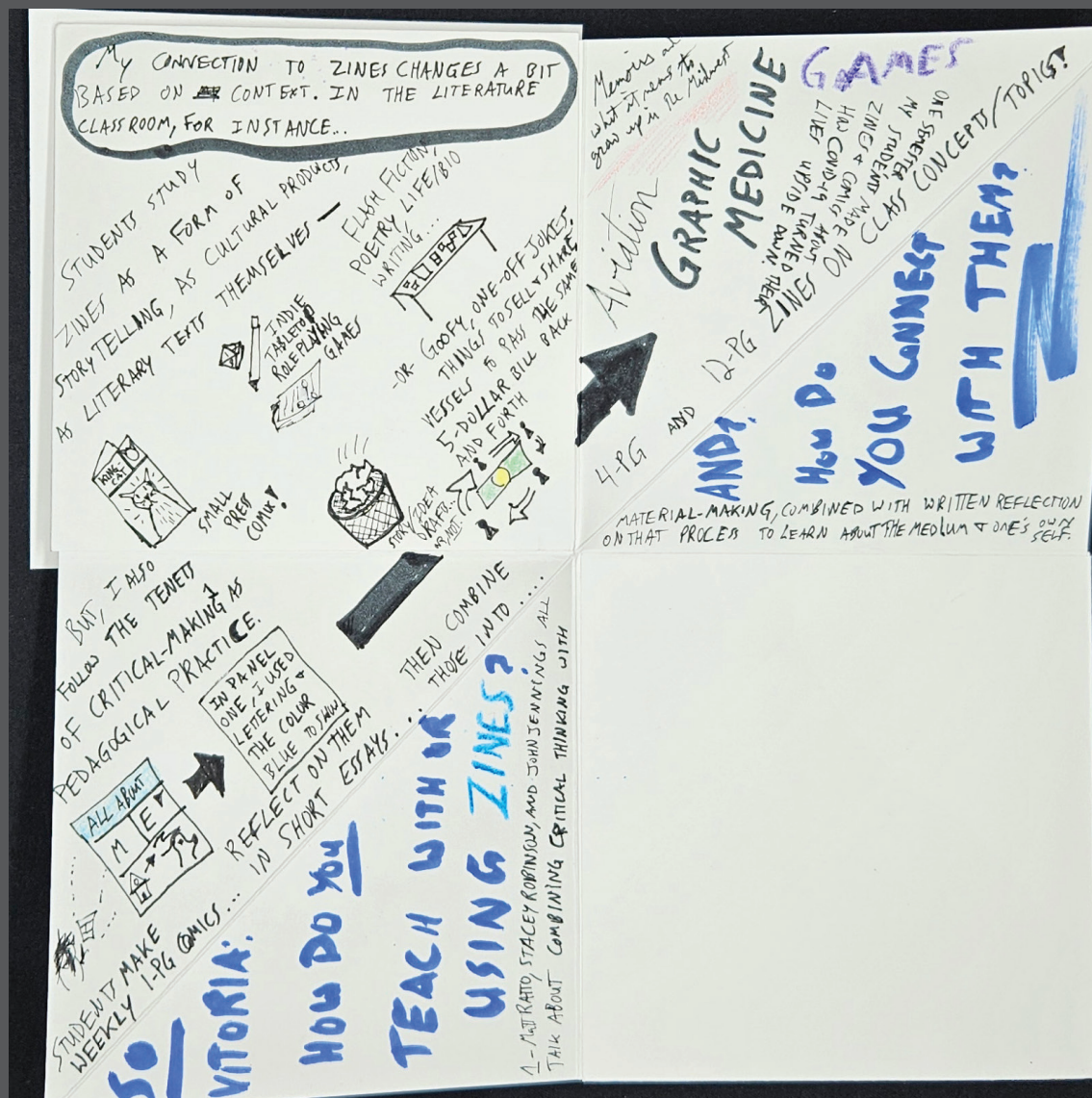
Vitoria Faccin-Herman
vitoria.faccin@und.edu
vitorianoc.com

Hey there! I'm Justin, Asst. Prof of English here at UND. Good to meetcha!

