

Florida Atlantic University
ARH 4013 - History of Ceramics
Boca Raton campus, GS 115
Mondays, 4:00 – 7:50PM
Instructor: Brian E. McConnell, Ph.D., RPA
Office: AL-136, Office Hours – M/Tu/Th, 1:00 – 2:00PM or by appointment

Course Syllabus

Course Description

Clay is an exceptional material in art. It is one of the first materials to have been used for making objects in prehistory, and fired clay has consistently proven itself to be one of the best archives of human skill and imagination. This course endeavors to explore the many aspects of what we call ceramics, from pottery to sculpture, from a surface and a space for art in other media to three-dimensional design concept with an anatomy of its own. The topics that are covered on a weekly basis are articulated generally in terms of chronology and geography, while the course seeks to highlight common techniques of production and the complex interplay of notions of form and decorative style that have arisen through contact and commerce in ceramics over the centuries on a global scale. Recurrent themes will regard the role of the individual and the ways in which gender, economic status, and other social considerations have conditioned the making of ceramics as a craft and as a medium in the history of art. Pre-requisites: ARH 2050 and ARH 2051 or permission of the department.

Required Books

Emmanuel Cooper. *10,000 Years of Pottery*, Fourth Edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8122-2140-4; here *Cooper*.
(optional) Suzanne Staubach. *Clay, The History and evolution of Humankind's Relationship with Earth's Most Primal Element*. Berkley Books, New York, 2005. ISBN 0-425-20566-5; here *Staubach*.

Additional reading assignments are available at the Reserve Desk of the Wimberly Library.

Requirements

10% précis of an academic article (due 1/23 – paper copy submission only)
15% object description exercise (due 1/23 for exchange, 1/30 for drawing, 2/6 for final written version)
10% slide quiz
15% mid-term examination
15% written report (5-6 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font) on an artist in clay
15% final examination
20% participation, including the 'word-of-the-week' and class attendance.
100%

Grading Scale

My policy on grading is based on the concept of a traffic light – the grade is an indication of how to go forward to the next assignment. Generally, an ‘A’ like a green light indicates good progress which can continue, a ‘B’ like a yellow light indicates progress which should be made with caution, and a ‘C’ like a red light indicates reason to stop, assess how one is proceeding and then continue; any grade lower than that is comparable to a suspension of one’s license. Each exercise is important to the overall content of the course and therefore, despite the differing weight of the various assignments, each one should be taken seriously. I do not tabulate running grades because such calculations during the semester are not an honest indication of overall performance. Numeric grades are given for quizzes and examinations with a curve that ranges between intervals of ten and fifteen points according to the circumstances of the exercise. Writing assignments are given letter grades with ‘plus’ or ‘minus’ gradations, which follow general university standards. Rewritten assignments are accepted according to circumstance, and the option to revise a writing assignment will be announced to the class as a whole. Effort in completing assignments is considered also in the calculation of the participation portion of one’s overall grade.

Attendance Policy and Useful Tips

Inasmuch as class attendance will be considered in the participation portion of the final grade, a sign-in sheet will be posted for selected classes. In order to be counted as present in class, you must sign this sheet (retroactive or joint signatures are not acceptable). Excused absences (for personal reasons or to represent FAU at sporting and other such events) must be communicated to the instructor in advance (aside from exceptional circumstances) with appropriate documentation. Special exceptions, including religious observances and other exceptions that are officially recognized by the university, will be discussed and accommodated on an individual basis. Emergencies will be dealt with on an individual basis. Please keep up with the readings for each class – the subject is vast, and it really is not possible to catch up just before an examination.

Students with Disabilities:

DISABILITY POLICY STATEMENT: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) located in -- Boca Raton - SU 133 (561-297-3880), in Davie - LA 240 (954-236-1657), in Jupiter - SR 110 (561-799-8585), or at the Treasure Coast - CO 117 (772-873-3382), and follow all OSD procedures.

Honor Code Policy Statement

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001 at: http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf

Class Reading and Assignments

(N.B. – The ceramic workshops at FAU and the Armory Art Center in West Palm Beach are listed below for reference, but they are not requirements for this course.)

I. January 9, 2012. Introduction: ceramics and history.

Assignments: précis – Bob Rogers, 'Reflections on Freedom and Ceramics' (due January 23rd); distribution of postcards (descriptions due in envelopes with postcards for exchange on January 23rd); see assignment instructions below.

