



ART/ARTH 260: Ceramics Traditions in Umbria and Central Italy

Course Syllabus

Fall Semester 2019

Instructor: Philippa Stannard, MFA

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: None

Class Hours: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Course Type: Standard Course

Lab Fee: TBA

Course Description

This is a beginning-level ceramics course that will introduce you to the technical and conceptual sensibilities inherent in clay. You will learn about the ceramic traditions in Italy and Umbria as a springboard for learning various hand-building techniques including coil, slab, and pinch methods, as well as the glazing and firing processes. These include learning about prehistoric pottery in central Italy, Etruscan figurative work, and the Maiolica Method from Deruta, as well as the classic terra cotta and black slip glazed urns that are so popular and are often associated with the Mediterranean. We will explore the ceramics of the region of Umbria first hand, taking trips to archeological museums, visiting local ceramics studios, and viewing work made by local ceramicists using the Maiolica method.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have:

- learned about the history and traditions of ceramics in Italy and Umbria;
- have a basic understanding of the properties inherent in clay, firing, and glazing;
- increased their proficiency in different hand-building techniques such as pinch, slab, and coil;
- gained an appreciation and greater understanding of a ceramic form and the aesthetics of three-dimensional objects.

Course Materials

Readings

Course reader available at local copy shop. See "Umbra Institute Course Materials - Textbooks and Readers" handout provided in the orientation folder for more information.

Supplies

All clay, glazes and firing costs and museum visits are included in your lab fee.

Assessment

Ceramic assignments (3)	80%
Quizzes and class participation	10%
Oral reports and presentations	5%
Written reports	5%

Grading

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Course Requirements

Grades are based on class attendance, class participation, quizzes, the quality and punctuality of turning in written and ceramic assignments, and overall improvement. Assignments are due on the assigned date. For every class that your assignment is late, your grade on the assignment will drop by one letter grade, unless you have a written note from a doctor.

Ceramic assignments (3) (80%)

Students are requested to finish all assignments given in the assigned time. We will regularly make work that requires drying time between various stages (such as waiting for a pot to be “leather-hard” before applying a handle). This means coming into the studio outside of class to cover or uncover work to control drying and finish work begun earlier. You might even want to consider taking your work home if you will not be coming to the studio for a few days. Your success in developing skills will be directly proportional to the time spent on your work outside of scheduled class times.

You will have three ceramic assignments due during the semester. Each assignment will be graded three times.

1st Grading – LEATHER-HARD/CONSTRUCTION – 50% - 70% of each assignment, depending on the assignment. The date your assignment is due, you will be graded based on the quality, time spent, level of challenge, concept/aesthetics, and craftsmanship of your work. You should be at the proper drying stage: LEATHER-HARD. This way, changes can be made if needed without starting your work again from scratch.

Once your work is at the bone-dry stage, additions and corrections are almost impossible to do well.

2nd Grading – BISQUE – 10% - 15% of each assignment, depending on the assignment.

Your pieces will be graded again based on how well they fired. Did they dry properly (slowly and evenly, otherwise cracks may appear...)? Did they crack during firing? How sound was your construction?

3rd Grading – GLAZED/FINAL PRODUCT – 15% - 40% of each assignment, depending on the assignment

You will glaze or decorate your work using different techniques such as slip painting, Maiolica painting, waxing, etc. You will be graded on your piece as a finished product. Did you apply the glaze evenly? How much time and effort did you put into painting and/or finishing your work?

Work will be evaluated in individual and group critiques throughout the semester. Grading will be based on the *quality* of your work, achieved through your productivity, specifically:

- *Level of Challenge:* How far did you go beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment to produce more numerous and challenging pieces? How thoroughly did you explore the required techniques?
Note: Quantity alone will not raise your grade unless you use the pieces to arrive at a higher quality, such as to work through ideas or improve handling of materials.
- *Concept/ Aesthetics:* How original and personal is your solution? How effectively did you use principles of design to communicate your concept? How far did you reach beyond the obvious?
- *Craftsmanship:* Is your construction sound? Did you take time to finish and resolve surfaces, joints, edges, and other details in an appropriate manner for your design?