I think I've been using zines in the classroom since early 2020. I specialize in US Lit, particularly comics, games, and digital humanities.

So, for me, they're something to collect, teach with, research.

Justin Wigard
justin.wigard@und.edu



My connection to zines changes a bit based on context. In the literature classroom, for instance...

Students study zines as a form of storytelling, as cultural products, as literary texts themselves—small press comix, indie tabletop role playing games, flash fiction, poetry, life/bio writing... -or- goofy, one-off jokes, things to sell and share, vessels to pass the same 5-dollar bill back and forth.

But I also follow the tenets of critical making¹ as pedagogical practice.

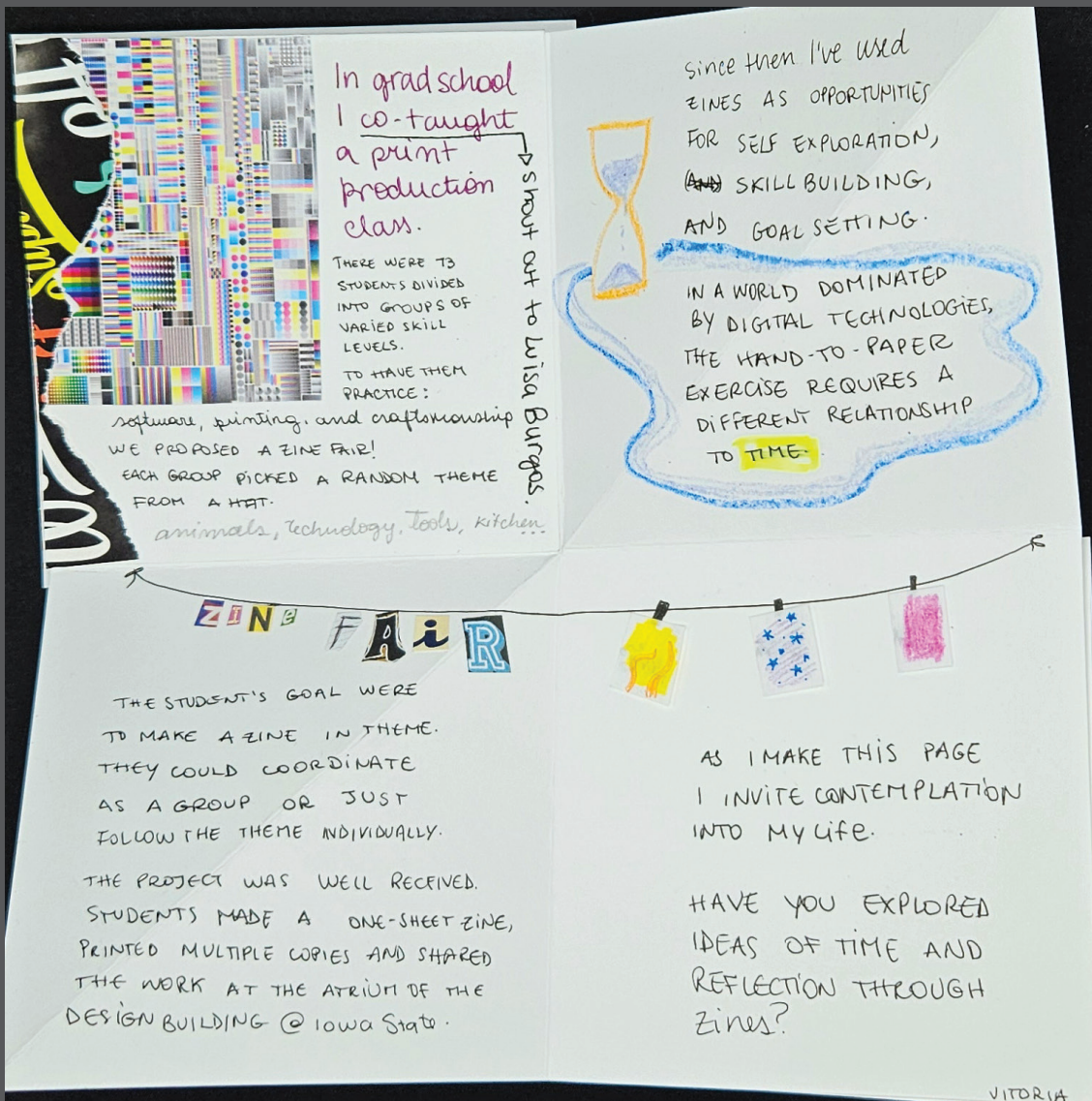
Student makes weekly one-page comics... reflect on them in short essays... then combine those into 4-page and 12-page zines on class concepts/topics!

