

California State University, Sacramento  
Department of Art  
**Art 50 Beginning Ceramics, Section 4**  
Fall 2004

Instructor: Tom Decker  
Class hours and classroom: TTh 1200-250pm, Kadema 131  
Office hours: TTh 1130am-1200pm, Kadema 196  
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Lab fee: To be paid in Lassen Hall Cashier's Office by 9/27/04 , administrative penalty imposed for non-payment.

## Course Syllabus

**General description:** *"It seems reasonable to expect that beauty will emerge from a fusion of the individual character and culture of the potter with the nature of his materials: clay, pigment, glaze, and that consequently we may hope to find in good pots those innate qualities which we most admire in people."* (Bernard Leach) This art course will expose you to a unique contact with a material in motion to encourage an exploration of form in space. You will focus your exploration towards physical activity in the production of ceramic objects. You will reflect upon these objects as results of your exploration. This reflection will lead to development for the sake of learning to express yourself through the medium. To get the most out of this course, interpret the subject originally, do historical research, draw upon inspiration, explore creative possibilities, and try to express yourself fully.

**Project assignments:** *"Given the intensity of process and limitations of materials, how can I be expected to express myself if I don't already have the ability?"* (Student in beginning ceramics class) There will be three projects assigned and a schedule to follow towards their completion. You are required to work in series, making multiple objects related to the resolution of formal problems and conceptual issues. Through exploration in the medium your technical skill will increase, and so too your ability to critically judge your work in the context of cultural significance. You must participate in the class by coming into the studio every class meeting, paying attention to lectures, observing demonstrations, and practicing technique by making objects in order to fulfill at least the technical requirements of the project assignments. Your presentation of the artwork to the class as a whole during regularly scheduled critiques is mandatory. These critiques are crucial points in evaluating your development of technical skill and expressive content.

**Grading:** *"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."* (Aristotle) Grades in these classes will be assigned as a result of your ability to integrate the subject matter in an expressive way. Expressive development is the goal. In order to earn a grade of "B" in the course, you must at least fulfill the technical requirements of all project assignments and present your work for critique on the scheduled date for each phase of the projects. To earn a higher grade, you must not only achieve the technical standard of each assignment, but exceed the minimum requirements of the assignment in a way that shows creative attempts at expression. If you miss a critique you should continue to work on the project on your own time after the critique date and submit the pieces for partial credit (up to but not after the date of the final critique). Work submitted for evaluation after the scheduled critique date will be graded at one letter grade lower than it would have been had the work been submitted on time. If you are not satisfied with your results on any one project you may find it is worth your time to make more objects and submit them to demonstrate your ability to critically analyze your work and improve it. The work that you undertake to improve your results on any project will be credited towards the improvement of your grade in the course.

**Materials and equipment:** *"Where am I / What am I doing / Why am I doing it? / I am here / The world is out there / Ceramics is the medium."* (Decker) Tools you'll need include a ceramic tool kit that you can purchase at the student bookstore. You must purchase clay here in the studio and pay by check. The average amount you'll use is about 100 pounds. To ensure safety, use consideration and respect for other students and their work. There is equipment in the studio which requires training to use safely and efficiently. Ask for instruction before using any unfamiliar equipment. If you feel that you will be unable to safely undertake the physical activity required in this course please contact the instructor during classtime in your first week of class. Every student is required to participate in the daily cleaning of the studio facility including equipment, floors, counters and tabletops. Lockers are available but you must provide a lock and remove all artwork and personal items from the studio at the term's end.