Assignment 1: Pinch Technique – Prehistoric Ceramics in Central Italy

- *Two pots: one beaker, the other an urn (made by attaching two beakers) pinch technique. Pinch, squeeze, turn. Pinch, squeeze, turn...*
- *Dry the pots enough to hold their shape, scrape, and smooth surface with wooden ribs to even out any bumps. Smooth surface with hands, burnish, and finally, rub very fine slip lightly onto the pots to create as smooth as possible of a surface.*
- *When the slip is no longer shiny or tacky to the touch, you may begin to decorate the surface of your pots with our 'prehistoric' tools... shells, bones, combs, string bow stones, etc.*

The earliest Neolithic remains found in Umbria near Lake Trasimeno and date back to 6000 B.C. Pottery production came into being as these primitive people settled and started growing their own food and building structures to live in. The pots with rounded bottoms are generally the earliest forms of prehistoric pottery, as the round bottom could stand up easily on most uneven ground or stones. Flat bottomed pottery is usually an indication of later, more evolved living conditions where they would have had flat surfaces on which to place pots. These pots had functional purposes, mainly for food and drink, and holding the remains of cremations. They were decorated using instruments at hand: bits of flint (triangular indents), combs (dotted lines), bones, shells and stones.

We will visit the Archaeological Museum in Corso Cavour to see some excellent examples of these pots, found near Lake Trasimeno and other nearby parts of Umbria.

Assignment 2: Slab and Maiolica Technique – Inspired by Deruta

- *Two forms made using the slab technique. One form should have a basic foot. Your second form should have handles and embellished feet.*

Syllabi available for download from the Umbra Institute website only with the purpose of informing students and advisers about course content. **All rights are reserved.**

- *We will glaze these works using Maiolica method.*

The slab technique is another clay construction method and has been used for millennia as a method of producing pottery and ceramic objects. We will use this method to create two pieces (plate, bowl, etc.). We will then decorate them using traditional methods used in Deruta.

Deruta began producing ceramics around 1300 and is located about 9 miles south of Perugia. Deruta continues to be world famous for their production of ceramics, in particular, using the Maiolica technique.

Maiolica is a type of ceramic decoration that is painted or applied to the piece. Pouncing is often used. Pouncing is a traditional way to transfer patterns onto the unfired white glaze. Charcoal or graphite is rubbed through a series of small holes punched in a paper pattern to transfer the design to an item to be decorated.

Create two forms using the slab method. Dry your work *slowly* to the bone-dry stage and bisque fire. Apply a base white glaze to the bisque piece. You will find or draw a pattern, sized to fit your pieces. Once you have your pattern, place a piece of tracing paper on top of your design, and poke many, many holes through the tracing paper. Place the perforated tracing paper on your glazed piece and gently rub charcoal through the holes to transfer the design. Now you can begin to paint your work, using the charcoal lines as your guide.

Assignment 3: Sculptural Coil Technique – Black Figure Vase

- *One vase made using the coil technique. The vase should have a handle(s) and a foot.*
- *Burnish vase when leather hard.*
- *Design your motif and decoration, paint with colored slips while leather hard (not bone dry).*

Etruscan vase painting was produced from the 7th - 4th centuries B.C. It was strongly influenced by Greek vase painting.

Make the base of your vase by making a spiral from one coil, pressing the sides of the coils closely together and smoothing inside and out to make a smooth base of uniform thickness. Begin building up the vertical walls of the pot by adding one coil at a time, carefully joining each coil to the one below it by smoothing with your thumb. Coils should become invisible as you build a smooth and uniform sides. If you do not join your coils carefully, the coils will separate as the clay dries and your pot will fall into a series of clay circles. Forms will be burnished when leather hard, then painted using slip glazes to create color contrast between the terracotta and the different slips that are applied to the surface of the piece. The vases may be waxed after the bisque firing or glazed with a thin layer of transparent glaze and fired a second time.

Quizzes and class participation (10%)

You will be given quizzes on your readings and on what we have learned in class. Class participation refers to active participation during class time. This includes studio time, critiques, discussion of readings, keeping the studio clean, clay recycle, help during firing and any other activity during class time.

Oral reports and presentations (5%)

Everyone will research a ceramicist/artist that incorporates ceramics into their work, technique, or style/period and give an oral and written report on their chosen artist/technique/style/period. Make sure that the ceramicist/technique/style/period that you choose has enough information available to write a 6-page paper.