One semester my students made zine and comic about how COVID-19 turned their lives upside-down.

Memories and what it means to grow up in the Midwest. Aviation. Graphic Medicine. Games

So, Vitoria: How do you teach with or using zines? And, how do you connect with them?

1. Matt Ratto, Stacey Robinson, and John Jennings all talk about combining critical thinking with material-making, combined with written reflection on that process to learn about the medium and one's own self.



In grad school I co-taught (shout out to Luisa Burgos) a print production class. There were 73 students divided into groups of varied levels. To have them practice: software, printing, and craftsmanship we proposed a Zine Fair!

Each group picked a random theme from a hat (animals, technology, tools, kitchen...).

The students' goal were to make a zine in the theme. They could coordinate as a group or just follow the theme individually.

The project was well received. Students made a on-sheet zine, printed multiple copies and shared their work at the atrium of the Design Building at Iowa State.

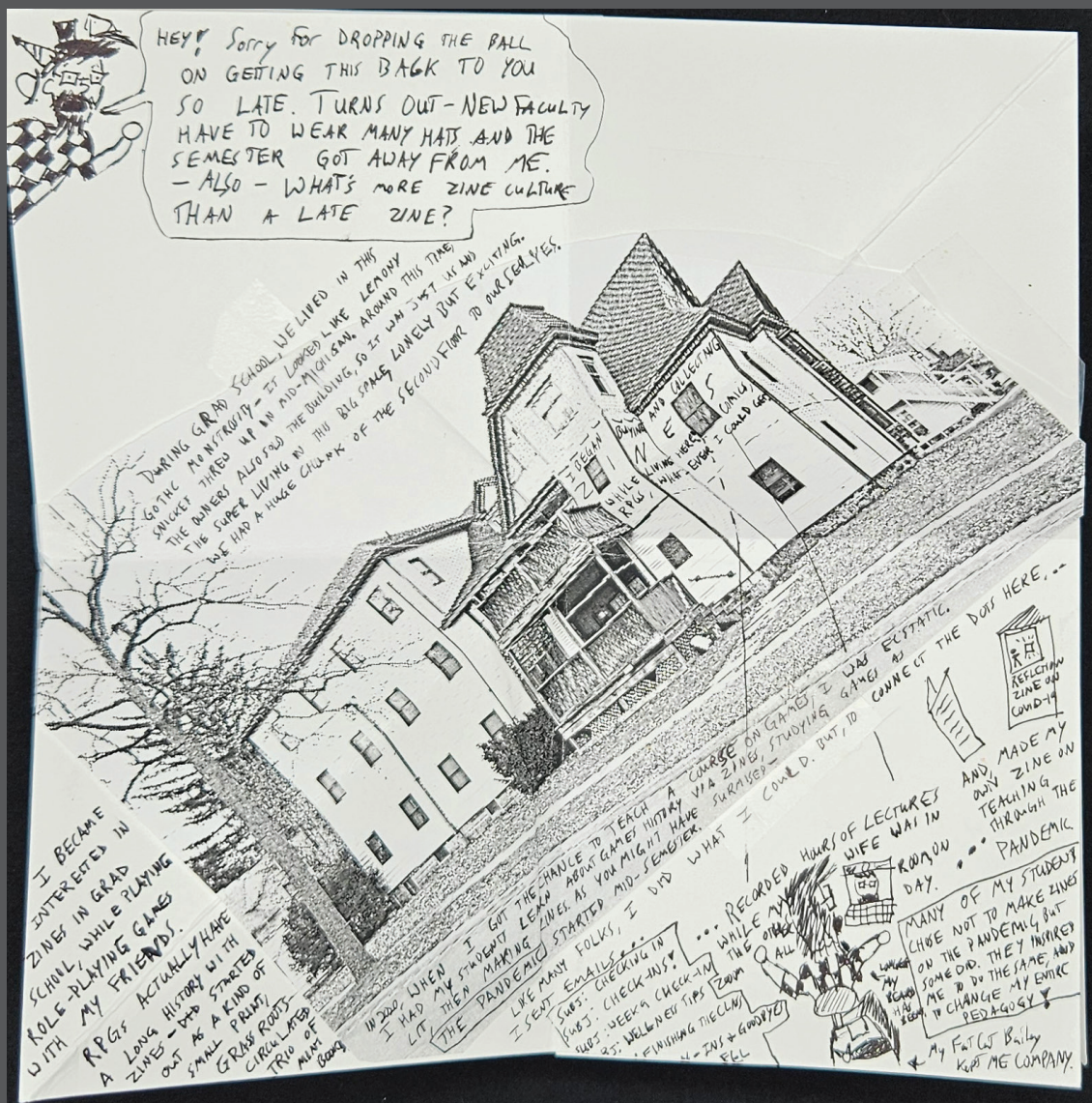
Since then I've used zines as opportunities for self exploration, skill building, and goal setting.

