

Corey George
Teaching Philosophy

In my role as an instructor, I see myself as a guide for my students. My job is to expose the students to as many things as I can that will benefit their growth as artists. I am also responsible for placing challenges, both technically and conceptually, in their way, and then helping them overcome and learn from those challenges. Learning in the visual arts is a journey, and it is my responsibility to guide the students as best I can.

I feel that the instructor has many jobs to do: to teach the students the technical information they need, to expose them to anything that would benefit their growth, and to artistically nurture the students as much as possible. You can show a photograph, or a painting, or a print to anyone and tell him or her that “This is good,” but will they understand why? To me, part of my responsibility is explaining and exploring the why. I begin this process by introducing critical theory, and having the students apply those theories to their work and to images from historical and contemporary photographers and artists. I ask them to identify what makes the image successful, and then, how could they apply those principles to their work.

Another one of my jobs as an instructor is to be the answer guy. However, I can’t just play the role of the oracle. I have to anticipate the students’ work, to head off problems and frustration before the student finds them. Being involved in classes where the students are allowed to do self directed work has definitely changed how I see this role. In many ways, it is like having a class of independent study students. Instead of relying on one goal for the whole class, I have to consider each student’s interests, their experiences and what they want to achieve.

I feel that I implement my teaching strategy in an informal manner. I am not a very formal person, and this is somewhat reflected in my classes and presentation. Much of the scheduled class time for the studio classes I teach are spent as work days, where I can informally interact with the students while they work. I constantly check up on what the students are working on, so I can offer assistance and also so I can keep tabs on their progress and problem areas. The other main component of the classes I teach is the critique. I act almost as a helmsman during critiques, letting the students do most of the discussion while I make sure we discuss all issues of the work, some of which they may not see without my guidance. If topics I feel should have been discussed aren’t brought up, I’ll present critical or technical questions and let the students discuss them. I think that this manner of handling critiques is extremely beneficial to the student, and also to me. Often a student will make an observation I wouldn’t have made, and by letting students be the main participant in the critique, they gain a better understanding of critical thinking.

Being an artist means a lifelong commitment to learning. While students and I may be at different stages in the journey, it is a journey that we are both undertaking. While I may be a leader on this journey, I expect that the interaction I create and foster leads to our mutual growth as artists, and as cultural explorers.