Film: *Paul Soldner, Playing With Fire*

II. January 16, 2012. No class session for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

(FAU ceramic workshop – Cheryl Tall, January 18-20, 2012.)

III. January 23, 2012. Pre-industrial pottery across the millennia: archaeological and ethnographic avenues to pre-industrial pottery in egalitarian societies; ceramics, geometry, planning and architecture.

Film: *The Potters of Burr Hebe (Somalia)*.

Assignments: words-of-the-week, return précis, exchange postcard-papers.

Reading assignments: Cooper – Introduction, Chapters 1 (pp. 8 – 16/ to Mesopotamia), 8 and 9; (recommended) Staubach – Chapters 1 – 3.

IV. January 30, 2012. Ceramic production and complex society in the Near East, China and the Americas: clay as a surface for writing; clay as a construction material.

Film: *Hopi Pottery, A Handmade Heritage*.

Assignments: words-of-the-week, return postcard papers with drawings and compare them.

Reading assignments: Cooper – Chapter 1 (pp. 16/Mesopotamia – 33).

V. February 6, 2012. Greek painted pottery: the articulation of form and function; black glaze kiln technology; the vessel as a medium for legend, myth and narrative; commerce in Greek painted pottery.

Film: *Greek Painted Pottery*

Assignments: words-of-the-week, submission of final postcard-papers.

Reading assignments: Cooper – Chapter 2 (pp. 34 – 49/Roman empire), (recommended) Staubach – Chapters 11-12.

(Armory Center ceramic workshop – Margaret Bohis, February 10-12, 2012.)

VI. February 13, 2012. Etruscan and Roman ceramics and architectural sculpture in clay: the clay vessel as a medium for relief decoration and relations with other materials (glass and metal); the vessel as a metaphor for the body and eroticism.

Film: *The Rise and Fall of the Etruscans*.

Assignments: words-of-the-week.

Reading assignments: Cooper – Chapter 2 (pp. 49/Roman empire – 53).

(FAU ceramic workshop – Justin Lambert, February 16-19, 2012.)

VII. February 20, 2012. Islamic pottery and tile: glazing; the story of blue and green; Islamic pottery in Medieval churches; poetry and pottery; **slide quiz**.

Film: *M.C. Richards: The Fire Within*.

Assignments: words-of-the-week.

Reading assignments: Cooper – Chapter 4; poetry selections (to be distributed).

(Armory Center ceramic workshop – Josh DeWeese, February 24-26, 2012.)

VIII. February 27, 2012. Ceramics in China: chronology and form; the famous terracotta warriors.

Film: *'Secrets of the Dead – Terracotta Warriors'*.

Assignments: words-of-the-week, undergraduate students consider artist reports (look through Cooper, Chapters 13 - 14 for ideas).

Reading assignments: Cooper – Chapter 3 (pp. 54 – 72/Korea).

IX. March 5, 2012. No class session for FAU Spring Break Holiday.

(Armory Center ceramic workshop – MacKenzie Smith, March 10-12, 2012.)

X. March 12, 2012. Continental European earthenwares and stonewares of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Special lecture in collaboration with the South Florida Society of the Archaeological Institute of America: Professor Robert Tykot (University of South Florida) – X-ray fluorescence in ceramic analysis.

Assignments: words-of-the-week, undergraduate students submit artist report suggestions.

Reading assignments: Cooper – Chapters 5 – 7, (recommended) Staubach – Chapters 7 – 10.

XI. March 19, 2012. Review and mid-term examination.

Assignments: **mid-term examination**.

XII. March 26, 2012. The story of ceramics in Japan and Korea; documenting pottery production.

Film: compare *'Traditional Art of Japanese Pottery'* with *'Potters at Work'*.

Assignments: words-of-the-week.

Reading assignment: Cooper – Chapter 3 (pp. 72/Korea – 81).

XIII. April 2, 2012. Ceramics and gender (session may be switched with April 9th).

Special lecture: Professor Moira Vincentelli (Aberswyth University, Wales, U.K.) – (title to be announced).

Reading assignments: Moira Vincentelli, *Women Potters, Transforming Traditions*, Introduction (Chapter 1, pages 9-15) and one additional chapter of interest.

XIV. April 9, 2012. Nineteenth and twentieth century ceramics in Europe and America: the potter vs. the studio ceramicist; *Japonisme*; the Arts & Crafts movement; does ceramic art follow the trends of other media?