In a world dominated by digital technologies, the hand-to-paper exercise requires a different relationship to time.

As I make this page I invite contemplation into my life.

Have you explored ideas of time and reflection through zines?

Vitoria



Hey! Sorry for dropping the ball and getting this back to you so late. Turns out - new faculty have to wear many hats and the semester got away from me. - Also - what's more zine culture than a late zine?

During grad school we lived in this gothic monstrosity—it looked like Lemony Snicket threw up on mid-Michigan. Around this time, the owners also sold the building, so it was just us and the super living in this big space, lonely but exciting. We had a huge chunk of the second floor to ourselves.

I became interested in zines in grad school while playing role-playing games with my friends. RPGs actually have a long history with zines—D&D started out as a kind of small print, grass roots, circulated trio of mini books.

In 2020, when I got the chance to teach a course on games, I was ecstatic. I had my students learn about games history via zines, studying games as lit, then making zines. As you might have surmised—The Pandemic started mid-semester. Like many folks, I did what I could. But, to connect the dots here... I sent emails...recorded hours of lectures while my wife was in the other room, on zoom all day... and, made my own zine on teaching through the pandemic.

Many of my students chose not to make zines on the pandemic, but some did. They inspired me to do the same, and to change my entire pedagogy.

Subj: Checking in

Finishing the class

Longest my beard has been.

