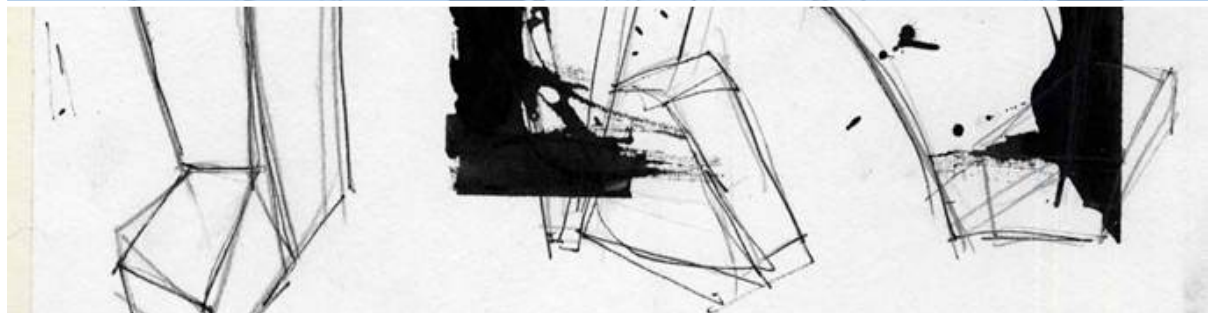


# Basic Ceramic Skills



An ALTO Open Course Book



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### **About this ALTO Open Course Book**

We have devised the Open Course Book format to represent and share our course learning resources. We have taken the open textbook format<sup>1</sup> as a starting point (for the same reasons it is used in the USA, Africa and elsewhere) – simplicity and effectiveness and adapted it to allow us to easily publish our course content as OpenCourseWare, as pioneered by MIT and others<sup>2</sup>. Unlike MIT, we do not have access to sophisticated web publishing platforms<sup>3</sup>. In order to meet our needs, we have created this hybrid format that mixes an open textbook with OpenCourseWare, we call this an ‘Open Course Book’. Our aim is to keep things as simple as possible.

### **Using this ALTO Open Course Textbook**

This ALTO open course book is intended to provide useful learning resources to independent learners and also to teachers of the subject. It gives an overview of the course and its structure as well as available learning resource content files, it is also presents an insight into how the subject is taught as well as the learning activities and processes that the students are involved in.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_textbook](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_textbook)

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_Courseware\\_Consortium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Courseware_Consortium)

<sup>3</sup> <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm>

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## ***Basic Ceramic Skills***

*Date: 2 July 2012*

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### **Course Description**



The Basic Ceramics Skills Course is designed to provide an introduction to the main techniques and processes that are commonly used by ceramic practitioners. The activities will enable students to form a base of skills and understanding which is fundamental to their future personal development.

The course will cover the hand building techniques of slab building and coil building; throwing on the potter's wheel and mould-making and casting.

Students will produce a series of simple forms in clay that will enable them to gain or improve their skills and their knowledge of techniques and of the working properties of clay.

This is an adaptation of an existing course that has been modified to focus on the practical aspects of constructing forms in clay. It is an eight-week course from which existing written requirements and oral presentations have been removed, in order that students can work on basic fundamentals in an intensive way.

It should also be mentioned that the course reflects the local nature of ceramic practice, i.e. the methods or particular details presented here are not the only way to approach the construction of form.

This Open CourseBook represents, in generic form, a typical Basic Ceramics Skills course. It is not intended to be an exact replica of any particular course nor should it be construed as such.

# Syllabus

## Basic Concepts, Knowledge, Skills and Ideas Covered in this Course

Preparation of clay for use in the studio

Rolling out

Slab building, including cutting and joining

Coil building, including the forming of coils and joining

Wheel throwing of a simple cylindrical form; turning/shaping of the pot base on the wheel

Making a two-piece plaster mould of a simple form

Slip-casting of the form to produce multiples of the object

Preparatory research and design/maquettes

## Course Learning Activities

Students will be given demonstrations of each of the ceramic activities contained in the course. Students will then be given the opportunity to work in turn with each method demonstrated. Their aim is improve their skills and gain an increasing understanding of the behaviour of clay under various circumstances. Practical work in the studio is to be supported by visual and technical research. Contact with clay and repetition of the tasks is to be maximized as far as possible during each week of the course. It is useful to understand the iterative nature of the learning process - the more opportunities that students have to work repeatedly on a technique, the better the results.

