

Instructor Name: Danielle Harms

Class Number and Name: English 233, Introduction to Creative Writing

Assignment: Become a D.I.Y. Publisher: Make a Digital Zine

Digital Humanities tools/methods:

The Digital Humanities tools were selected by students to fit their work and audience. Tools included a range from podcasting technology, Garage Band, Sway, Instagram, Twitter, Maps, communal lending libraries, oil painting, etc.

Description of assignment:

For their final project in Introduction to Creative Writing, students became independent publishers of their own work by transforming their creative writing into a Digital Zine that they could distribute to a small and specific audience that held meaning for them.

Here are the materials I asked students to assemble into a portfolio as their final project in the class, with an excerpt of the descriptions from the assignment directions:

1. **A Digital Zine** that you could distribute to a small and specific audience that holds meaning for you. Whatever you create should include:
 - a. At least one significant multimodal element that a reader could engage with digitally.
 - b. At least one significantly revised work from one of the 3 major projects (the creative nonfiction, poems, and short story).
2. **A vision statement for your zine that discusses:**
 - a. What small and specific audience that holds meaning for you did you cater to in creating your zine? How did you create with this audience in mind?
 - b. A plan for how you might distribute what you made to your target audience.
 - c. Reflection on whether you will or already have distributed it for others to read, and how that experience impacts you as a writer
 - d. You can submit this vision statement as writing, audio, or video. That means you can write, or you can talk in an audio or video recording.
3. **Lessons Learned Reflection**
 - a. 2-3 paragraphs reflecting on your learning this semester, in this final project process, and through the writing you have produced. This can be informal, and you should feel free to write as you talk.
 - b. You can also submit this reflection as writing, audio, or video. That means you can write, or you can talk in an audio or video recording.

Pedagogical Digital Humanities Goals

For this assignment, I used Digital Humanities tools to broaden the possibilities for how students could re-imagine their work as a stand-alone zine that included digital, multimodal elements. One of my pedagogical goals was to use Digital Humanities practices to foreground the specific audiences of readers that students could envision reading their creative work. My pedagogical goals were to:

- Design a final project around the awareness that craft ideas defining “good writing” are culturally constructed.
- Discuss and re-orient how audience awareness becomes constructed in creative writing classrooms.

Often, creative writing classes end with a portfolio where students draw on the feedback they received in class to revise their writing. In the generative phases of the writing process, when students share drafts of their work with the class and receive feedback, it is easy for students to feel that the primary audience they need to write for is the instructor and the other students in the class. But for many students, that is limiting, and they may be writing for an audience beyond the class. For students with identities that are not well represented or understood in the class or academia, implicitly or explicitly framing the class as the primary audience to write in response to can have a real harmful, oppressive, and silencing impact. I hoped the Digital Humanities would provide tools for this zine project to counter those dynamics, allowing student to share their work with an authentic, outside audience using multimodal tools.

Outcomes:

This project supported these learning objectives:

What will we learn? By sufficiently engaging in this class, you will be able to:

- **Produce original, creative work** that reflects thoughtful, informed engagement with its literary genre.
- **Continue to write creatively** with a variety of methods, processes, and craft techniques you can use to generate and revise writing.
- **Engage with some of the ongoing debates** writers are having, including issues of ethics.
- Understand ways writers **circulate work and build communities**.

These learning objectives are adapted from work by the author, scholar, and poet Janelle Adsit.

Sample assignments:

A collection of sample assignments from this project is [available at this link](#).