

COURSE SYLLABUS FORM

**American University of Beirut
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Department: Civilization Sequence Program
Course Number and Title: CVSP 229 – Pottery and Ceramics**

1. Course Learning Outcomes

What the student potter needs in order to get the ceramic process under some measure of control is an understanding of the principles and techniques which govern the behavior of his raw materials, i.e. clay, oxides, colorants, glazes, types of firing... A potter needs to know the alphabet of pottery making as art as well as science, craft and history.

Although the basic elements of ceramics are relatively unchanging, it is a continuous research that never ends. But to start with, we have to go back into history and basic techniques. We shall concentrate on hand-building techniques: coiling, pinching and slab building. The hand-shaping methods are essential for developing tactile sensibility and manipulative skill.

Techniques may not change drastically, but forms do. Emphasis is on understanding of ceramics as art but also as a functional art. A study will concentrate on the notion of form related to function (FF).

Glazing is the ultimate decorative technique and so can be one of the most complex procedures in the whole pottery process. Not only does the preparation of the glaze have to be more accurate, if results are to be predictable, the eventual quality of the final glaze depends as much on a clear understanding of the effects of firing as on the care of preparation. Then it is followed by a study of the different problems of glaze firing and glaze flaws such as crazing, shivering, crawling, pitting and pin-holding, blistering, under firing and over firing, and other kiln accidents.

2. Resources Available to Students

Several lectures will be given during the semester. A lot of important ceramic books are available for the student potter in the same classroom as well as specialized monthly magazines and videotapes.

Besides, a textbook is designed for the course. The AUB libraries are precious sources of information for the student. Visits to art galleries and museums will be arranged during the course of the semester, which will enable the student to get in live contact with art and well-known artists. Sample projects are prepared beforehand to facilitate the understanding of certain complicated techniques.

3. Grading Criteria

Evaluation and Grading

Class attendance and group participation	30%
Improvement through the course and teacher's opinion	20%
Weekly clay projects	20%
Final clay projects	20%
Two term papers	10%

4. Schedule

Topic 1: Discovering clay

Exercise of wedging clay, de-airing and preparing it to take the first primitive form. Learning how to prepare clay by kneading and wedging is a prerequisite for successful pottery.

Topic 2: Pinching

When making a pinched pot, you will discover the relationship between the weight of the clay and the size of the finished pot and how the shape of the hands can affect the shape of the finished pot. We start pinching using hand-turned wheels.

Topic 3: Coiling

Making a coiled pot is our third step. Symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes can be coiled. Equipment will include a turntable, together with a cutting wire, modeling tools and scrapers.

Topic 4: Slab building

Slab building is similar to preparing pastry for baking. Clay needs to be even in texture, ready for rolling on a heavy piece of cloth. The student will exercise construction, making boxes with lids of different geometrical shapes, such as squared boxes, triangular, and oval forms.

Topic 5: Sandpapering

Understanding the importance of a well-finished piece, polished with sand paper, preparing it to receive all kinds of decoration is important before the first firing. The student should put down his initials and section number on the base of his piece to be able to recognize it later on.

Topic 6: One-piece press mold

One of the easiest ways of making shallow dishes is with such a mold. These molds are primarily employed for the reproduction of specific shapes by pressing sheets of clay into either a hollow concave or convex mold. The student potter is taught now to shape the desired original form in clay and how to prepare the plaster.

Topic 7: Exercise of a teacup and the technique of adding a useful handle.

Topic 8: The plate

It is a utilitarian clay object but also is a piece of art in the history of ceramics. A complete historical study of the plate in different civilization is important. We will use already prepared and dried one-piece plaster mold to make a plate.

Topic 9: Slips and glazing

Slip trailing in decoration on leather hard clay objects through history.

Most functional clay pots are glazed to make them water-resistant, durable and easy to clean. Glaze can be highly colored or opaque and when used for decoration it is very effective. For beginners there is no immediate need to get deeply involved with the business of glaze chemistry. For such potters, the main interest will be in preparing standard glazes: mixing and applying by pouring or spraying or by brush application.

5. Course Policy (if any)

Attendance is important through the whole semester. The course ends with an annual exhibition. The student potter will be given the opportunity of exhibiting in other occasions inside and outside the university. An amount of \$70 should be paid by the student at the beginning of the semester for all expensive materials to be used during the course.