

**AUF***The American
University of Florence***SYLLABUS**Rev. 8
April 2025
Academic AffairsFormat revised 2025
Syllabus reviewed in 2025

Florence University of the Arts (FUA) is an academic institution for study abroad in Florence, Italy. FUA collaborates with The American University of Florence (AUF), an international university offering US-style undergraduate and graduate degrees, in a cooperation to offer study abroad programs with a diverse breadth and depth of academic curriculum.

FUA study abroad programs may include AUF offerings, which are US-aligned in terms of higher education standards as per the university's institutional structure. Common courses offered by FUA and AUF have been jointly selected by both institutions as eligible for mutual recognition and delivery. As such, equal academic standards, credibility, and outcomes are vetted by the Academic Offices of the institutions for all courses and syllabi offered in the study abroad program.

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS
COURSE TITLE: CERAMICS (BEGINNER)
COURSE CODE: FACECE200
3 Semester credits**

1. DESCRIPTION

In this course, students will work on pottery and/or ceramic sculpture projects. During the first portion of the course, emphasis will be on different clay hand-building techniques. The second portion, students will progress to a variety of surface decoration techniques and different methods of firing and coloring. Lecture content will provide students essential information about the nature of clay and glazes and the history of Mediterranean ceramics. Students will be introduced to local Tuscan artisan traditions and the work of contemporary ceramic artists.

2. OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Construct and design forms using key techniques in hand built work: pinch, coil and slab and craftsmanship in making ceramic objects that are functional and non-functional shapes/forms: bowls, jugs, vessels, etc.
- Apply elements and principles of 3-dimensional design to ceramic pieces.
- Determine and apply the basics of ceramic design and apply surface design through impressed textures, carving, slips/underglazes and glazes.
- Understand and use basic terminology related to clay, ceramic, firing, and glaze processes.
- Recognize some contemporary artists in ceramics/contemporary art.
- Identify the role of ceramics in a cultural context and an abridged history of ceramics.
- Define theoretical and practical knowledge of basic properties and technology practices.
- Evaluate and examine ceramic work (their own as well as by others).
- Develop and formulate an organized plan of preparing a portfolio and presenting a strong body of work.

3. REQUIREMENTS

There are no prerequisites for this course.

4. METHOD

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, projects, and interaction with the local community. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, integrate relevant academic sources, may include multimedia references, propose creative problem-solving, and other appropriate forms of delivery as deemed appropriate to the course's purpose.

Class is dedicated the methods of the ceramic arts, taught by lectures/demonstration, hands-on applications, and research including onsite/museum/gallery/other visual aides visit(s) where applicable. During each lesson, development of composition and design skills will also be shown and students get hands on experience by applying learnt methods of building and decoration techniques. This will aide in

improving technical skills to move towards a slightly more conceptual based work by the end of the course.

Various building processes will be introduced in a progressive build up of skills throughout the course to evaluate and assess individual issues and prepare for different ceramic assignments and/or projects. Specific assignments will be given throughout the course directly in connection with class exercises.

A sketchbook, daily/weekly log of work in and outside studio time must be kept individually by students. It is useful for jotting down ideas and sketching forms, notes from lectures and demos, questions to ask and notes on your research, draw- pots, vessels, sculpture, nature whatever it is that inspires you and what you aspire to achieve...drawing will greatly help develop your projects and ideas in ceramics. Sometimes collage is helpful as well, if your strengths are not drawing, think 3D.

Students will be assigned readings which will be discussed during a given class period. In order for the discussions to be meaningful, each student must attend class fully prepared. Students will also be expected to keep a sketchbook and log of daily/weekly work in the lab and outside of the lab, which will be later assessed during the semester so you must have your sketchbook every lesson at every class that is scheduled and your logbook will be reviewed regularly. In addition to studio work, students will be asked to attend required visit(s) to galleries/museums or relative lecture(s), or watch a film/video. Some of which may be on your exams. Critiques of student work will allow students to share their work, ideas and discuss the work of others. Since participation plays a role in your final grade, it is not only essential that you read and complete the assignments, you should also draw your own conclusions from the reading. You will be often asked to present those conclusions during class discussions.

Excellence in ceramics requires a lot of hours of hard work and attentiveness. Expect to spend a significant amount of time outside the classroom to work on your assignments. It is highly recommended to make use of the studio times available to meet deadlines and to produce a high quality body of work. Clay is not a material in which you may see immediate results, patience and working on more than one assignment/project at the same time is required to achieve this.

5. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES

TEXTBOOK (Copy available at the university library):

- Speight, Charlotte. *Hands in Clay: An Introduction to Ceramics* (5th edition). McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2003.
- Landerberger, Elisabeth. *Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide to Tools and Techniques*. Allworth Press, 2012.

The textbook is mandatory for course participation and completion. Where applicable additional materials may be provided by the instructor.

FURTHER READINGS

- Bruce, Susan *The art of handbuilt ceramics* The Crowood Press 2013.
- Peterson, Susan *The craft and art of clay a complete potter's handbook* Laurence King Publishing 2003.
- Piepenburg, Robert *The spirit of clay a classic guide to ceramics*, Pebble Press Inc 1998.
- Speight, Charlotte *Hands in clay* Mc Graw Hill 2003.

LIBRARY

Course participants may access the campus library. Please consult the library site for resources such as collections, borrowing, scanning and wifi connection, and research: <https://www.auf-florence.org/Library/the-library/>

6. COURSE MATERIALS

Tools and materials will be supplied by the school, including clay, glazes, and pottery tools.

Students must obtain the following materials for personal use:

- A sketchbook to document ideas, progress and outcomes during each lesson.
- A logbook of daily/weekly hours lab and research.

- Pencils/Pens
- Digital Camera to document work
- Brushes
- Plastic bags, dry-cleaning bags – clear and thin work best
- Tool box/bag
- Dust Mask (when working with dry materials and dry glazes)
- Latex gloves
- Old containers plastic, e.g. yogurt cups, etc.
- Other various objects like old forks, spoons, plastic cards (credit card shape), just about anything you think can be used as a tool and will impart a special mark on a piece of clay, so be creative.

These materials may be purchased at the following store: Salvini in Via degli Alfani 111r. A 15% discount is usually applied to university students.

Other recommended stores: Rigacci in Via dei Servi; Zecchi in Via dello Studio 19r; Lory in Piazza Frescobaldi 8r.

Some courses may require specific materials. Please refer to your enrollment information.

7. COURSE FEES

Course fees cover course-related field learning activities, visits, and support the instructor's teaching methodologies. Book costs are not included in the course fee. If this course requires a fee, the exact amount is communicated prior to enrollment.

8. GRADING AND EVALUATION & ATTENDANCE

10% Attendance

10% Participation

20% Assignments

20% Midterm Assessment and Critique Project A

10% Final Paper or presentation

10% Digital Final Portfolio in PDF

20% Final Exam, and Critique Project B

The above grade breakdown percentages reflect the grading scale standards in the “Grading and Evaluation System” section of the catalog.

Attendance

Class participation is mandatory. Based on the hours defined in the Academic Catalog’s attendance policy, students may miss up to 2 class encounters delivered as lecture hours. A third absence constitutes a course failure.

Please note that absence hours may vary according to the learning methodology, as per the academic catalog policy on credit hours: https://catalog.auf-florence.org/standard_regulation

9. EXAMS / PROJECTS / ASSIGNMENTS

Midterm Assessment: The midterm assessment accounts for 20% of the final course grade. It consists of an online submission due on Lesson 6. The instructor will provide specific information on the content and format at due time.

Final Exam: The Final exam accounts for 20% of the final course grade. The time and date of the exam cannot be changed for any reason.

Format: the exam is divided into three sections:

- Part I: 5 short-answer questions: concise explanations, main ideas, key words, names, etc.
- Part II: two essay questions.
- Part III: presentation and oral critique and group discussion of the *Final Projects* and digital portfolio. The *Final Projects* involve different skills, applications and theoretical practices as outlined below.
- Please see the Final Projects section below for project B submission details.

The final exam is cumulative.

Final Projects:

- Project (A): Set of everyday objects. 4 objects due by the end of the course. Two of them must be decorated and colored. We will choose the objects together in class. 3 drawings for each object are required. Every chosen object must accurately represent reality, after that you can choose to add personal decorations and different interventions. Drawing and templates are required to help you achieve precision. Methods used can be pinching, coil, slab or draping over a mold or pressing into a mold. Decoration may involve using a solid color or using two contrasting colors, sgraffito and slip techniques may also be used.
- Project (B): Usually is based on the Student Show Theme, but students can feel free to work on their own ideas, particularly as this is a beginner course.

