

Where Can UVic English Take You? An Interview with Erin F. Chan (BA 2019)

What is your job?

I am currently a teaching assistant for Simon Fraser University's Publishing Program for the course "Graphic Design in Transition: Print and Digital Books," taught by Publication Design Lecturer Mauve Pagé. And I recently completed an internship with independent book publisher Arsenal Pulp Press.

What led you to pursue an interest in publishing?

Although I have always loved books and everything print, it was not until I took the course "Writing 322: Magazine Publishing" on a whim in my last semester at UVic that I realized that publishing was something I could pursue. The course, taught by John Threlfall, introduced me to the publishing industry and to how stories, business, editing, design, and publishing intersect through creative collaboration. This experience led me to the Master of Publishing program at SFU, where I am now in my second year of the program working on research for my thesis—which is centred on zines and the zine community of the West Coast as a publishing counterculture.

What does a typical professional day look like for you?

As a TA for a graphic design course that centres on book design practices, I provide assistance and support as students work through various book design assignments and projects—one of which includes conceptualizing and designing a print illustrated book based on the un/settled art installation by Otoniya J. Okot Bitek and Chantal Gibson at SFU's Belzberg Library. And as a publishing assistant at Arsenal Pulp Press, I worked closely with their marketing and publicity team to promote their Fall 2021 titles—doing tasks such as designing content for Instagram, creating email newsletters, and working on book press kits.

What's your favourite part of your work?

In my TA work, I really enjoy helping the students and getting to engage with their design work—which I am often inspired by. And when I was at Arsenal Pulp Press, I loved working with such a passionate team and seeing the behind-the-scenes of the amazing and important books they are publishing.

How did UVic English help you prepare you for this work?

So many of the skills I developed over the course of my English degree have helped me immensely in my publishing pursuits thus far—from being able to approach texts and perform



Erin F. Chan (she/her)

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skills in close reading and critical analysis to communicating effectively through advanced writing and editing competencies. I particularly benefited from courses in which professors offered alternative project-based options for assignments, which allowed me to experiment and engage with the texts in more creative and varied ways. And having focused on courses in Canadian literature as an upper-level student, I gained an understanding of the literary landscape of Canada—including the various issues within CanLit—and was encouraged to explore and support the local literary scene. Also, volunteering as a student editor for *The Albatross*, UVic's English undergraduate journal, was a valuable experience in working collaboratively to practise substantive editing, copy-editing, and proofreading.