Your paper and your oral report are both due on the day that you sign up to give your presentation.

The *oral report* will be given to our class as a projected presentation, basically explaining the life and work of your ceramicist, what you think about their work, and should include about 20 examples of their work. If you choose to give a report on a technique/style/period, you should explain the history, influences, and process, etc. The

images in your presentation should be of a higher resolution since they will be enlarged on the monitor. (Use Google→ Image search→ tools→ image size→large.) Please talk about your ceramicist's life, artistic style, techniques, etc. We are interested in your creative analysis and interpretation. The oral report should last about 15 minutes.

Be prepared to give your oral presentation at the beginning of class. Your preparation will be included as part of your grade. You may either put your presentation on a thumb drive, which can be used to open the file on the classroom computer, or you may use your own computer if it has an HDMI port. Do not count on e-mailing your presentation to yourself to open up minutes before you give your presentation as internet here can be unreliable.

Written report (5%)

The *written paper* on your chosen artist/technique/style/period should be at least six pages long, typed, and double-spaced. *I am interested to know what YOU think about your chosen artist/technique/style/period.* Tell me why you chose the artist/technique/style/period and describe the process, history, career, etc. I do not want to read a paper that is half quotations. Limit the number of quotes to a minimum (no more than three). If you are doing your report on an artist, how did they get into ceramics? What contributions did they make to the world of ceramics? What is unique about their work? Is there a subject or theme that ties their work together? If you are doing a report on a technique, where and how did it evolve, why? Why are you interested in it? If you are doing a report on a style or period, research pertinent historical information and exemplary work from that period. I am interested in your creative analysis and interpretation. Your bibliography should include at least 5 sources.

Additional Course Information

Clean up

You are **REQUIRED** to clean and pick up after yourself. This includes cleaning up your work space, tools, etc. Any clay on the floor should be wiped or swept up. Spilled glazes need to be wiped up, and the lids should be put back on the containers. Store all artwork in designated areas. Leave it cleaner than you found it!

Process

It is *imperative* that you work on your projects in a timely manner outside of class. Time spent on work outside of class is directly correlated to the quality of your work. Due to the nature of the medium, clay must have time to harden before passing to the next step. Therefore work can not be rushed. Do not expect the first piece you make to be "the one". Ceramics is very process oriented. Working outside of class time gives you knowledge of the process, even if your work is thrown back into the clay recycle. You should expect to spend at least one hour outside of class for every hour spent in class.

Stages of wet clay

Greenware – wet, leather hard, and bone dry

Bisque – fired in the kiln for the first time

Glaze – fired for the second time with a glaze or glass like coating on the surface

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is **mandatory**. Students are allowed **two "free" absences**, which do not need to be justified. **It is the students' responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity (sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class)**. Each additional absence, unless for a very serious reason, will lower the students' grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a

Syllabi available for download from the Umbra Institute website only with the purpose of informing students and advisers about course content. **All rights are reserved.**

B).

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. It is also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. **Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason.** Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important for student performance in class. Missing a mandatory field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and Umbra Academic Director in a timely manner, will lower students' final grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Academic Integrity

All forms of **cheating** (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and **plagiarism** (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate **respect** for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that **cell phones** must be turned off before the beginning of each class. **Computers and other electronic devices** cannot be used during class lectures and discussions.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Clay: Origins, Stages, Processes

- Give everyone a piece of clay
- Introduction in pairs
- Create a likeness of your partner in clay
- Introduce partner (along with your figurine of them)
- Throwing name game
- Go over syllabus
- Definition of ceramics: a brief introduction
- General information on materials being used in the studio, the kiln, studio rules, common terminology, safety issues, etc.
- Examples of different stages of clay: wet, leather-hard, bone-dry

To do before next class:

- Research an artist/technique/style/period of which you would like to present to the class and write a paper.

Readings

Reading on Cardium pottery/impressed ware.