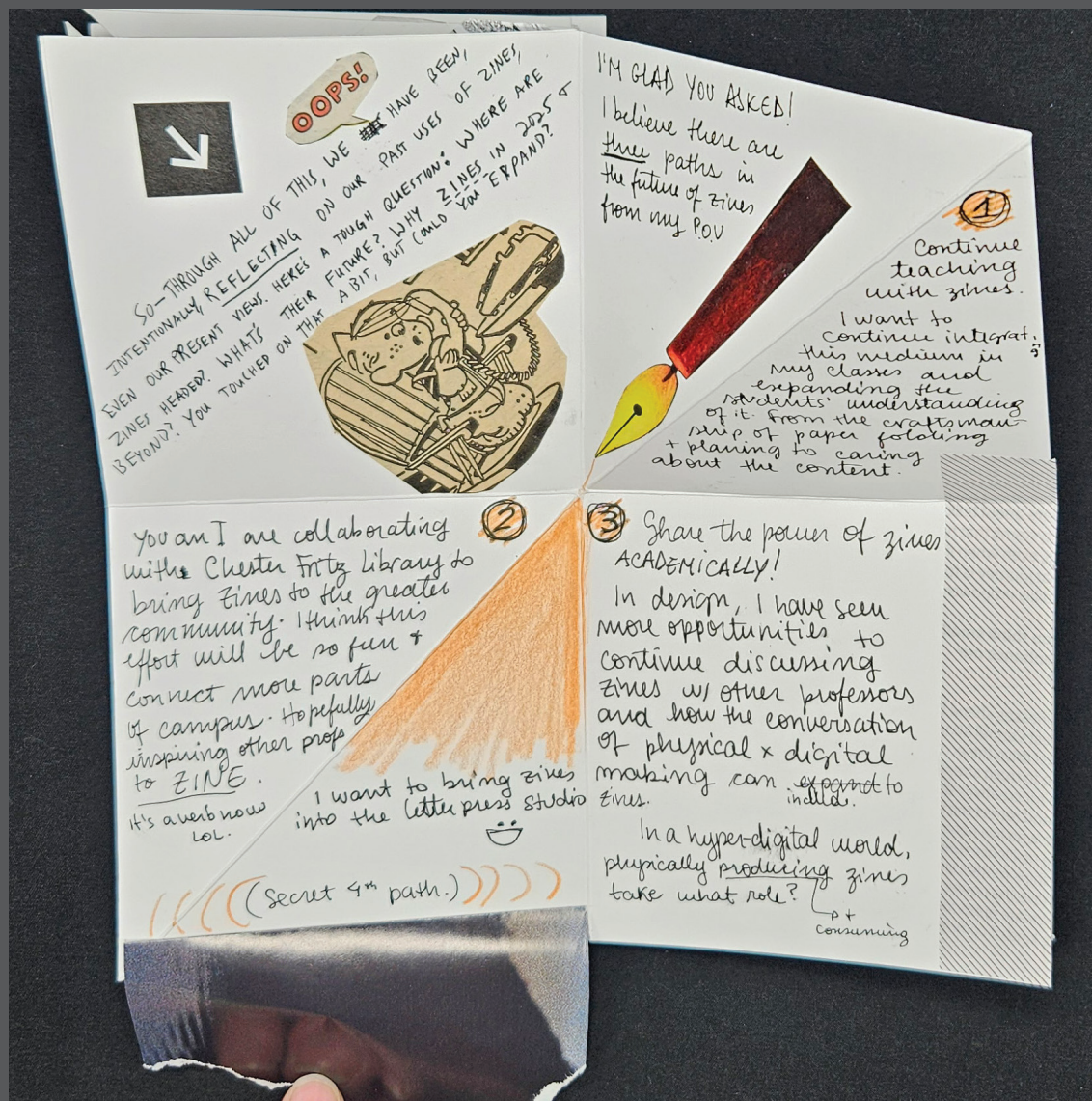
Subj: Check-ins!

-ins + goodbyes.

My fat cat Bailey kept me company.

Subj: Week 9 Check-in

Subj: Wellness tips



(Justin) So-through all of this, we have been, intentionally, reflecting on our past uses of zines, even our present views. Here's a tough question: Where are zines headed? What's their future? Why zines in 2025 and beyond? You touched on that a bit, but could you expand?

(Vitoria) I'm glad you asked!

I believe there are three paths in the future of zines from my P.O.V.

1) Continue teaching with zine. I want to continue integrating this medium in my classes and expanding the students' understanding of it. From the craftsmanship of paper folding and planning to caring about the content.

