

## ZINE ASSIGNMENT I

**Due \_\_\_\_\_:** Read the zines you selected and review them. What's the zine about? What do you think the author trying to communicate? What does the author do right and what does s/he do wrong? How could the zine be improved? Do you see any of the ideas they are expressing in mainstream magazines?

**Due \_\_\_\_\_:** Our class will be making a zine that we distribute throughout Berkeley Carroll. But first we need to decide what kind of zine to make. Your job is to come up with at least two solid ideas for a zine that the entire class could work on. Each idea should include an overall theme, as well as suggestions for contents that fit that theme. The theme could be anything remotely connected to media or consumer culture. (Tip: General themes are often better than specific ones since they allow for a broader range of articles.)

Spend some serious time on this because you'll have to pitch your idea to the class. The class will then choose the theme it likes best and make a zine based on it. Each student will then be responsible for producing 2-4 pages in the zine by him/herself.

Here's an example of what you should have by Friday:

### Sample theme: Shopping

#### Sample contents:

- \* Survey: what corporate logos do BC students wear the most? Someone could take an informal survey and count the number of logos (Nike, Hilfiger, etc.) displayed on any given school day and compare BC students to the average person on, say, Flatbush.
- \* Take photos to go with the above article
- \* Article: compare official namebrand clothing with some of the bootlegs you can find in Chinatown. What's the difference? How can you tell the fakes from the real ones?
- \* Article: In what ways are BC students influenced by advertising?
- \* Graph: Research the costs that go into making a typical namebrand t-shirt. How much money goes in to cover materials? How much for labor? How much for advertising? How much for distributing the product? Take a big picture of a t-shirt, then use it to make a chart illustrating how the costs break down.

### Sample theme: Cars

#### Sample contents:

- \* Article on car product placements. Come up with a list of TV shows that prominently feature cars. Clip out pictures of celebrities and car ads (or copy them from the web) and use them to illustrate how product placement works. Try to come up with something visually interesting and/or funny.
- \* Photos: take pictures of the various bumper stickers you see on cars around the neighborhood and use them to create a photo essay or collage.
- \* Interview a few BC teachers and parents and ask them for stories about their first car. What kind of car was it? What's the most memorable experience they had in it?
- \* Create spoof car ads and place them throughout the zine.

## ZINE ASSIGNMENT II

The class will be producing an as-of-yet-untitled zine with the theme “sex and the media.” The zine will be distributed in the library and other places at Berkeley Carroll. Since it will be read by other students and faculty, your job is to come up with something as interesting, educational, and entertaining as possible. Each student is responsible for 2 to 6 pages of material. This can be anything: articles, personal stories, reviews of popular TV shows or movies, ad parodies, comics, surveys, photo essays, etc. Be creative and use images judiciously.

Each contribution will ultimately be compiled and put into the zine. (Those of you who would like to collaborate on an article rather than working by yourself should talk to me.)

You may want to use images from magazines, books, or other sources on your pages. You can use the copy machine and other supplies for free (rubber cement, scissors, etc.) at my office at 808 Union Street. I’m there from 1 pm until 5 pm on days 2, 4, and 6 and often on the other days as well.

### A FEW IDEAS

Use one of the ideas below or come up with your own. Be sure to talk to Ms. McLaren about your ideas beforehand. I want to make sure that all your submissions will fit the zine and that we don't have too much of one type of thing. Also, I can offer you tips on researching, layout, and other matters.

Keep in mind that you can do more than one idea . . . and, in fact, you *should* do more than one idea if your idea is quick and simple. You’ve got 2 to 6 pages to work with; use them wisely.

