ANG 6122C Archaeological Ceramics

Spring 2018
Section 2A66
Thursday 10:40-1:40 PM (Periods 4-6)
Turlington B357

Instructor: Kenneth E. Sassaman
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REQUIRED TEXT


Additional readings as specified below

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sherds of pottery are among the most common objects recovered from archaeological sites worldwide. Among societies that made and used pottery, sherds are ubiquitous partly because they are durable relative to organic media like baskets and cloth, but also because the vessels from which sherds were derived met a variety of needs, including cooking, storing, and serving both solid and liquid-based foods. The remains of pottery technology is also a means by which archaeologists make inferences about subsistence, chronology, economic organization, social identity, kinship, exchange, ritual, migration, and more.

Archaeological Ceramics is a graduate-level practicum in the analysis of pottery in traditional, nonwestern societies. The title for this course is a bit of a misnomer because pottery among most “traditional” societies was actually earthenware or subceramics; true ceramics require kiln firing, which was innovated under the conditions of mass production in early state-level societies. In this course we review a variety of analytical approaches to pottery, but the emphasis is on technological and functional approaches. Structuring the course is a “life cycle” perspective that begins with the selection of clay and temper and follows the manufacture, use, discard, and recycling trajectories of alternative vessel technologies. Our inferential bases about the decisions and behaviors involving pottery come primarily from ethnoarchaeological and experimental research. We pay particular attention to the mechanical performance of alternative ceramic pastes, design specifications, and vessel forms. We also delve into the behavioral insights of use alteration and assemblage formation processes.

FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

The ultimate goal of this course is to familiarize you with pottery analysis so that you can conduct independent research on technofunctional variation in archaeological ceramics. To this end, you are required to either have an assemblage of pot sherds for analysis, or to review a body of extracurricular literature on technofunctional variation in pottery. In bridging ethnoarchaeological and experiment findings to archaeological ceramics we employ a vessel unit of analysis. After determining the minimum number of vessels, you will gather data on variables such as temper, wall thickness, vessel profile, orifice diameter, use alteration, and breakage patterns. The actual data you collect are determined by the question(s) you pose. Our readings from the text and supplemental articles will provide inspiration for the sorts of questions you might address, as well as the inferential basis for linking the mute sherds in your assemblage to human decisions and actions. The result of your effort is an original research paper of publishable quality, roughly 20-25 double-spaced pages long. Throughout the semester we will review guidelines for researching and writing your paper.
We meet every Thursday from 10:40 am to 1:40 pm. Except for our last class, I will present material, through lecture and demonstration, at each of these meetings. The first few weeks will be full presentations; thereafter we split our time among lectures, laboratory demonstrations, discussion, and an occasional video. You must be prepared to discuss all assigned readings for each class. Five lab exercises provide explicit insight on quantifying and characterizing archaeological pottery. Three quizzes gauge your uptake of lab exercises, readings, and lectures.

I assess your performance in this course on grades from the three lab quizzes (10 percent each or 30 percent total), your research paper (60 percent), and class participation, including a 15-minute presentation to the class on your research project (10 percent).

COURSE OUTLINE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11</td>
<td>Prospectus</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 18</td>
<td>Origins and History of Pottery</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chap. 1; Rice 1999; Brown 1989; Garraty 2011</td>
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<td>Jan. 25</td>
<td>Pots to Sherds to Pots</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chaps. 11-12; Braun 1983; Crown 2007</td>
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<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>Life Cycle Perspective</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chap. 15; Arthur 2009; DeBoer and Lathrap 1979; Sullivan 2008; Skibo 2013, Chap. 1</td>
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<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td>Clay Selection and Preparation</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Part 2 (skim Chaps. 2-3, 5-6); Gosselain 1994; Stark et al. 2000</td>
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<td>Feb. 15</td>
<td>Temper</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chap. 4; Rye 1976; Schiffer and Skibo 1987; Skibo et al. 1989; Bronitsky and Hamer 1986</td>
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<td>Feb. 22</td>
<td>Forming (and Classifying) Vessels</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chap. 8, 13; Arnold 1985, Chap. 8; Blitz 2015</td>
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<td>Mar. 1</td>
<td>Finishing and Firing</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chaps. 9-10; Gosselain 1992; Schiffer et al. 1994; Pierce 2005;</td>
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<td>Mar. 8</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Mar. 15</td>
<td>Form and Function</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chaps. 18-19, 25; Linton 1944; Skibo 2013, Chap. 2; Frink and Harry 2008; Reid 1989; Hally 1986</td>
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<td>Mar. 22</td>
<td>Use Alteration</td>
<td>Skibo 2013, Chaps. 3-4; Arthur 2002; Hally 1983</td>
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<td>Apr. 5</td>
<td>Breaking, Discarding, Recycling</td>
<td>Stanislawski 1978, 1987; Deal 1985; Deal and Hagstrum 1995; Senior 1995</td>
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<td>Apr. 12</td>
<td>Production, Specialization, Society</td>
<td>Rice 2015, Chaps. 21-22, 24; Sassaman and Rudolph 2001; Bowser 2000; Crown 2016; Mills et al. 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 19</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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ADDITIONAL READINGS

Arnold, Dean E.
1985  
Ceramic Theory and Cultural Process. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. (Chap. 8 only)

Arthur, John W.
2002  

2009  

Blitz, John H.
2015  

Bowser, Brenda J.
2000  

Braun, David P.
1983  

Bronitsky, Gordon, and R. Hamer
1986  

Brown, James A.
1989  

Crown, Patricia L.
2007  

2016  

Deal, Michael
1985  

Deal, Michael, and Melissa B. Hagstrum
1995  

DeBoer, Warren R., and Donald Lathrap
1979  

Frink, Lisa and Karen G. Harry
2008  
Garraty, Christopher P.  

Gosselain, Olivier P.  


Hally, David J.  


Linton, Ralph  


Pierce, Christopher  

Reid, Kenneth C.  

Rice, Prudence M.  

Rye, O. S.  

Sassaman, Kenneth E., and Wictoria Rudolphi  

Schiffer, Michael B., and James M. Skibo  

Schiffer, Michael Brian, James M. Skibo, Tamara C. Boelke, Mark A. Neupert, and Meredith Aronson

Senior, Louise M.

Skibo, James M.

Skibo, James M., Michael B. Schiffer, and Kenneth C. Reid

Stanislawski, Michael B.


Stark, Miriam T., Ronald L. Bishop., and Elizabeth Miksa

Stoltman, James B., Joyce Marcus, Kent V. Flannery, James H. Burton, and Robert G. Moyle

Sullivan, Alan P.

Wallis, Neill J., T. Pluckhahn, and M. Glascock