

NCAL 407C: BEGINNING CERAMICS POTTER'S WHEEL FOR OLDER ADULTS

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Winter 2026
Units:	0
Hours:	3 lecture, 3 laboratory per week (72 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Non-Degree-Applicable Non-Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Non-GE
Transferable:	None
Grade Type:	Non-Credit Course (Receives no Grade)
Repeatability:	Unlimited Repeatability

Student Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate increased visual awareness by presenting and discussing three-dimensional ceramic art.
- Demonstrate technical competency in basic wheel-throwing techniques including centering, opening, gathering, collaring, pulling, and shaping methods and proper construction such as joining techniques when applying handles, knobs, and sculptural additions to their wheel thrown projects.
- Demonstrate technical competency in glazing assigned works by implementing glazing and finish-firing techniques demonstrated in class.
- Use proper terminology and discuss details such as form, line quality, function, craftsmanship, and glaze application.

Description

This noncredit course is targeted towards older adults. An introduction to throwing on the potter's wheel. This course introduces the process of wedging clay, centering a pot, pulling a wall, shaping processes, and trimming techniques to complete well balanced forms on the potter's wheel.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate technical competency and understand the process of wheel throwing and trimming on the potter's wheel and clay materials
2. Demonstrate competency and understanding of the process of glazing and various surface treatments
3. Use a variety of pottery ceramic tools and equipment skillfully
4. Skillfully demonstrate all of the steps and the process of pottery
5. Integrate diverse cultural, historical, and contemporary styles and iconography effectively when applying carving, slip, and glaze decoration and patterns
6. Integrate diverse cultural, historical, and contemporary clay forms as ideas for ceramic projects

7. Discuss and be exposed to contemporary guest ceramic artists from various diverse cultural backgrounds
8. Communicate, discuss, identify, critically think about, and write about the personal and cultural differences in a class critique
9. Discuss and write about the tools, processes, and content of "great works" from diverse cultures, historical, and contemporary ceramic pottery
10. Write a one to two page paper about a ceramic pottery vessel from a gallery art or museum

Course Content

1. Demonstrate technical competency and understand the process of throwing on the potter's wheel, and trimming a foot
 - a. Wedging clay
 - b. Centering clay on the potter's wheel
 - c. Throwing basic forms
 - i. A cylinder
 - ii. A vase
 - iii. A bowl
 - d. Trimming a foot of a pot
 - e. Making knobs and handles
2. Demonstrate competency and understanding of the process of glazing and various surface treatments
 - a. Pouring, spraying, dipping, brushing
 - b. Wax and latex resist
 - c. High and low firing
 - d. Raku and pit-firing
 - e. Under-glazes and slip painting
 - f. Stain/oxide application
3. Use a variety of pottery tools and equipment skillfully
 - a. The different kinds of clay
 - i. Stoneware clay
 - ii. Porcelain clay
 - iii. Raku and sculpture clays
 - b. Clay pottery tools
 - i. Loop and ribbon tools
 - ii. Wooden angle tools
 - iii. Metal, rubber, and wooden ribs
 - iv. Rubber-tipped shaping tools
 - v. Needle tools
 - vi. Wire tools
 - vii. Sponges
 - c. Trimming equipment
 - i. Giffin grip
 - ii. Chuck
 - iii. Trimming loop tools
 - d. Spray booth
4. Skillfully demonstrate all of the steps and the process of pottery. Understand the limitations and challenges of the clay drying process
 - a. Wet clay
 - b. Leather hard
 - c. Bone dry or greenware
 - d. Bisque-fired
 - e. Glazed-fired