## Prerequisites

- Students would normally have completed a Visual Studies course first. This will have reinforced their understanding of visual fundamentals (e.g. drawing, colour, surface, simple 3D construction etc.) and would have seen them employing sketchbooks for research, exploration and idea development. Such a course would ideally form the introductory element of a degree course, being a very useful means of bringing together a presumably diverse cohort of individuals into a common understanding of the language and learning behaviours, which underpin the entire degree course.
- Some previous experience of working with clay is desirable.

## Teaching Aims

- Familiarize students with the substance of clay and its characteristics under a variety of circumstances
- Engage students in the making of simple ceramic forms through the use of different construction techniques
- Develop in students a sense of shape and proportion
- Develop in students an understanding of the application of visual and technical research to the accomplishment of practical tasks.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

- **Research:** Show both technical and selective visual research into simple ceramic production methods
- **Experimentation:** Employ research to solve problems and to explore and develop ideas
- **Subject Knowledge:** Manipulate ceramic materials in a manner that is sensitive to their nature, in order to carry out the assignment tasks and begin to indicate a personal aesthetic
- **Technical Competence:** Demonstrate basic skills in the construction of ceramic work

## Assessment Criteria

- **Research** Systematic identification and investigation of a range of academic and cultural sources
- **Experimentation:** Problem solving, risk taking, experimentation and testing of ideas and materials in the realisation of concepts
- **Subject Knowledge** Demonstrate an understanding and application of subject knowledge and underlying principles
- **Technical Competence** Skills to enable the execution of ideas appropriate to the medium

## Assessment Methods

**Research (Sketchbook):** An appraisal of the appropriateness, quality and range of visual research. This research will usually comprise of work by professional ceramicists and will provide good examples of the techniques being explored in the practical assignment tasks. Historical references may also be included. Assessors may also wish to comment on indicators of the student's emerging visual interests as made manifest in their selections. Appraisal of technical research should ensure that all construction methods are represented (coil building; slab building; wheel throwing; mould making; slip casting) and be presented with clarity and economy.

**Experimentation (Sketchbook, ceramics etc):** Assessors are seeking to establish the effectiveness of the relationship between the student's research and its use in problem-solving. This may include the use of drawing, collage, maquette-making, test pieces, samples etc.

**Subject Knowledge (Ceramic making etc):** An assessment of the extent to which the work has been produced with sensitivity to the nature of the materials used and with due regard to aesthetic considerations. Includes design development and ceramic work.

**Technical Competence (Ceramic making):** An assessment of the level of technical proficiency demonstrated in the production of the work.

## Course Requirements

- Work to a brief
- Carry out visual and technical research, to be kept in a sketchbook
- Develop simple design ideas for the production of ceramic artifacts
- Produce ceramic work in response to the project brief and research:
  - Slab building
  - Coil building
  - Throwing
  - Mould-making and casting





## Timetable, Activities and Resources

Week	Activities	Resources
1	<p><b>Induction:</b> Course meeting and overview. Assessment rules. Tour of facilities, Health and Safety training. Workshop Equipment demonstrations. Purchase / Supply personal tools and equipment.</p> <p><b>Tutorial:</b> meet personal tutor</p> <p><b>Seminar:</b> Describe and discuss personal targets and relate them to the course learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>Online Workshop:</b> Introduction to the VLE and online learning in the course</p> <p><b>Project 1 Brief:</b> Introduction. Research activities begin: visual and technical elements. Development of simple design ideas based on research</p> <p><b>Workshop:</b> Examine previous students work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Workshop/Studio floor plan</b> (Folder: 'Workshop Floor Plan'. See 'Ceramics studio', 'Kiln room' and 'Ceramics studio typical usage')</li> <li>• <b>Health and Safety Notes</b> (Health and Safety.doc)</li> <li>• <b>Project 1 Brief</b> (project1brief.docx)</li> <li>• <b>Previous student work.</b> (Folder: Previous Student Work))</li> <li>• <b>Have link to sketchbook videos here)</b></li> </ul>

