

Community founds my understanding of art's purpose and potential. Within the classroom, this idea translates into a teaching style that encourages an exchange of knowledge from teacher to student, from student to student, and also from student to teacher. This multi-directional learning turns the classroom to a community-where students' stories and experiences integrate with course subjects in a dynamic process of learning. As a teacher, I create social learning structures where students feel comfortable exploring, and possibly failing, and where they learn to try again. The work my students create is not just part of class requirements, but part of an ongoing exploration that will transform them into better artists.

I expect excellence, but I believe in the productivity of failure as an integral part of the process. I believe that a strong foundation in the technical aspects of photography gives students the platform needed for conceptual experimentation. Within the first week, I schedule individual meetings with students to improve retention rates and break down the notion that I am just here to "lecture" to them. This continues throughout the semester with intermediate check points where students meet with me individually to evaluate their progress. Building this rapport with students encourages them to see me as a collaborator in their education.

In my upper level courses, discussion and collaboration deepen the artistic community. For each of the assignments given, students present proposals of their ideas in a group discussion, aiding each student in their brainstorming process. Halfway through the project timeframe, these discussions recur, encouraging students to help each other notice their progress, explore ideas, address alternate view points, share tips and give feedback. Through this process, students see where they stand in relation to their peers, while building their investment in one another's success.

The results of this structure has proven its effectiveness. Students are comfortable with each other, and as a result their criticism is analytical, in-depth, and geared toward the growth of the artist. In short, they are constructive, and graciously received because a foundation of artistic trust has been established.

On the syllabi for my classes, you will find a mixture of photographic projects, group assignments designed in researching contemporary photography, mandatory gallery attendances that require a critical writing response, and project critiques of various structures. Through these diverse methods, students gain technical and conceptual skills for developing their works in an environment that is consistent in its requirements, but dynamic in structure. Students leave my class equipped with necessary technical skills, comfortable with exploring conceptual ideas through their photographic work, and enthusiastic about contemporary art. Further, they internalize the fundamental tenant of my artistic life and practice—art is a practice that occurs with and for community—the origin of art's purpose and possibility.