5. Integrate diverse cultural, historical, and contemporary styles and iconography effectively when applying carving, slip, and glaze decoration and patterns
 - a. Greek or Roman decorative patterns
 - b. Asian or Eastern decorative patterns
 - c. African decorative patterns
 - d. Mesoamerican decorative patterns
 - e. Egyptian decorative patterns
 - f. Native American decorative patterns
 - g. American decorative patterns
 - h. European decorative patterns
 - i. Contemporary and abstract decorative patterns
6. Integrate diverse cultural, historical, and contemporary clay forms as ideas for ceramic projects
 - a. Greek or Roman vessel forms
 - b. Asian or Eastern vessel forms
 - c. Mesoamerican vessel forms
 - d. Contemporary vessel forms
 - e. Egyptian decorative patterns
 - f. Native American decorative patterns
 - g. American decorative patterns
 - h. European decorative patterns
7. Discuss and be exposed to contemporary guest ceramic artists from various diverse cultural backgrounds
 - a. Artists that use a variety of different slab construction
 - b. Artists that use a variety of different coil construction
 - c. Artists that use a variety of different surface treatments, slip painting, and glaze applications
 - d. Artists from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds
 - e. Artists that make ceramics that are abstract or use new trends in ceramic arts
8. Communicate, discuss, identify, and write about the personal and cultural differences in a class critique
 - a. Using ceramic terminology in the class critique
 - i. Leather hard
 - ii. Bone-dry
 - iii. Bisqueware
 - iv. Stoneware
 - v. Glaze
 - vi. Slip
 - vii. High-fire
 - viii. Kiln
 - ix. Molds
9. Discuss and write about the tools, processes, and content of "great works" from diverse cultures, historical, and contemporary ceramic pottery
10. Write a one to two page paper about a ceramic pottery vessel from a gallery art or museum
 - a. Writing and discussing the ceramic tools, stylized textured line applications, cultural decorations or applied patterns, surface treatment, glaze or slip treatment, ceramic form or shape, the cultural symbolism or content, and the subject matter in the ceramic piece
 - b. Writing and discussing the personal point of view from examining the ceramic piece
 - c. Writing the "first impression" the student gets from viewing the piece
 - d. Writing about the content of the ceramic piece
 - i. Understanding the expressive meaning in a ceramic vessel
 - ii. The hidden metaphors, symbols, and meaning in a ceramic vessel
 - iii. The artist's intention in ceramic vessel
 - iv. The cultural meaning or symbolism in a ceramic vessel

Lab Content

1. Ceramic projects that focus on centering a pot skillfully
2. Ceramic projects that focus on making a cylinder on the potter's wheel
3. Ceramic projects that focus on making a vase on the potter's wheel
4. Ceramic projects that deal with learning various ways to attach clay
5. Ceramic projects that deal with creating a personal approach to a project
6. Ceramic projects focused on varied ways to use diverse cultural symbols, iconography, and pattern
7. Ceramic projects focused on varied ways to create visual or actual texture
8. Ceramic projects that focus on using a variety of ways to apply slip and glaze with a brush, dipping, and spraying
9. Ceramic projects that focus on the forms and volumes influenced by looking at forms from different cultures
10. Sketchbook notations, generating ideas and problem-solving sketches, thumbnail sketches for ceramic shapes and vessels from diverse cultures, historical periods, and contemporary ceramics
11. Research historic and contemporary ceramic forms through in-class video and text library

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Clay, potters wheel, ceramic extruder, slab roller, kilns, glaze materials, sculpting tools, banding wheels, spray booth.
2. When taught via Foothill Global Access: ongoing access to computer with email software and capabilities; email address; JavaScript-enabled internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

The instructor's direct evaluation of each completed project in relation to the stated goals of the assignment

Evaluation will be by critique of works in progress and finished pieces using criteria of design and technique presented in class. All assigned projects will be graded by the instructor

Craftsmanship, attention to detail, and problem solving ability

On-time completion of the projects

Participation in class activities, discussions, and demonstrations

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture

Discussion

Laboratory
Demonstration

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Carter, Ben. Mastering the Potter's Wheel: Techniques, Tips, and Tricks for Potters. 2016.

Although this text is older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, it remains a seminal text in this area of study.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Weekly reading assignments from the selected contemporary ceramic magazines
2. Weekly reading assignments from the ceramic historical and contemporary textbook
3. Writing a paper about a ceramic sculpture or hand-build ceramic vessel from an art gallery or museum
 - a. Writing and discussing the ceramic tools, stylized textured line applications, cultural decorations or applied patterns, surface treatment, glaze or slip treatment, ceramic form or shape, the cultural symbolism or content, and the subject matter in the ceramic piece
 - b. Writing and discussing the personal point of view from examining the ceramic piece
 - c. Writing the "first impression" the student gets from viewing the piece
 - d. Writing about the content of the ceramic piece
 - i. Understanding the expressive meaning in a ceramic vessel
 - ii. The hidden metaphors, symbols, and meaning in a ceramic vessel
 - iii. The artist's intention in ceramic vessel
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Discipline(s)

Art