Film: *'The Leach Pottery, 1952'*.

Reading assignment: Cooper – Chapters 10 – 11; Bernard Leach, 'Belief and Hope,' pages 86-88 in G. Clark, *Ceramic Art, Comment and Review, 1882-1977*.

XV. April 16, 2012. Abstract Expressionist ceramics; Post-Modern and other contemporary trends in ceramic art media; **written report on an artist due in class.**

Film: *Toshika Takaezu: Portrait of An Artist.*

Assignments: undergraduate students summarize their artist reports.

Reading assignment: Cooper – Chapters 12 – 14; John Coplans, 'Abstract Expressionist Ceramics,' pages 153-162 in G. Clark, *Ceramic Art, Comment and Review, 1882-1977.*

XVI. April 23, 2012. Review for final examination (undergraduates only).

Final Examination: Monday, April 30, 2012, 4:00pm – 6:30pm (undergraduate students only; graduate students receive their graded semester projects).

Instructions for Specific Assignments

Word-Of-The-Week

Each student in the class is to find a word related to ceramics and bring it in to share with the class for those sessions in which this assignment is scheduled. Technical terms are encouraged, inasmuch as not everyone has the same experience with ceramic production. The source for the word can be anywhere, as long as the word has common usage, however, the following books each have a glossary that may be consulted:

Joaquim Chavarria, *The Big Book of Ceramics*, pages 186 – 191.

Garth Clark, *The Potter's Art*, pages 232 -233 (short).

R.M. Cook, *Greek Painted Pottery*, Third Edition, pages 325 – 330 (specific to the area).

Emmanuel Cooper, *10,000 Years of Pottery* (our textbook, but the glossary is short).

Paul S. Donhauser, *History of American Ceramics, The Studio Potter*, pages 245 – 251.

Frank Homer, *The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques*, *passim*.

Ivor Noel Hume, *If These Pots Could Talk*, pages 361 – 373.

Susan Peterson and Jan Peterson, *The Craft and Art of Clay*, Fourth Edition, pages 412 – 417.

George Savage and Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Ceramics*, *passim*.

Charlotte F. Speight and John Toki, *Hands in Clay*, Fifth edition, pages G-1 to G-11.

Moira Vincentelli, *Women Potters Transforming Traditions*, Appendix on Techniques and Tools.

Précis

A *précis* (plural *précis*) is a genre of summary writing that places the author in the position of the author, whose work is being summarized. It is a means of arriving at the kernel of one or more ideas that the initial author wishes to communicate – to some extent it is an abstract of the larger work. The author of the *précis* should not write '[Author] argues that ...' but rather jump right in to the idea that is important to communicate. It is not necessary for a *précis* to include every idea that the original work communicates.

Postcard Exchange Papers

This exercise is intended to test one's ability to describe an object in written terms. You are to write a two-page description that is so vivid that a classmate can draw the object accurately without ever having seen it. The exercise is developed in the following stages:

- 1) Students receive an envelope bearing a control number, which contains a postcard with an image of an object. The postcard has the same control number as the envelope but no other information.
- 2) Each student prepares the description on blank paper (please type double-spaced at 12-point font). The description should be labeled only with the control number on the envelope and the postcard. The description should be put in the envelope with the postcard and with a separate sheet of paper called the control sheet, which has the student's name and the control number.
- 3) At the moment of exchange the instructor will remove the postcards and the control sheets, shuffle the envelopes and distribute them to students (with luck no one gets the original envelope!)
- 4) Students then attempt to draw the object on a blank sheet of paper according to the description that they have received. It is important to write the control number on the drawing, but not one's name. Please put the verbal description sheets in the envelope with the drawing.
- 5) Students will return the envelopes with the description and the drawing, and the instructor will match the control numbers with the control sheets and the postcards and return the entire packet to the original student. After that, the class compares the drawing to the postcard.
- 6) If the drawing matches the postcard, then the description must be pretty good; if not ... In any case, each student has the opportunity to revise the description before submitting it for grading. Only the revised description will be graded

Written Report on an Artist in Clay

This exercise is a formal report on an artist of the student's choosing. The final paper should be between 5-6 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font) of written text with full citation of sources on a separate page (printed books are required in the bibliography – sole reliance on internet sources is unacceptable).