Art 130 Ceramics  
Units: 4  
Spring 2023

Instructor: Thomas Müller  
Class: M/W 12:00-2:40 Watt Hall 107  
Office Hours: M/W 11:00-12:00 or by appointment  
Contact Info: tmuller@usc.edu  
Studio Manager: Farzan Sabet

Course Description
Besides offering the basic technical skills that ceramic sculpture requires--handbuilding techniques, glazing and kiln firing--this course will offer a broader, more conceptual understanding of what ceramics is and what it can be. Clay is an extremely versatile material with a rich history that has been part of human culture and evolution since the beginning of recorded history, from bowls to jugs to bricks to toilets up to space shuttle tiles, at the same time clay has been used by artists as a fundamental sculptural medium.

As you become comfortable with the material, I would encourage you to really stretch your imagination as to what the material can do for you.

Each project will have both a technical component as well as a conceptual component. It is essential to fully explore both aspects in order to come to a successful resolution. Just a note—the more interesting your concept or idea the more interesting it will be to resolve your technical issues!

Projects
This course will consist of 4-6 major projects, a reading/research assignment, a vocabulary quiz, and in-class exercises. Each project will take approximately 2-4 weeks. Students should not attempt to “cram” for the course; the medium simply won’t allow it. If students use their time wisely there should be ample time to complete the projects.

While most class periods will be spent working on projects, you are expected to spend at least 8-10 hours a week outside of class time on your projects. You will have 24/7 access to the Ceramics Studio.

Skills you will be expected to have acquired by the end of the semester include:

- coil building  
- slab construction  
- slip and score  
- glaze mixing and application  
- vocabulary  
- basic electric kiln firing
Grades
All projects will be presented for the whole class to discuss and critique. All students are expected to participate in critiques. Your participation is considered part of your grade. Students learn as much from their peers as they do from any other aspect of the class. Projects will be graded based on craftsmanship (as it relates to both building and glazing), thoughtfulness to form, creative solutions, originality and effort.
In order for grades to be calculated fairly, all projects must be turned in on time on the day they are due. No exceptions.
Late projects will be penalized 1 full grade.

The wet deadline is: April 9th. The wet deadline is the absolute last day to make work for this class. No work will be accepted after this date. No exceptions.

All projects must be completed, fired and glazed in order to earn credit. Partially completed projects receive no credit.
If a project should blow up in the kiln or fall apart due to poor craftsmanship or lack of attention, it is the students own responsibility. The student can "re-make" the piece, if there is room in the kilns and time. The project will be considered late.

Distribution for final grade
Projects (5) and Quiz 82%
Participation 9%
Studio Etiquette 9%
Attendance (−)%

Final Grade 100%

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed 3 free absences (excused or otherwise), no questions asked, but the fourth absence will drop your final grade by one full grade. Every additional 3 absences will drop your grade by an additional full grade level. 4 tardies equal one absence.
Please arrive to class on time; lectures and discussions will begin at the beginning of class and participation is expected. Arriving to class 15 minutes late will be considered an absence. Leaving class early will also negatively impact your grade. There is no scheduled "lunch break" for this class. Please plan your meals accordingly.
If you are absent for any reason, please communicate with me clearly via email, so we can make sure you are on track.
Attendance for the Final is mandatory. Missing the Final will result in loss of 2 full grade levels. Our Final is scheduled for Friday, May 5th, 11am-1pm.
All work must be removed from the Studio by May 11th at 5pm or it will be thrown away.
Notes on Grading

C is considered an average grade. A C is given when the project is completed as prompted. Craftsmanship is adequate.

B is considered above average. Project goes beyond expectations of the prompt. Craftsmanship is excellent.

A is considered excellent well above average work. Project exceeds expectations of the prompt, students bring their own voice to the project and create something truly original. Craftsmanship is, of course, excellent.

Blackboard

Blackboard is only used for syllabus, assignments, links to various documents and ceramics technical documents. I do not post grades or attendance on blackboard.

After each critique, I’ll ask each student to send me a snapshot of their art work. I’ll respond with a grade and a few more comments. This is optional.

Studio Etiquette

A dirty studio is unhealthy and not conducive to work. Each Student is required to wet sponge the work area and studio tool he or she has used. This includes the floor. The class will do a general studio clean-up at least once during the semester. Never handle someone else’s work unless absolutely necessary. No food in the studio. Students using devices while the professor is speaking will be asked to leave the class and will be considered absent.

If you come to class sick, you may be asked to leave.

Please know 24/7 access to this studio is considered a privilege. If the studio is not taken care of properly or is messy, 24/7 access will be rescinded. Project deadlines will remain the same. Treat the studio and your peers with respect.
Tools
Required by 2nd class meeting of the term. Initial tools with an engraver or indelible marker.