2	<p><b>Demonstration:</b> ALTO UK technical architecture</p> <p><b>Demonstration:</b> preparing clay; basic slab building and joining methods</p> <p><b>Seminar:</b> Discuss 'Pottery Basics' by Jaqui Atkin</p> <p><b>Project 1/Slab building:</b> practical clay work activities begin. Clay preparation followed by slab building. Forms made in response to sketchbook design ideas/maquettes</p> <p><b>Seminar:</b> Discuss 'Slab Techniques' by Ian Marsh &amp; Jim Robison</p>	<p><b>Video demonstration:</b></p> <p><b>Clay preparation</b> How to knead and wedge clay <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAOPlz3Bkgs&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAOPlz3Bkgs&amp;feature=related</a></p> <p><b>Rolling out a clay slab</b> How to roll out a slab <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12Q2z61azPg">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12Q2z61azPg</a></p> <p><b>Basic slab building pt 1</b> How to make the walls of a rectangular form <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-dldKI-exl&amp;feature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-dldKI-exl&amp;feature=relmfu</a></p> <p><b>Basic slab building pt 2</b> How to join the walls of a rectangular form <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbcSDK0dVuU&amp;feature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbcSDK0dVuU&amp;feature=relmfu</a></p> <p><b>Basic slab building pt 3</b> How to add a base (or top) to a rectangular form <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&amp;v=gkuXqVB53D0&amp;NR=1">http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&amp;v=gkuXqVB53D0&amp;NR=1</a></p> <p><b>Publication:</b> <a href="http://www.acblack.co.uk/visualarts/Pottery-Basics/Jacqui-Atkin/books/details/9780713673388">http://www.acblack.co.uk/visualarts/Pottery-Basics/Jacqui-Atkin/books/details/9780713673388</a></p> <p><b>Publication:</b> <a href="http://www.acblack.co.uk/visualarts/Slab-Techniques/Jim-Robison-Ian-Marsh/books/details/9781408110072">http://www.acblack.co.uk/visualarts/Slab-Techniques/Jim-Robison-Ian-Marsh/books/details/9781408110072</a></p>
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3	<p><b>Demonstration:</b> preparing clay; basic coil building and joining methods</p> <p><b>Project 1/Coil building:</b> practical clay work activities continue. Coil building. Forms made in response to sketchbook design ideas</p> <p><b>Seminar:</b> Discuss 'Coiling' by Michael Hardy</p>	<p><b>Video demonstration:</b></p> <p><b>Basic coil building:</b></p> <p><b>Making coils</b> Rolling clay by hand to form coils <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLLB-Kh_XQA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLLB-Kh_XQA</a></p> <p><b>Making a base</b> A quick way to make a base for a coil pot (first 30 seconds of the video). <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T4bsH8XQv4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T4bsH8XQv4</a></p> <p><b>Coil building the walls</b> Raising the walls <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cPuxbqYNIY&amp;feature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cPuxbqYNIY&amp;feature=relmfu</a></p> <p><b>Use of a card template as a guide</b> Use of a card template as a guide. Stop-motion video. <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50T62CD3KdE&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50T62CD3KdE&amp;feature=related</a></p> <p><b>Publication:</b> <a href="http://www.amazon.co.uk/Coiling-Ceramics-Handbooks-Michael-Hardy/dp/0713668903/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&amp;ie=UTF8&amp;qid=1342089707&amp;sr=1-1">http://www.amazon.co.uk/Coiling-Ceramics-Handbooks-Michael-Hardy/dp/0713668903/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&amp;ie=UTF8&amp;qid=1342089707&amp;sr=1-1</a></p>
4	<p><b>Project 1/Coil building:</b> practical clay work activities continue. Coil building. Forms made in response to sketchbook design ideas</p> <p><b>Formative feedback:</b> Guidance for each student summarizing situation so far and indicating actions required to successfully complete the course.</p>	<p><b>Formative feedback sheet:</b> (Feedback blank.pdf)</p>

