ARTS5312.001 MFA Studio in Art: Ceramics
Instructor: Louis Katz, Office: CA 113C, Office Telephone: 825-5987, louis.katz@tamucc.edu
Office Hours: M-R 3:30-4:45pm
Final Exam (Critique): by appointment. Attendance at stacked undergrad crits required.

(student learning outcomes)
This is a Graduate Level Course. Commitment, hard work, and responsibility are minimal expectations. Ceramics is a demanding media, requiring skill, technique, technical understanding, knowledge of an art history not widely taught, and an aesthetic different from other media. Students with concentrations in ceramics will be expected to gain expertise in all of these areas. Students will build a substantive body of work, cohesive yet broad. They will become the expert on their own work, its historical antecedents, and contemporary relatives, its formal characteristics, and content. (Undergraduate students usually find that the instructor knows more about the roots of the work and formal aspects than the student, sometimes this even includes content. By graduation the MFA student must be able to show that they are the preeminent expert on their work.)

(MFA Students concentrating in Ceramics) The Work. Work for this course must be reviewed by the instructor at least monthly, preferably less formally weekly (summer weekly). Partial pieces, sketches, typed verbal descriptions of ideas, and finished work may be presented. Firing or other finishing should take place throughout the semester unless the work demands otherwise. Working rhythm is important to all work, particularly ceramics which transforms radically in firing and normally requires drying time.

1. Writing.
   o At the beginning of the semester the student will outline their plans in writing conceptually rather than numerically. "I will investigate asymmetrical platter form" is better than "I will make 10 platters". Numerical goals never address quality sufficiently. These plans are not contracts for specific work. They are just tools to help provide quick focus at the start of a semester. Plans change.
   o Each semester in Ceramics the student will be asked to write a short document on some aspect of their work. Its roots, where it is headed, what it says, its conceptual stance etc. The statement is due the first day of finals week. Unless otherwise stated, the aspect of their work discussed is the student's choice. This statement may be identical or based on statements required in other courses during the same semester. This assignment is upgraded by itself but will add information for the evaluation below.

2. Technique. During graduate school the student will fill in any gaps in their undergraduate education. In terms of technique, the graduate student specializing in Ceramics should be able to work in all the basic handbuilding techniques, throwing (even if minimal), make molds and slipcast, and make extruder dies and use them. The graduate student should come with experience loading and firing oxidation and reduction kilns and should have experienced some form of vapor glazing or solid fuel firing.
3. **Understanding** of the students place in the body of contemporary ceramics and history roots.

**Methods of Evaluation**

The primary responsibility of the student is to work towards a successful thesis. It is not required that all areas of this are brought forward at the same time, just that timely proportional progress is made. Some semesters parts of the requirements will make more progress than other parts. This is expected. For more information see the [MFA Thesis Requirements](#) on this website and the separate departmental requirements.

A. These parts of the student's grade that are tied together and create a make or break criteria for a students grade.

- Quality of work. A graduate student's work must be at or above the level of an undergraduate BFA. When admitted in the area of ceramics the student will have demonstrated the ability to do this.
- Effort. A student whose work has fallen from the quality demonstrated on admittance into the program must be working hard to improve the work irregardless of other criteria for a grade.

B. Each semester the student through critique, papers, discussions and the art work demonstrate substantive progress in:

- Clarity of work
- Cohesion of ideas
- Personal direction of work
- Formal understanding of aspects of the work
- Understanding of its content
- Understanding its place in the genre of ceramics and in the feild of art in general

Each of these areas will be marked as:

- no progress,
- limited progress,
- significant progress
- sufficient for thesis exhibition

- It is expected that at least three of these areas will have significant progress in order to be granted the grade of A
- Significant progress in two areas B.
- Significant progress in on area C. If progress is limited in all areas but the student is meeting minimal quality and time commitments a grade of C will be given.

Committee Meetings: Students will participate in an end of the semester critique with their committee. The student will negotiate and arrange the time. The committee decides if and when the student proceeds to Thesis and if the Thesis is approved. For more detail see the graduate art handbook and catalog.