2) You and I are collaborating with Chester Fritz Library to bring zines to the greater community. I think this effort will be so fun and connect more parts of campus. Hopefully, inspiring other profs to zine. (It's a verb now LOL)

3) Share the power of zines academically!

In design, I have seen more opportunities to continue discussing zines with other professors and how the conversation of physical x digital making can include zines.

Secret 4th path) I want to bring zines into the letterpress studio.

In a hyper-digital world, physically producing (and consuming) zines take what role?

What are some lessons you've learned and how has your teaching with zines changed?

We talk about “why comics” and “comics as literature,” then move on to reading deeply in both realms, often with classics first, then some more recent texts.

Reflections

So — I'll take first crack. One thing I'm really grateful for is just, selfishly, the chance to actually hear about your pedagogy. You know (but our audience doesn't), that we actually met on New Faculty Orientation and our first convo was ABOUT ZINES. So, I find myself inspired by how you are teaching with zines, and I want to actually create a zine fair on campus. Collab #2, maybe??

But, I'm also thankful for the chance to reflect on my own pedagogy, and to, well, put my money where my mouth is, to make a zine! How about you? What reflections & takeaways do you have? Whatcha got??

Many Thanks to our Fearless editors, as well as UND & The College of Arts & Sciences!

Justin Wigard

Hey!

I loved sharing + hearing about how you apply zines in your class. It feels very organized. I want to try the method you use of zine-reflection. I wonder what some "order" might do to a design class.

I think there's more for us to zine about!
(it is a verb)

The reflective aspect of this experience has been great. Thanks!

VITORIA FACCHIN-HERMAN

Reflections!

So — I'll take first crack. One thing I'm really grateful for is just, selfishly, the chance to actually hear about your pedagogy. You know (but our audience doesn't), that we actually met on New Faculty Orientation and our first convo was about zines! So, I find myself inspired by how you are teaching with zines, and I want to actually create a zine fair on campus. Collab #2, maybe??

But, I'm also thankful for the chance to reflect on my own pedagogy, and to, well, put my money where my mouth is, to make a zine! How about you? What reflections and takeaways do you have? Whatcha got?

Hey!

I loved sharing and hearing about how you apply zines in your class. It feels very organized. I want to try the method you use of zine-reflection. I wonder what some "order" might do to a design class.

I think there's more for us to "zine" about! (It is a verb).

The reflective aspect of this experience has been great. Thanks!

Many thanks to our fearless editors, as well as UND College of Arts & Sciences.

References:

Barry, Lynda. Making Comics. Drawn & Quarterly, 2019.

Barry, Lynda. Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor. Drawn & Quarterly, 2021.

Czerwiec, MK, Ian Williams, Susan Merrill Squier, Michael J. Green, Kimberly R. Myers, and Scott T. Smith. Graphic Medicine Manifesto. Penn State Press, 2015.

Jennings, John, and Stacey Robinson. Black Kirby: In Search of the Motherboxx Connection. Cedar Grove Publishing, 2015.

Kunka, Andrew J. Autobiographical Comics. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art. Vol. 106. Northampton, MA: Kitchen sink press, 1993.

Ratto, Matt. "Critical Making: Conceptual and Material Studies in Technology and Social Life." The Information Society 27.4 (2011): 252-260.

Smith, Esther K. How to Make Books: Fold, Cut & Stitch Your Way to a One-of-a-kind Book. Potter Craft, 2012.

Sohini, Kay. "On Teaching Artfully: A Graphic Interview with Meghan Parker." Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society, vol. 6 no. 1, 2022, p. 69-84. Project MUSE, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ink.2022.0003>.

Sousanis, Nick. Unflattening. Harvard University Press, 2015.

Wigard, Justin, Zaria Cannon, Claudia Kramer. "From the Classroom: Critical-Making with Comics and Graphic Medicine During the COVID-19 Pandemic. ImageText 13.3 (2023): <https://image-textjournal.com/from-the-classroom-critical-making-with-comics-and-graphic-medicine-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>