Digital Portfolio: The digital portfolio accounts for 10% of the final course grade. The digital portfolio is worth 10%. Portfolio submission of documented work throughout the session. By midterm, you will be required to present an overview of your final project(s) in a power point presentation with ideas and images including your drawings/sketches, photographs of documented works in progress, maquettes and or inspiring images. In addition, you will give an oral presentation about your final project(s).

The Digital Portfolio is the evidence of your practices, processes and achievements during the course, and it will be evaluated according to how accurate these are reported. It must be composed of and include your statements, goals and achievements, as well as the procedures and challenges encountered to reach those. By the end of the course, you are required to hand in the digital portfolio, complete with photos of your works, measurements, techniques and the aforementioned short written statements. Be sure to constantly record the advancements of your work, and to update your presentation weekly, by taking pictures of your work in different phases.

The digital portfolio format accepted is Power Point (if you are strong in other programs, such as iPhotos, you are welcome to use those but you must inform the instructor by the 3rd lesson of class via email, which format you will use at the beginning of the session). You will need to hand it in as a digital file saved in PDF format and give a brief presentation of your final works.

The final digital portfolio must be submitted in pdf format. The first page of your portfolio must contain the following information:

Name of the School

Department of... (Department of Education, Department of Ceramics... etc...)

Code and exact title of the course

Name of the Professor

Name of the Student

Term and Academic Year

Final Paper or Presentation: The final paper or presentation accounts for 10% of the course grade. Your paper/presentation must include the following information:

- outline of ideas, concepts, plan of action;
- Include historical reference, inspiring objects/forms, drawings, photographs, and other imagery to help communicate your ideas.

The instructor will provide additional information on topic and length.

Material for research will be available at the university library.

Assignments: This course requires at least 3 assignments as per the course outline in the syllabus.

Further details are provided in the course portal.

10. COURSE OUTLINE

Lesson 1	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Presentation of the course; class syllabus. Information on Projects, assignments and exams. Introduction to the studio, materials, health and safety factors. Final projects to submit for final critique (A and B) will be discussed.
Objectives	By the end of this class students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of expectations, requirements, main contents and practices of the course.
Lab	First contact with clay 1 tile piece. Measurement requirements 15x15 cm, height (thickness) 2/3 cm.
Readings/Assignments	Read: <i>Hands in Clay</i> , Chapter 1: An Introduction to Clay & Chapter 10: Getting to Work with Clay Complete lab work (due Lesson 2).

Lesson 2	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Working in three dimension: Formation and types of clay bodies and early clay. Handbuilding. Pinching & coiling. Slab construction. All about the wheel.
Objectives	By the end of this class students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display knowledge of raw materials and different types of clay bodies. • Display knowledge of handbuilding techniques such as pinch, coil and slab. • Apply <u>at least one</u> handbuilding technique to their work. • Working in three dimension: Formation and types of clay bodies and early clay. Handbuilding. Pinching & coiling. Slab construction. • Display knowledge of different types of wheels.
Lab	Students submit tile piece assigned on the previous lesson. Students start working on the chosen objects for project A.
Readings/Assignments	Reading for next week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hands in Clay</i>, Chapter 2: Early Western Asia and the Mediterranean & Chapter 11: Handbuilding • <i>Ceramics: A beginner's guide</i>, pp. 9-28. • <i>Hands in Clay</i>, Chapter 3: Asia & Chapter 12: Throwing on the Wheel. • <i>Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide</i>, 'Throwing, Trimming and other throwing techniques, pp. 41-78. <p>Continue working on your chosen object for project A. NB: should you finish your project A object before the deadline, you may start working on a new object. You will then choose <u>one</u> object to submit as your project A.</p>

Lesson 3	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Clay and ceramic in sculpture. Using molds. Basics of ceramic design I (impressed textures, carving, slips/underglazes and glazes).
Objectives	By the end of this class students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display understanding of the use of clay and ceramic in sculpture.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display knowledge of the use of molds in clay and ceramic. • Work with molds. <p>Display knowledge of, and apply <u>at least one</u> decorating technique.</p>
Lab	Student continue working on the chosen objects for project A.
Readings/ Assignments	<p>Reading for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hands in Clay</i>, Chapter 4: Africa & Chapter 13: Molds. • <i>Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide</i>, Sculpting and modelling pp. 25-27, Making plaster molds, Using slip casting clay, pp. 35-40. <p>Continue working on your chosen object for project A. NB: should you finish your project A object before the deadline, you may start working on a new object. You will then choose <u>one</u> object to submit as your project A.</p>