**Technical**

Undergraduate programs do not always provide a technical understanding of ceramics. The graduate student specializing in clay will learn to do glaze calculation as a means to greater understanding of the material. Instruction in simple glaze calculation will be provided along with the undergraduate ceramics classes. Students will be expected to learn the difference between various categories of glaze materials, how to make substitutions, and how to use glaze calculation software. Graduate students are required to attend technical lectures given to undergraduate students.
A more in depth understanding of why kilns fire the way they do, new theories of how reduction works and specifics about firing cycles will be covered.

**Ceramic History**
Ceramics Graduate students will be required to read Ceramic History Survey Texts during their time at TAMU-CC and will be required to study individual periods, countries or styles in addition. Serious online research will be accepted. PowerPoint HTML or slide presentations may be required each semester along with foot noted outlines. The presentations will be given to an undergraduate class. Subjects of these talks will be by mutual agreement or by assignment.

For example:
Fall 2001 - A History of World Pottery- Emmanuel Cooper. Read the text, supplement with other texts as needed. Answer the following questions:
What contemporary or modern well known potters seem to make work closely descended from:
- Greek or Roman traditions,
- English traditions
- Chinese traditions
- Japanese traditions
- African Traditions
- Native American Traditions
What makes you draw these conclusions? Could someone else justifiably determine that these potter's major influence lies somewhere else?

**Aesthetics**
Students will be required to read books on ceramic aesthetics during their coursework at TAMUCC. These will be discussed in weekly meetings.

**Graduate Students Specializing in Other Media**

Graduate students from other areas may use the class to advance the main body of their thesis work or may use the studio to develop work independent of their main body of work.

**Student learning objectives**
- This is THE major objective. To become the expert on their own work, its historical antecedents, and contemporary relatives, its formal characteristics, and content. (Undergraduate students usually find that the instructor knows more about the roots of the work and formal aspects than the student, sometimes this even includes content. By graduation the MFA student must be able to show that they are the preeminent expert on their work.)
- The student will fill in gaps in their undergraduate education learning, firing, forming techniques and other hands on knowledge necessary to become well rounded ceramists.
- The student will read books, learn about ceramic artists, and pursue research

**Firing,** Advanced students are expected to actively participate in the firing, loading and maintenance of kilns. Washing shelves, cleaning burners and loading kilns are normal skills required in a studio. At the end of the semester you should be able to light our kilns, adjust them for reduction, load them and clean the kiln shelves properly. This will require out of class time.
Attend technical lectures.
Students will learn to identify the following styles, kilns, and artist's typical work:

The following assignments may also be used in Fall 2012 with permission of instructor
Default Assignments for graduate students specializing in other media (other assignments
may be given with mutual agreement)
For 2-D areas:
• Make a 3-D or Bas Relief version of your 2-D work. The piece (s) should reflect a
  semesters time, and before application of surface be finished to show quality. Bas
  murals are often most effective when perspective is forced, fisheye or skewed.
  "Oriental" or vertical perspective techniques are often useful. The mural may have
  fully rendered components attached or in front of behind or to the side of the
  mural.
• Three D representations of the work. These are best when not considered as a
  cube but as objects in space. The objects do not need to be attached together and
  may be displayed on a pedestal table or floor or attached to a wall.
• The murals or 3-D renderings may be "surfaced" in any manner. However you
  should consider that you are making a surface, not necessarily a representation of
  a surface. Other techniques may be much more appropriate than brush and paint.
• You are responsible for firing your own work with assistance if needed.
For 3-D areas:
• Make a clay version of your work . Use the properties, concepts, and surface
  qualities of clay to their best advantage. The piece (s) should reflect a semesters
  time, and before application of surface be finished to show quality.
• Carefully consider how material and process affects you finished product. How
  can you use clay advantageously?
• You are responsible for firing your own work with assistance if needed.
Grading:
These pieces will be graded on the following criteria
• relationship to the students work 25%
• quality of workmanship 25%
• intendedness 25%
• the art of finishing 25%

Students working on development of skills with ceramic materials processes will be
graded as follows.
• Development of skill 50%
• Use of skill for aesthetic ends 50%

The taking of a course outside ones area of expertise can have several goals.

