



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

Course Syllabus Fall Semester 2025

Instructor: Philippa Stannard, MFA ATR

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:45am-12:15pm

Office Hours: by appointment after a class

Email: philippaatumbra@gmail.com

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: USD\$100

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.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *learn* about the history and traditions of ceramics in Italy and Umbria (Field Trips, Readings, Quizzes);
- *summarize and apply* technical skills, vocabulary, processes and materials related to using clay. (Readings, Quizzes, Assignments)
- *provide* examples of the historical and sociological role of ceramics in Umbria from Neolithic to the Renaissance. (Readings, Quizzes, Assignments)
- *integrate* design concepts including form, structure, space surface, color proportion, composition and function into their work. (Assignments).
- *differentiate* between ceramic traditions or methods in contemporary and historical contexts. (Oral presentation and Written Report)

Course Materials

Readings

Please consult Moodle for links to your readings.

Assessment

Attendance	10%
Ceramic Assignments	72% (four total, 18% each)
Quizzes	13 %
Class Participation	5 %

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. 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)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Assignments (72%)

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

Your pinch pot should be even thickness from the bottom to the top, the surface should be smoothed. It should be painted with the Terra Decantata and then “Impressed” by pressing objects into the clay. Burnish twice: once when hard-leather-hard and again when bone dry.

Assignment 2: Sculptural Coil Technique – Inspired by the Black Figure Vases from Greece and Etruria

One vase made using the coil technique.

Design your motif and decoration, paint with colored slips while leather hard (not bone dry).

Vase should be no taller than your hand and no wider than your palm

Assignment 3: Slab Open Creative Assignment

Design and create your own project using the slab technique and any other techniques. Get creative! You may make anything you like, as always, your project will be graded on thickness, surface, decoration, level of challenge etc.

Your finished piece should be no taller than your hand and wider than your palm.

Assignment 4: Maiolica Technique – Inspired by Deruta

- *We will learn the Maiolica method that includes creating a motif or design, making a stencil, and using carbon to “pounce” the design onto the ceramic work, after it has been glazed. Once our glazed work has been “pounced”, we will paint the motifs using the Maiolica technique.*

Quizzes (13%)

Students will be assigned quizzes on the required reading. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed.

Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. There will be a combination of *technical, methodological, and content questions*. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The technical questions will help students learn the class's policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources.

Class Participation (5%)

Class participation refers to active participation during class time. This includes interest in material, class preparation, keeping the studio clean, and respectful interaction during group critiques.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused “sick days” and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

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.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

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.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

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; ear buds, smart watches, and other electronic devices cannot be used during class time.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, students are asked to keep computers and phones away and use a regular notebook. There are three exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you're using a tablet to take notes, 3) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; or 4) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

Communication Outside of Class

I prefer talking face-to-face about assignments and other questions as I know that method of communication is richer and can address things I can't 'read' in an email. That said, when you have questions, first check the Moodle site and the syllabus, as many are answered there. I check and respond to emails on weekdays between

10am and 4pm. It might take me 72 hours to respond to an email so it's often best to come see me before or after class. I'm also happy to make an office hours appointment.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Clay: Origins, Stages, Processes

Meeting 1 *Course overview, stages of clay*

Meeting 2: *Archeological Museum Visit*

Resources for the week:

<https://potterycrafters.com/the-7-stages-of-clay/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaZsSsbtMDw>

WEEK 2

Prehistoric Pottery: Cardium or Impressed Ware

Meeting 1 *Neolithic Pottery, Pinch pot construction*

Meeting 2: *Refining shape and surface*

Resources for the week:

[History of Pinch Pots Google Slides](#)

Neolithizing Provence: Cardial, a Culture That Came from the Sea

<https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft5j49p06s&chunk.id=d0e393&toc.depth=1&to c.id=d0e103&brand=ucpress>

WEEK 3

Prehistoric Pottery: Decoration and Burnishing

Meeting 1 *Terra Decantata and decorative techniques*

Meeting 2: *Burnishing, History of form and function in Etruscan Pottery.*

Resources for the week:

[Greenware, Bisqueware, Glazeware: What's the Difference?](#)

WEEK 4

Assignment 1 Due. Introduction to Greek and Etruscan Pottery

Meeting 1 *Critique and Grading. Choosing a shape, making a guide*

Meeting 2: *Vase construction using coil technique*

Resources for the week:

[Etruscan Art | Essay | The Metropolitan Museum of Art | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)
<http://www.mysteriousetruscans.com/art/pottery.html>

WEEK 5

Greek and Etruscan Pottery: Coil Method

Meeting 1 *Making a base, building height*

Meeting 2: *Finishing construction and adding decorative elements.*

Resources for the week:

[Etruscan Civilization - World History Encyclopedia](https://owlcation.com/humanities/ancient-art-history-styles-of-antiquity-ancient-greek-pottery#)

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/ancient-art-history-styles-of-antiquity-ancient-greek-pottery#>

WEEK 6

Etruscan Pottery: Painting with colored slips

Meeting 1 *Evaluating design, transferring to vases, decorative slips*

Meeting 2: *Assignment 2 Due, demo slab technique*

Resources for the week:

[Etruscan Pottery - World History Encyclopedia](#)

[Greek Vase-Painting, an introduction – Smarthistory](#)

Semester Break

WEEK 7

Slab Technique: Introduction to Assignment 3

Meeting 1 *Slab technique, evaluating ideas for 3rd Assignment, construction.*

Meeting 2: *Working on Assignment 3*

Resources for the week:

Heins, Frances Ingraham. "Majolica Pottery has a Long History." *Chicago Tribune*. October 8, 2000.

WEEK 8

Slab Technique: Creative Assignment 3

Meeting 1 *Working on Assignment 3*

Meeting 2: *Assignment 3 Due*

Resources for the week:

[Italian Ceramics - Grazia Deruta Maioliche - English](#)

[MAIOLICA : LA SMALTATURA](#)

WEEK 9

Maiolica Technique: History

Meeting 1 *History of the Maiolica Technique*

Meeting 2: *No Class (MPP and FSE Capstone Trips)*

Resources for the week:

[Pouncing](#)

[How Maiolica is made with Lindsay Montgomery](#)

WEEK 10

Maiolica Technique: Glazing, Painting and Pouncing

Meeting 1 *Glazing and painting tiles*

Meeting 2: *Glazing and painting vases and mugs, Creating stencil if desired, and pouncing*

Resources for the week:

[Arromont - Martina Lantin -Maiolica glazing 1](#)

WEEK 11

Maiolica: Creating a stencil and pouncing

Meeting 1 *Glazing and painting plates, using the pouncing technique if desired.*

Meeting 2: *No Class, Thanksgiving*

WEEK 12

Studio Inventory and Clean Up

Meeting 1 *Finishing all work, Loading last kiln*

Meeting 2: *Critique and Grading*

WEEK 13

Final Classes, Final Exams, & Special Academic Events

Meeting 1: *Studio Clean Up*

Meeting 2: *Studio Clean Up*