Prehistoric Pottery and Pinch Pots Field trip: Archeological Museum

- Name game
- Sign up for artist/technique/style/period and report dates
- Quiz on reading
- Introduction to prehistoric pottery
- Walk to Archeological Museum on Corso Cavour to see prehistoric tools and pottery from the surrounding area
- Prehistoric pottery: before the wheel. Analyze function and construction of pieces
- Discussion
- Bring sketch book or pad and paper to draw ideas for your pinch pot form and decoration

To do before next class:

- Bring drawings of the shape/form/decoration for your pinch pot.
- Research an artist/technique/style/period that you might be interested in doing your report on.

WEEK 2

Prehistoric Pottery and Pinch Pots: Construction

- Name game
- Sign up for artist/technique/style/period and report dates
- Assign tools and shelf space
- Correct studio use
- Demonstration: Preparing clay for work: wedging and kneading
- Demo: Construction of pinch pots
- Covering work properly
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Pinch pot (beaker). Wrap work appropriately; make sure it does not dry out too much!

Prehistoric Pottery and Pinch Pots: Refining shape and surface

- Discussion of work created
- Problem solving
- Demo: Beaker pot form
- Demo: Smoothing the surface with wooden rib and fingers
- Working on Assignment 1
- Covering work appropriately
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Beaker and an urn: surface smoothed with wooden rib and fingers. Should be leather-hard by next class. Cover work appropriately. Your work should be at the leather-hard state for next class.

WEEK 3

Prehistoric Pottery and Pinch Pots: Decorative techniques

- Introduction to prehistoric tools used to decorate pottery
- Demo: Impressing your pots
- Terra Decantata – Why cover pots with slip? What function does it have? When is it appropriate?
- Demo: Terra Decantata
- Problem solving, smoothing, decorating, and applying terra decantata to our work
- Covering work appropriately
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- ASSIGNMENT 1: Prehistoric inspired pinch pots (2) - one beaker pot, one urn. They should be between leather-hard and bone dry, painted with terra decantata, and decorated using the “prehistoric tools”.

Prehistoric Pottery and Pinch Pots: Assignment 1 Due

- Demo: Burnishing and Shining the surface with a soft cloth
- Critique
- Grading
- Covering (or not covering) work appropriately
- Place finished work on the shelf to be fired
- Introduction to Maiolica Technique and ceramic traditions of Italy and Deruta.

Readings:

Maiolica origins and processes

WEEK 4

Maiolica Method

- Introduction to maiolica method
- Walk to local artists' ceramics studio to see examples of local Maiolica work.

To do before next class:

- Research ideas for low open shapes and painting using the Maiolica method
- Bring sketches of ideas for second assignment to class

Maiolica Method and Slab Technique: Construction

- View sketches, discussion of ideas
- Demo: Slab Technique, plates, platters, and bowls
- Demo: Make and attach different kinds of feet to your work
- FYI: Do not burnish these works
- Discussion: strength of different clay states; wet, semi-leather hard, leather-hard, semi-bone dry, bone dry and how they can help us (or make it very difficult/impossible) when making and attaching feet and handles
- Covering work appropriately
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Work on slab forms; bowls, plates, and platters.
- Create at least one slab work with foot attached for next class.

WEEK 5

Maiolica Method and Slab Technique: Refining construction and adding functional and decorative elements

- Discussion of work created: problem solving, Q&A
- Demo: Slab Technique variations
- Demo: Making and attaching handles
- Working on Assignment 2
- Covering work appropriately
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- I suggest making several slab works for next class (more than required). Slab works are more prone to cracking as they dry, so treat with care!
- Assignment 2 due.
- Ensure assignment 1 is bone dry by next class. We will be firing them!

Maiolica and Slab Technique

- Working on slab pieces
- problem solving
- Evaluation of ideas/patterns for applying the Maiolica technique on your work
- Covering (or uncovering) work appropriately

WEEK 6

Maiolica and Slab Technique: Assignment 2 due

- Critique
- Grading
- Evaluation of ideas/patterns for applying the Maiolica technique on your work
- Covering (or uncovering) work appropriately
- Placing finished work on the shelf for firing
- Introduction to decorated Etruscan vases, form and use
- Discussion of motif function and meaning
- What is a bisque firing? How do the properties of clay change after a bisque firing?
- Loading kiln with pinch pots

Readings

Etruscan Vase, shape, form, painting, use

The Etruscan Vase: Field trip to Archeological Museum

- Quiz on reading
- Visit Archeological Museum to view Etruscan vases
- Discussion of form and use
- Discussion of motif function and meaning
- Sketch shape/forms/decorative motifs that appeal to you
- Class discussion

To do before next class:

- Sketch/draw vase shape form and desired decorative motifs and their meaning.
- Be prepared to discuss the choice and function of your vase shape and the accompanying decorative motif and its meaning.
- Bring a rigid piece of cardboard about the size of a letter sized piece of paper (pizza boxes work great).