The Studio
The Ceramics Studio is for students enrolled in ceramics courses to use.
End of the semester firing space is prioritized as follows:
1. test tiles
2. students will thesis shows within the next three months
3. The person loading the kilns work (within some limits)
4. beginning class work
5. undergraduate class work
6. graduate class work

The rest of the year priority will be granted as follows.

1. test tiles
2. The person loading the kilns work. This may not be done in consecutive kilns and other limits may be needed.
3. Students with thesis shows in the next three months
4. beginning class work
5. undergraduate work
6. graduate work

Studio space will be allotted for the use of graduate students. It will be treated as a privilege. Wheels will be made available for use in the spaces unless there is a shortage for the undergraduate classes. These spaces must be kept clean. Priority for these spaces will be as follows:

1. MFA's in their last year.
2. Other MFA's
3. MA's in their last semester
4. MA's in their last year
5. other MA's
6. All allotted space is at the discretion of the instructor. Ample space will be made available for all work unless none is available. The ability to store fired work in the studio is limited.

Access to the ceramics studio after hours
Graduate ceramics students may use the ceramic studio after hours when the building is closed. They must either stay or have keys. Doors may not be left open or propped. The studio and building must be left locked and secured. After hour access for graduate students is a privilege that has limits.

Access to the ceramics studio between semesters.
Graduate students are expected to remove materials from the common space between semesters. Work not removed from the common space may be thrown away without warning.

Graduate students specializing in ceramics may use the studio between semesters with the following limits:
The graduate student must be enrolled in ceramics the semester before and the semester after the break. During the break the students must be out of the building 15 minutes before closing time unless they have a key. Kiln firing except for electric bisquing requires approval by Louis each time (if between semesters). Graduate students working between semesters must not be a burden in any meaningful way on the custodial staff.
Graduate students must comply with all studio rules and inform Louis of all gas or wood firing between semesters.
Graduate students using the facility between semesters will be expected to participate in a cleanup the week after the end of the semester and the week before the next semester starts.
Wheels owned by graduate students may be kept within the graduate space and will not be used by undergraduates. Wheels left in the common space will be available to anyone who wants to use them. Under no circumstances will TAMU-CC, Louis Katz, other
students, or other members of the University faculty and staff be responsible for damage or theft of student owned wheels. Wheels must be kept in a safe condition or be removed. Wheels must be removed before graduation. Hydraulic wheels are not allowed. This syllabus is subject to change.

Calendar
Graduate students will attend lectures in the Advanced class and participate in Advanced Class Critiques. They will meet with the instructor at least weekly and show work at least monthly. Graduate students will arrange a meeting with their committee at the end of each semester except their first semester.

Required Notices
- The College of Liberal Arts complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible. Please have your accommodation letter from TAMU-CC Services for Students with Disabilities Office with you when you come see me. If you suspect that you have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (located in Driftwood 101) at 825-5816.
- It is a College of Liberal Arts recommendation that students meet with an academic advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which then must be signed by the student and a faculty member.
- Because art studios use materials and tools that could be dangerous, safe and cooperative behavior by students is absolutely necessary. The studio course instructor will be the ultimate judge of cooperative as well as safe and unsafe behavior. Individuals engaging in uncooperative and/or unsafe behavior will be cautioned and instructed once by the instructor. If a second occasion of uncooperative and/or unsafe behavior occurs, that student will be un-enrolled from the course and given a “wd” with no refund of tuition and fees. (per Dean Richard Gigliotti)
- Grade Appeal Process
  As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal.
  A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the student may take the steps below.
1. Presentation of grievance to instructor. (This step must be taken within fourteen calendar days after the beginning of the next term.)
2. Appeal to department chair or area coordinator.
3. Written appeal to the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.
4. Preliminary review and advising by an ombudsman appointed by the Provost.
5. Submission of file by department chair to the chair of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.
6. Review of file by committee chair and submission of case to committee.
7. Proceedings of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee. (Committee holds hearing, reviews data, presents findings to all parties, and makes recommendation to Provost.)
8. Decision by Provost.
9. Final appeal in writing to the Provost if student or instructor thinks appropriate procedures have not been followed.

For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamu.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm.

For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.