Teaching Philosophy ~ Instructor: Jordan Lage

My teaching philosophy across all disciplines in which I have been an instructor derives from a desire to convey to my students simplicity, clarity, and pragmatism. I strive to instill in them the merits of adhering to a diligent work ethic, being assiduous in preparation, infusing their work with an investment of iron will, and of particular importance, to ensure that they understand how habit can work to their advantage or, if they’re not careful, to their detriment. I believe a dedication to these virtues fosters an inspiration to strive even harder to attain the goals that my classes have to offer. As I have expectations of my students regarding commitment and the meeting of a high standard in all aspects of the work, I urge my charges to hold me accountable for what I teach in class: to ask, if it’s not understood, how an exercise or point of discussion or a particular constructive note furthers the intended goals of the class. The essence of a classroom, to me, is that it’s a place where training is ongoing and where work gets done.

Practical Aesthetics

Having been a participant in and witness to the success of a practical approach to acting in the classes I attended at New York University under the tutelage of playwright David Mamet, I adopted a core set of tenets coined “Practical Aesthetics” by Mamet to guide my pedagogy. The essential thrust behind Practical Aesthetics stems from a desire to demystify the art of acting and writing, impart a clear foundational technique as a way to best address those disciplines and thereby give the student an unobfuscated path to the acquiring of a skill.

Acting and Writing as a Craft

Under my tutelage, students approach the disciplines of acting and writing as a craft: a set of learnable and repeatable skills that they hone over time assiduously in class and rehearsal or at the writing desk, thereby inculcating unassailable work habits that will hold them in good stead as they embark on their careers. Thus, as the adage goes, would the difficult be made easy, the easy habitual, the habitual, beautiful.

For the student new to the methods I teach, foundational technique is imparted in the early days of the class, then, like the acquiring of it any other skill – e.g. learning how to play a musical instrument, learning a new language, carpentry – that technique would be applied rigorously to the exercises assigned and then clarified as the need arose. By habitually and assiduously applying an unambiguous technique to the work in class, the student becomes more technically fluid over time to the point where a facility with the process takes hold and improvement is seen in the desired goal of the class, whether it’s to become a better actor or to hone one’s playwriting skills. It’s not unlike the conditioning an athlete must go through in order to excel at his or her chosen sport. The traits the student actor or writer must dedicate himself to are will, bravery, and common sense: the will to apply oneself to the approach no matter the difficulty or the obstacles; the bravery to hang tough when demanding circumstances may appear to be insurmountable; and the common sense to cut through the fog of distraction and see and stick to what’s essential.

Conclusion

In the end, it is stressed that in the pursuit of training the student actor or writer, my classes are designed to foster a solid, habitual, precise way of approaching the work that will not fail the students so long as they bring their will to bear and apply themselves rigorously, even ploddingly, to the rules.

For more specific details regarding the classes I teach, individual syllabi are available upon request.