- Cutting wire
- Synthetic sponge
- Large sponge
- Needle tool
- Fettling knife
- Trimming tool
- Metal/rubber rib
- Wooden knife
- set of brushes fine, medium and thick brushes
- Fork
- Small plastic bucket for water and tools
- clay

Clay must be purchased through the USC ceramics department. You will have the opportunity to purchase a clay voucher for $62.50 that will include 5 25lb bags of clay that will be delivered to the studio (details to follow). Additional clay may be purchased as the semester progresses.

Course Objectives

- Students will demonstrate conceptual and technical knowledge of ceramics.
- Students will have the skill and confidence to build most any clay sculptures they can conceive of.
- Students will know and use basic vocabulary and terminology.
- Students will be able to form an opinion and critique finished art works.

“Being an artist is like jumping off a plane and making a parachute on the way down.”

-jean-pierre laroque
# Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics/Daily Activities</th>
<th>Readings and Homework</th>
<th>Deliverable/ Due Dates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td>Fundamentals of clay demos</td>
<td>Test tiles due, begin project 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td>Intro project 2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
<td>Glaze demo Coiling building demo</td>
<td>glazed test tiles due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
<td>Review glaze tests</td>
<td>Project 1 due for bisque</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
<td>Intro Project 3 Glaze application demo Slab construction demo</td>
<td>Project 2 due for bisque</td>
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<td><strong>Week 6</strong></td>
<td>demo</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Project 1 due, glazed Project 2 due for bisque</td>
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<td><strong>Week 8</strong></td>
<td>Critique Project 1 Intro Project 4</td>
<td>Project 3 due with underglaze</td>
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<td><strong>Week 9</strong></td>
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<td>Project 2 due, glazed</td>
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<td><strong>Week 10</strong></td>
<td>Critique Project 2</td>
<td>Project 3 due, glazed Project 4 due</td>
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<td><strong>Week 11</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 12</strong></td>
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<td>4/9 Wet Deadline, all plastic must be removed and work is drying</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13</strong></td>
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<td>4/16 10am Bisque Deadline, all work must be bone dry and on the bisque rack</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14</strong></td>
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<td>14/23 Glaze deadline, all work must be glazed</td>
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<td><strong>Week 15</strong></td>
<td>Studio Cleanup mandatory Vocab Quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FINAL</strong></td>
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<td>Friday, May 5th, 11am-1pm</td>
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**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support System**
Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call sthealth.usc.edu/counselingstudent
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086 eeotix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.
Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298 usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.
The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776 osas.usc.edu
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.
USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710 campussupport.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
ombuds.usc.edu
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or otfp@med.usc.edu
chan.usc.edu/otfp
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.
Ceramics Vocabulary and Study Sheet

**Bisque:** clay which has gone through its first firing. A low firing usually Cone 06-04 to harden clay, but still keep it porous in order to accept glaze.

**Greenware:** unfired clay in any of its states of dryness or wetness.

**Leather Hard:** unfired clay which has stiffened up a bit so that it is still workable but not completely bone dry.

**Bone Dry:** Clay which is completely dry, but has not been fired.

**Slip:** watered down soupy clay. Generally used to attach 2 pieces of leather hard clay or wet clay to leather hard clay.

**Engobe (underglaze):** slip which has stains or oxides in it to create different colors. Engobes are used to paint on the surface of leather hard clay.

**High Firing:** a firing which goes to cone 8 or higher. Cone 10 is a typical high firing.

**Low Firing:** a firing which is between cone 06 (or lower) and cone 1.

Differences between high and low firing:

- **Low temperature clays and glazes:**
  - Vitrify (become glass and non-porous) before cone 1
  - Fired in oxidation, which is when the atmosphere inside the kiln has sufficient oxygen to burn fuel efficiently
  - Glazes tend to be brighter, more colorful and more reliable
  - The clay body tends to be less durable

- **High temperature clays and glazes:**
  - Vitrify at higher temperature-cones 6-10
  - Glazes tend to be darker, earthier in tone, considered in terms of textures rather than color
  - Glazes are generally fired in reduction
  - Glazes generally greater variation than low fire and offer a wider palette

**Reduction Firing:** when the kiln is not allowed sufficient oxygen to burn fuel. This atmosphere allows certain oxides in clay and glazes to change color. For instance, copper turns red when it is reduced and turns green when it is oxidized.

**Majolica:** a decorating technique in which oxides or stains are painted on a rwa glaze prior to firing. Majolica is a low temperature technique.

**Oxides:** materials which come from heavy metals and are used as colorants in glazes. Some examples of metal oxides are: copper for greens, blues, and reds, iron for red and blacks, tin or titanium for white and sometimes pink.

Order of Pyrometric Cones:

- Low temperature: 010, 09, 08, 07, 06, 05, 04, 03, 02, 01, 1
- Medium range:  Cone 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- High temperature:  Cone  6, 7, 8, 9, 10