WEEK 7

The Etruscan Vase and Coil Method: Refining

- Evaluate base of vase
- Demo: Height and the coil technique
- Demo: Creating shapes that increase and decrease in circumference
- Demo: Creating the top half of your vase
- Working on vases
- Covering (or uncovering) work as needed
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Vase shape should be completed by next class and covered tightly to prevent drying out.
- Ensure proper drying of Assignment 2, we will be loading another bisque kiln soon, and your work must be bone dry to be fired.

The Etruscan Vase and Coil Method: Making and attaching handles, feet, and other decorative elements

- Demo: Making handles, feet, and other decorative elements
- Demo: When and how to attach handles, feet, and other decorative elements
- Demo: Making small slab to practice technique of vase painting
- Working on vases
- Your vases should be completed with handles, feet, and other decorative elements by the end of class.
- Covering work adequately (vases and slabs) and properly to ensure that it doesn't dry out too much during our break.
- Clean up
- Take all dried work to be bisque fired

To do before next class:

- Draw/print out pattern/design to be painted on your vase. It should be the right size to fit on your vase appropriately.

SEMESTER BREAK

WEEK 8

The Etruscan Vase and Coil Method: Slip painting

- Evaluate drawing/pattern/design in relation to your vase
- Ensuring vase is waxy, very dry leather hard before continuing
- Demo: Burnishing
- Demo: Transferring drawing/pattern/design to your vase. Practice first on your slab. If the paper sticks to the clay, it is still too wet.
- Slips – what are they? How do we use them?
- Demo: Greek/Etruscan vase painting techniques
- Practice on slab
- Cover work as needed
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Vase should be burnished, the pattern transferred, and start painting your vase before next class.
- Stop by and pick up your fired work and bring it to the ceramics lab.

The Etruscan Vase and Coil Method: Slip painting

- Discussion of work, challenges, and solutions.
- Painting vases
- Covering (or uncovering) as needed
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Finish Etruscan vase.
- Ensure second assignment pieces have been brought back to our ceramics lab after firing. We will be glazing them next class.
- Bring pattern/design/motif that you would like to transfer to your slab work using the Maiolica method.

WEEK 9

Etruscan Vase Due

- Critique
- Grading Etruscan vase
- Second Grading of 2nd assignment (bisqued slab work)
- Maiolica method: preparing work to be glazed
- Demo: Creating a stencil
- Demo: Wiping work with slightly damp cloth
- Demo: Glazing white base
- Demo: Pouncing
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Ensure that vase is drying appropriately.
- Create stencil for Maiolica process.
- Glaze all slab work white.

Maiolica Method

- Demo: Pouncing
- Demo: Maiolica painting using colored pigments
- Glazing and painting Maiolica work
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- One of your two Maiolica works should be finished by next class.

WEEK 10

Maiolica Method

- Glazing and painting Maiolica work
- Discussion and problem solving
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Your Maiolica pieces should be ready to be put in the kiln for their final glaze firing by next class.
- Vases should be ready to be fired by next class.

Loading Kiln

- Loading vases into the kiln
- Loading Maiolica work into the kiln
- Studio organizing and clean-up of all glaze related materials.
- Clean up

To do before next class:

- Check to see if your work is ready for pick up.

WEEK 11

Grading Fired Work

- Grading

Reports by:

- _____
- _____
- _____

WEEK 12

Presentations

Reports by

- _____
- _____
- _____

Presentations

Reports by

- _____
- _____
- _____

WEEK 13

Presentations

Reports by

- _____
- _____
- _____

Final Critique and Grading of all Work

- Last Critique and grading
- *Studio Clean up*

WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS AND SPECIAL ACADEMIC EVENTS

The Final Exam and Special Academic Events Calendar will be provided later in the semester.