

- ELIZABETH** So I think the idea of a workshop-based class, a hands-on class, that's what's becoming
- CHOE:** trendy in education. At least at MIT right now. It's bringing it back to mind and hand. They won't work if students don't bring anything to workshop or have anything ready.
- So that's why the first two or three days of class were very, very information intense to bring them up to the point where they had a script that they could actually read aloud at the table read. Or that they would have a scene they could storyboard. How was it leading the workshops? Because I could kind of let you guys take over for those.
- JOSHUA GUNN:** Yeah, I mean I think it was great. I mean, I think we couldn't have done what we did if they hadn't come to the class with a portion of a script that they could storyboard. Or do some sort of storyboard work on. I think maybe in the future you might think about having-- well, I don't have. Setting it up so that there's instruction about say, storyboarding, and examples and kind of models. Then have them do that and then have them return for the critique. As opposed to trying to compress all of that into one class. But again, that requires more time.
- GEORGE ZAIDAN:** My only workshop-- workshops are great because it means that you rely a lot more on stuff that you sort of just know and can talk off the cuff about and don't have to prepare long lectures, which is fantastic.
- ELIZABETH** But that requires that you actually are just natively an expert in that.
- CHOE:**
- GEORGE ZAIDAN:** But the nice thing about that is that you can reduce the time you spend speaking and increase the time that they spend working and speaking. And I think the earlier that you get the students talking and doing things things in the workshop, the more quickly they realize that it's not a lecture. And that they're not going to sit there and absorb. That they have to actually do something.
- ELIZABETH** So you had people reading their scripts from the beginning of your workshop. There was no
- CHOE:** easing into it. It was pretty much just like all right, this is the script that so and so submitted last night OK, come up and read it for us.
- GEORGE ZAIDAN:** Yeah. And then they get over their nerves and they just do it. And then you roll into it. The hard thing about doing that is-- giving feedback in a workshop is tough because you can't just

be like great job. Go sit down. That was great that you did it, but we're not going to give you any constructive criticism. You've got to say OK, here's what I would do differently. But you have to do it in such a way that it's not ego destroying. And that applies for any of the stuff. It's hard to do, especially for hosting, because there you're commenting on their tone of voice, their delivery style--

**ELIZABETH** Their existence.

**CHOE:**

**GEORGE ZAIDAN:** The way they talk. You know? So it's a tricky thing to get. You sort of err on the side of being a little bit softer than you probably would be.

**JOSHUA GUNN:** It's also-- sorry. It's also interesting to get them-- I think just from my basic pedagogical experience, because I did teach creative writing for a while. It's nice to get them-- to get students, as you said, doing peer work where they're critiquing each other so there isn't just this authority figure that has all the answers. There's also this innate sense that we all have, and students have, of what's working and what's not. Because they are audience members too and they have that audience sensibility.

**ELIZABETH** Actually a really important thing was to establish that the medium in which we are working had  
**CHOE:** no established best practices, and that was something that I tried to emphasize a lot and say, you know, I have very strong opinions on what I think is good hosting and what isn't. But at the end of the day, you do what you want as long as you can justify it to me. You can take or leave my advice on how I think you should edit this section, but if you want to stick with what you have and you're able to write out why--

**JOSHUA GUNN:** You're going to get an F.

**ELIZABETH** But an A for effort. That's fine as long as I see that they're consciously processing their own  
**CHOE:** personal taste. What was the thing you just said?

**GEORGE ZAIDAN:** I'm saying that you don't want to just be the only person critiquing, which is really important.

**CHRIS BOEBEL:** It's really, really important and I think one of the things about that too is trying to make the classroom I guess kind of a safe space where people can be really honest. And it's like, you know what? Someone is probably going to go at you and your work at some point, but you need to be OK with that. And if you feel that you need to be honest with somebody about their work, that's OK too. As long as you're not doing it on some kind of illegitimate grounds. If it's a

legitimate critique, you should feel OK about saying it.

**JOSHUA GUNN:** Yeah, that's a good point. I think too, it can sometimes be helpful to just kind of lay the ground rules of critique. Like what's personal. I mean, sometimes it's not obvious to students what's a personal attack. What's constructive criticism of the work.

**CHRIS BOEBEL:** Sometimes people need instruction on peer review.

**JOSHUA GUNN:** Yeah, exactly. You can't expect that people know the rules.

**ELIZABETH**  
**CHOE:** Luckily, just having Jamie at every single class was really helpful. I mean, it's hard. In an ideal world, every class would have a staff of five people who are all experts on different facets of the industry. And then a dedicated instructional designer facilitating group discussions every day.

**JOSHUA GUNN:** Two instructors per student.

**CHRIS BOEBEL:** Let's recommend that.

**ELIZABETH**  
**CHOE:** Right. But you know, that's what it takes. It really does. Because if Jamie wasn't there, I don't know how to facilitate classroom discussion. She would be able to interject and sort of coach these things subliminally without having to establish guys, these are the classroom rules. No picking on people. It was just all done very organically. And that's actually very hard.

This is such a cop-out answer to be like, it's important to foster a good classroom space. Go do it. You know? But I don't really know how to give actionable items to people who are trying to do this in their schools.

I think one thing I tried to do was, and this was off of Jamie's suggestion, was to do every single assignment that I assigned to the students. So on day one when they had to record a selfie pitch, I did it and I was like this is not perfect. And the next day I pointed out things that I didn't like about it or things that could have been better about my own work.

So I think having something physical to be able to critique, to sort of show people how to critique it, you know? It's not even just show people what's wrong, but show people the active critiquing is really important. Because if you don't have the physical examples, it's just like saying lighting has to be done well. Well, if you don't show them an example of a well-lit scene, they're not going to be able to do it.

**CHRIS BOEBEL:** The things you get from students who aren't used to giving that kind of critique tend to be either oh, it was good or I didn't like it. And neither one of those is particularly helpful.

**JOSHUA GUNN:** Yeah, or in creative writing class students will be like, this is really deep.

**ELIZABETH** Yeah. But then to be able to be there as an instructor and say, OK. Why do you think that?

**CHOE:**

**CHRIS BOEBEL:** Yeah, exactly. Why is it good? Why is it deep? Why didn't you like it?

**ELIZABETH** Questions that drive them to give a more tangible answer. That's really important in the live

**CHOE:** discussion. And it's important, I think, to have it in real time. Which is why I don't know how you can scale this experience up. If you offer this as an online class, for instance, I guess you could have forums where students critique each other. But again, without the guidance of someone who's practiced it. That limits you. And then someone who responds like, why do you think this was deep? The next day, you sort of lose that momentum.

**GEORGE ZAIDAN:** I mean, the really great thing is when this sort of stuff happens on set. Like when we were shooting the episode about the exploding wire and our student host got to see you, me, and the director of photography get into a fight about why we thought the framing was wrong. And I mean, it was literally like, what do you think of this framing? I hate it. Why? Because it looks like an episode of Home Improvement? Like an actual episode of Home Improvement or the show that they were parodying in Home Improvement? No, the crappy version. OK. Well, let's figure out how to fix it. Like that's the kind of discussion that happens on set.

**ELIZABETH** And that is so much more helpful for someone to see than sometimes people struggle with

**CHOE:** framing. Here are some tips. Try to put the people in this framing. It might be more engaging. That's sort of how media things are presented right now. But to see like George and me fight, is one, way more entertaining.

**JOSHUA GUNN:** I'm sure it is.

**ELIZABETH** But two, I think like she probably took a lot more out of that than watching a lecture series.

**CHOE:**