5	<p><b>Demonstration:</b> preparing clay; basic throwing on the potter's wheel</p> <p><b>Project 1/Throwing:</b> practical clay work activities continue. Wheel throwing. Simple cylindrical forms.</p> <p><b>Seminar:</b> Discuss 'Throwing' by Phil Rogers</p>	<p><b>Video demonstration:</b></p> <p><b>Basic throwing:</b> An excellent video that shows the basics of throwing on the wheel. <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU-VE1wnRGw&amp;feature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU-VE1wnRGw&amp;feature=relmfu</a></p> <p><b>Centering:</b> How to tap center a pot for trimming <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08dtfjqkfQI">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08dtfjqkfQI</a></p> <p><b>Trimming:</b> Finishing a pot before firing <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6MzIJ89pKE">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6MzIJ89pKE</a></p> <p><b>Publication:</b> <a href="http://www.amazon.co.uk/Throwing-Pots-Pb-Ceramics-Handbooks/dp/0812217578/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&amp;ie=UTF8&amp;qid=1342090087&amp;sr=1-1">http://www.amazon.co.uk/Throwing-Pots-Pb-Ceramics-Handbooks/dp/0812217578/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&amp;ie=UTF8&amp;qid=1342090087&amp;sr=1-1</a></p>
6	<p><b>Project 1/Throwing:</b> practical clay work activities continue. Wheel throwing. Simple cylindrical forms.</p>	
7	<p><b>Demonstration:</b> Mould-making and casting</p> <p><b>Project 1/Mould making &amp; casting:</b> Mould-making and casting of simple form</p> <p><b>Seminar:</b> Discuss 'Slipcasting' by Sasha Wardell</p>	<p><b>Text:</b></p> <p><b>Mixing plaster and mould-making:</b> <a href="http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/faculty/budgett/classes/art12/mold_making.pdf">http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/faculty/budgett/classes/art12/mold_making.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Video demonstration:</b></p> <p><b>Casting:</b> Slipcasting on an industrial scale, but gives a good overview of the process: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1YCRs6QtEY&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1YCRs6QtEY&amp;feature=related</a> Slipcasting from a one-piece mould: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-mdLkOg4ss&amp;list=UUbyjzowofwGxnmDJYCCR8_g&amp;index=3&amp;feature=plcp">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-mdLkOg4ss&amp;list=UUbyjzowofwGxnmDJYCCR8_g&amp;index=3&amp;feature=plcp</a> Slipcasting from a two-piece mould: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zgXyXXQcL8&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zgXyXXQcL8&amp;feature=related</a></p> <p><b>Publication:</b> <a href="http://www.acblack.co.uk/visualarts/Slipcasting/Sasha-Wardell/books/details/9780713676723">http://www.acblack.co.uk/visualarts/Slipcasting/Sasha-Wardell/books/details/9780713676723</a></p>

8	<p><b>Project 1/Mould making &amp; casting:</b> Mould-making and casting of simple form</p> <p><b>Final week.</b> Activities conclude</p>	
9	<p><b>Work submitted for Summative assessment.</b></p> <p><b>Summative assessment.</b></p>	<p><b>Summative Assessment:</b> (Assessment Resources.pdf). To take place within an identified time-scale, including feedback to students.</p>

## General Learning Resources

Students are strongly advised to see first-hand as much work from the broad spectrum of art & design as they possibly can. This will include visits to museums, galleries, studios, sculpture parks, theatres, cinemas and so forth. Clearly, this overview will assist learners to contextualize the place of art & design culturally and historically, and underscore its profound importance to human endeavor. Similarly, visits should be made to venues of specialist ceramic interest so that students begin to appreciate the history and context in which their specialism operates.

## Readings and References

Publisher	Title	Author
A&C Black	Pottery Basics	Jaqui Atkin
A&C Black	Slab Techniques	Jim Robinson & Ian Marsh
A&C Black	Coiling	Michael Hardy
A&C Black	Throwing Pots	Phil Rogers
A&C Black	Slipcasting	Sasha Wardell

## Related Resources

Grayson Perry studio visit [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Yboc75WuFE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Yboc75WuFE)  
Kate Malone making coil pots [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jrbz\\_S1hq9c&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jrbz_S1hq9c&feature=related)  
Throwing a 5ft tall pot <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bt2N1mNDEPQ&feature=related>  
Academic ceramics journal [http://www.interpretingceramics.com/contents\\_current.htm](http://www.interpretingceramics.com/contents_current.htm)  
Ceramics at the V&A <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/ceramics/>  
International ceramics forum <http://www.ceramicstoday.com/>

## Equipment

Access to a ceramics studio equipped with sturdy benches, kilns, and throwing wheels.  
Storage/drying space

## Materials

General equipment useful to all art students: see General Equipment List.docx  
Ceramic equipment useful to ceramics students: see Personal Equipment List.docx

## **Health and Safety Guidance**

Good Practice should be followed – please refer to your local facility provider for guidance on this. A basic guide is given in ([Health and Safety.doc](#))

## **Assessment Resources**

For Assessment Criteria and Summative feedback: [Assessment Resources.pdf](#)

For Formative feedback: [Formative feedback blank.docx](#)