- \* Which corporations are the biggest producers of porn in America? Find out and make a chart tying the companies to their various media outlets and mainstream programming.
- \* Find the most ridiculous examples of advertisements that use sex to sell and comment on them.
- \* Research historic sexual "firsts" on TV (i.e. first portrayal of an interracial romance, first depiction of premarital sex, first shot of a bare navel) and discuss them in an illustrated essay.
- \* Deconstruct a movie poster that uses sexual imagery.
- \* Interview someone from GASP and discuss images of homosexuality in the media. Use pictures to illustrate.
- \* Parody the sex advice found in teen magazines and/or compare it to the

sex education taught in school (if such a thing exists)

- \* Research how an apparently gender-neutral product like a cell phone is targeted to each gender. How do the ads play into stereotypes to pitch "boy" cell phones and "girl" cell phones?
- \* Conduct an informal survey, asking people a question like: What's the first sex scene you remember seeing in a movie or on TV? Have respondents briefly discuss their answer. Tape record and transcribe responses, then edit them.
- \* How does the teenage sex life as portrayed on TV compare to the sex lives of real teens? Find out what surveys say about the sexual habits of teens (try to get information from a variety of sources). Also interview some of your friends, while keeping in mind that they are unrepresentative of teenagers in general. Also keep in mind that most people lie on surveys about their sex lives.
- \* Last year there was a big scandal about how women's magazines like *Cosmo* fake the sex data they report in their surveys. Write an article, discussing why magazines would blatantly lie about this information and discuss the effect this could have on audiences. See Ms. McLaren for sources.

## GRADING

Your contribution to the zine will be graded as part of your test score. Some of your ideas should involve a lot of independent research. We'll spend time in the library and you can use the online databases there for background information. I can help you locate books and articles that aren't available in our library. Whether your idea involves a lot of research or not, I expect you to put a great deal of thought into whatever you do to help assure that the zine is something that other people can both learn from and enjoy reading. I expect you to spend at least ten hours on your contribution. Grades will be determined by the following:

- \* Quality of writing. (Grammar, spelling, and punctuation count.)
- \* Quality of design and/or illustrations. Are you effectively using images? Xeroxing or scanning images and getting them to reproduce well on copy paper can sometimes be tricky, but you should do your best to make illustrations clear and aesthetically pleasing. Sloppy work will generally result in a lower grade.
- \* Is your work educational? How much research did you do? Does it provide readers with information that they'll find interesting and/or useful?
- \* Is it entertaining, funny, or otherwise engaging?
- \* Does it reflect a considerate amount of time and effort?
- \* On topic: Does it fit the theme?

## **Deadlines**

\_\_\_\_\_ Your idea of what you want to contribute needs to be written up and submitted to me for approval. If you would like to work on your pages over the holiday, let me know and I'll read your idea immediately. Once I okay it, you're free to start working. (If you later change your mind that's fine, but be sure to let me know and run the new idea by me.)

\_\_\_\_\_ A first draft of your pages is due. Please bring three copies. You'll be exchanging them with your fellow students to critique each other's work. Ms. McLaren will also review each contribution and offer input.

\_\_\_\_\_ Final is due! ***PAGES MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME TO GET A PASSING GRADE; THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS.***

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

AUTHOR'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### **PEER CRITIQUE FORM**

Read over the pages you've been assigned carefully and write out a critique for each author using the info below as a guide. The point here is to be constructive, of course...

#### **TEXT**

Do you have any suggestions for improving the text? Is it clear what the author is trying to communicate? If there is too much text, suggest parts to edit or cut out. Also suggest ways the author could make the text more interesting, lively, or informative. Point out both strengths and the weaknesses in the text. Correct any misspellings or grammar problems that you see (on the draft itself).

Comments here:

#### **COHERENCE**

Try to imagine these pages inside a zine. Is there anything the author could do to make his or her pages more cohesive? Each author's pages should look like they go together. If there are articles, they should have a clear beginning and an end. They should also have a clear title or headline. If there's an image that you think needs a caption, point it out.

Comments here:

## **IMAGES & DESIGN**

Does the author use images effectively? (A good rule of thumb is whether they make the reader want to read the text.) Offer some suggestions to liven things up and draw more readers in. If you're not sure why certain images are used, ask the author and then suggest ways that s/he could make the meaning clearer.

One way for authors to make their pages coherent is to use design elements (fonts, clip art, borders, or backgrounds) to create a uniform "look." (Ms. McLaren will bring a few examples to class to help illustrate.)

Suggest ways to make the pages look better, funnier, foxier, here:

## **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

Are the pages the right size? Are the graphics clean? Is the text legible?

Point out any possible technical problems here:

## **MISC.**

Do the pages fit the theme "sex and media"? If not, suggest a way to make things more in line.

Is the author's name clearly marked somewhere on his/her pages? If not, where do you think it should go?