Lesson 4	
Meet	In class
Lecture	A world of glaze techniques and raw materials from ancient to present. Basics of ceramic design II (impressed textures, carving, slips/underglazes and glazes).
Objectives	<p>By the end of this class students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display knowledge of different glaze applications and processes from past to present. • Put into practice some simple glazing techniques and make test tiles. • Display knowledge of, and apply <u>at least one</u> decorating techniques.
Lab	Start to think about project B and continue to work on project A.
Readings/ Assignments	<p>Reading for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hands in Clay</i>, Chapter 5: Indigenous America & Chapter 14: Texture, Color and Glaze. • <i>Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide</i>, Glaze, pp. 109-121. <p>FINAL PROJECT OVERVIEW.</p>

Lesson 5	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Project B tutorial. Review for Midterm Exam. Questions and concerns regarding midterm review.
Objectives	<p>By the end of this class students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify any doubts concerning project B • Clarify any doubts on the content of the course so far.
Visit/Lab	<p>Students bring their sketchbook with preliminary ideas for Project B for a tutorial review.</p> <p>Continue working on your chosen object for project A. NB: should you finish your project A object before the deadline, you may start working on a new object. You will then choose one object to submit as your project A.</p>
Readings/ Assignments	<p>Finalize Project A during the Lab and begin preparing Final Paper A to submit before Lesson 6 as well as for the Project A critique during Lesson 6.</p> <p>Review reading assigned so far and prepare for midterm assessment.</p> <p>MIDTERM ASSESSMENT ASSIGNED, due prior to next class meet.</p>

Lesson 6	
Meet	In class
Lecture	<p>Project A post-submission Critique.</p> <p>Focus on local Tuscan artisan traditions and on the work of contemporary ceramic artists. Coloring techniques (foundation)</p>

Objectives	By the end of this class students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display knowledge of various clay artists and of their work. • Display knowledge of, and apply basic coloring techniques to their work.
Visit/Lab	Start working on the chosen objects for project B.
Readings/Assignments	Reading for next week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hands in Clay</i>, Chapter 6: Europe. • <i>How to Add Color to Your Ceramic Art</i>. Continue working on the chosen objects for project B. NB: should you finish your project B object before the deadline, you may start working on a new object. You will then choose <u>one</u> object to submit as your project B.

Lesson 7	
Meet	In class
Lecture	From mud to ceramic I: firing (bisque).
Objectives	By the end of this class students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display knowledge of, and apply bisque firing technique to their work.
Visit/Lab	Continue working on the chosen objects for project B.
Readings/Assignments	Reading for next week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hands in Clay</i>, Chapter 7: The United States & Chapter 15: Firing. • <i>Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide</i>, Bisque firing, Glaze firing, pp. 124-125. Continue working on the chosen objects for project B. NB: should you finish your project B object before the deadline, you may start working on a new object. You will then choose <u>one</u> object to submit as your project B.

Lesson 8	
Meet	In class
Lecture	From mud to ceramic II: firing (glaze).
Objectives	By the end of this class students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display knowledge of, and apply glaze firing technique to their work.
Visit/Lab	Continue working on the chosen objects for project B.
Readings/Assignments	Reading for next week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hands in Clay</i>, Chapter 8: Worldwide Interaction • <i>Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide</i>, Bisque firing, Glaze firing, pp. 124-125. Continue working on the chosen objects for project B. NB: should you finish your project B object before the deadline, you may start working on a new object. You will then choose <u>one</u> object to submit as your project B.

Lesson 9	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Portfolio preparation and writing an artist statement I.
Objectives	By the end of this class students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display understanding of a portfolio's requirements. • Display understanding of an artist statement's requirement.
Visit/Lab	Finalize the chosen objects for project B.
Readings/Assignments	Reading for next week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide</i>, The workshop, Inspiration, pp: 141-143. Assemble your digital portfolio FINAL PROJECT DUE

Lesson 10	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Project B post-submission Critique.
Objectives	<p>By the end of this class students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present their own work. • Establish the progress they have made so far and identify ways to further improve their skills. • Present their own work • Establish the progress they have made so far and identify ways to further improve their skills.
Visit/Lab	
Readings/ Assignments	<p>Reading for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ceramics: A Beginner's Guide</i>, Glossary, Read more, Suppliers pp: 146-147. • Review reading assigned so far in view of the Final Exam. <p>Submit Digital Portfolio</p>

Lesson 11 Final Exam	
Meet	In class
Lecture	FINAL EXAM