

Corey George

Teaching Philosophy

You can show a photograph, or a print, or any piece of art to anyone and tell him or her that “This is exemplary,” but will they understand why? To me, part of my responsibility is to help students explore the question. I begin this process by introducing critical theory, and asking students apply those ideas to images from artists from a variety of sources, ranging from historical figures to emerging artists. Students are asked to identify what makes the work successful, and then, how could they apply those principles to their work. In my photography-based courses, I use primers such as The Nature of Photographs and The Photographer’s Eye. We then move on to selections from la Grange’s Basic Critical Theory for Photographers to further gain an understanding of how to look at and think about images. This critical introduction is further supported by technical and instructional readings and in class demonstrations that relate back to the assignments being given in the class.

I maintain a blog dedicated to each semester, so I am able to immediately present new technology, new criticism and new art to the courses on an ongoing basis. Because art making has moved into utilizing an online presence, I require my studio students to maintain a blog. For lower level courses, this allows the student to create an online sketchbook containing thoughts, images and ideas to aid them as their work through the course progresses. For an upper level course, the blog allows students to post their work and to receive feedback. This platform also allows class participants to respond to class readings in a way that allows them to collect their thoughts in an organized manner. Discussions of the readings take place while the writing component is still fresh in their memories, resulting in a higher quality of discussion. Students respond favorably to the blog component, taking advantage of opportunities for self-promotion and incorporating the web into their art making process.

When teaching courses that have technology integrated into them, such as Digital Imaging, I have to be fluid and open to changes in the management of the class. I actively update the curriculum in order to incorporate new modalities, such as introducing the Cinemagraph and other time based photography into Digital imaging. My fluid approach also applies to class critiques. Recently, I have added a peer critique component to all my studio classes. This way, students who are reluctant to talk in larger critiques can communicate with their peers. Students have found the peer critiques offer them a higher degree of feedback on their work.

I view teaching in the visual arts to be closer to mentorship than to lecturing, where students take charge of their own learning under the instructor’s guidance. Especially in my upper level courses, I engage my students as artists, not art students. At all levels, I prepare them to be reflexive makers, invested in the exchange of ideas with their peers. This collaborative attitude is an asset to them regardless of their career path or academic trajectory.