

ARTS 597 (Section 01T): Figurative Sculpture

Brian Weaver
Art Studio Technician / Adjunct Faculty
Office: Art 117
Email: brian.weaver@tamuc.edu
Office Hours: By appointment only

Texas A&M University - Commerce
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Phone: 903-886-5208
Wathena Temple Ceramics Lab
Wednesday – Thursday, 5:00pm-8:00pm

COURSE SYLLABUS

GRADUATE CLASS HOURS: Because of the nature that is a graduate students schedule, this course may meet outside of regular specified class hours listed above. This must be arranged with the instructor prior to the start of the Summer I semester. If no time slots work, then the graduate student(s) must follow the course specified time. This flexibility for graduate students will allow for their daily activities in the professional world. Graduate students are still required to meet with the instructor each week to meet the university policy for attendance and instruction.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is a perceptually based introduction to figure sculpture using fired clay as the medium. The class will include a study the human body and options for its representation in three dimensions. An orientation to building, surfacing, and firing ceramics and processes of hand-forming clay including: pinching, coil-building, slab building, modeling, and carving will be introduced. The class format will include slide and video presentations, two life model sequences, demonstrations, critiques, and team firings. The course includes three themes, each differing in focus: the “perceptual”, the “gestural”, and the “interpretive” style. Group “lab work;” loading, firing, and unloading class kiln firings is integrated into the structure of the course.

GRADUATE COURSE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Graduate students will be expected to engage in the creative production of ceramic objects that demonstrate an advanced level of knowledge of ceramics as a fine art medium and an advanced ability to render ideas through forms that are sophisticated in technique, design and concepts.

An artist statement must accompany each individual body of work. The artist statement must address both the theory and practice. The first part of the statement will establish the conceptual framework for the work and contextualize the work in both historic and contemporary art practice. The second part of the statement will address how you have engaged in the creative process to create the work, your intention in how the meaning is encoded in the work, and how you expect the viewer to approach and access the work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Demonstrate increased ability, knowledge and awareness in the following areas:

- The acquisition of technical knowledge and the development of excellent craftsmanship
- The conceptual understanding of how objects “contain” or “embody” meaning
- The understanding of both historic and contemporary ceramic context and the issues that pertain specifically to ceramics as an art form
- The knowledge of art in general and especially contemporary art
- The definition and development of a personal direction
- The development of a solid, sustained work ethic and time-management skills
- The ability to benefit from the critiques of one’s own work and the work of others
- The ability to explore an idea in breadth and depth through a cohesive body of work
- The ability to write about one’s work in an articulate and insightful way

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Tardiness, leaving early and absences will result in grade reduction: Three late

arrivals will equal one absence. After the third absence, the final course grade will be lowered one full letter grade. After the fifth absence, the final course grade will be lowered two full letter grades. Seven or more absences will earn a failing course grade. If you are not **present and prepared** for class or critique you will be counted as absent for the day. Students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Students who do not attend at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which they are registered, and who have not contacted the department to indicate their intent, may be dropped from the course. The university recognizes the right of the individual professor to make attendance mandatory. After due warning, professors may prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class session, and is central to success in this course. Demonstrations, lectures, critiques, and discussions will be scheduled for many class periods. Also, the ceramics process is one that cannot be rushed or neglected without consequences. Success in working with clay is skill based on and can be mastered through regular practice. Students who are absent due to illness should contact me and/or leave a message on my voice mail.

GRADING FORMAT:

A = 100 – 90: Excellent work, work meets the requirements and goes above and beyond expectations.
B = 89 – 80: Work meets all requirements to a high degree, and is presented in a meaningful fashion.
C = 79 – 70: Work is average, meets all requirements minimally, presentation is “satisfactory.”
D = 69 – 60: Work is below average, concepts are missing or not fulfilled, presentation lacks quality.
F = 59 – 50: “F” Work receives a failing grade, unacceptable and insufficient work.

GRADING: Your grade will result from an evaluation of the following criteria: project grades, a cumulative glazing grade, participation in team firings, and participation in group critiques. Each project will be graded for technical execution, aesthetics, expression/concept, and degree of difficulty. Attendance will be considered into your grade; after three absences results in a letter grade drop. Ceramic work is fragile. Studio accidents or kiln issues may cause work to break. While all due care will be exercised, I must have finished work to assign a grade for a project. Work that blows up or is broken before completion will require re-making for grading. If your work is destroyed in progress, please show this to me and we will discuss what must be done to achieve a finished project for grading. In the case of involved projects where the loss is not the student’s fault, abridged project parameters may be negotiated and due dates adjusted.

At the midpoint of the Summer I and Summer II course, graduate students will be expected to present an artist statement that cohesively states their artworks intentions while relating to ceramics theory, criticism and practice. A final statement will also be required at the end of the course session in addition to all artist statements that accompany each piece created. The final statement should intellectually reflect in a cohesive manner their approach to the art making practice.

Academic Honesty: Cheating and illegal use of copyrighted material is not tolerated.

LATE WORK: All projects, reading responses, and research projects must be completed on time for full credit. Specific due dates are stated on each project sheet and are announced in class. Failure to complete any project on time will result in a drop of one full letter grade, and failure to complete any other assignment, such as response papers, in-class exercises, or other class work, on time will result in a drop of ½ letter grade for each day it is late. If the time line states that a project is due at the beginning of class, turning it in at the end or after class is considered late. You must have work finished and installed before the start of class on critique days or your work will not be critiqued and your project grade will be lowered. It is the student’s responsibility to turn in all work on time. The ceramic process requires that green ware be completely fabricated and detailed, then dried for several days, depending upon scale and complexity. Please finish building all wet work on time for green ware due dates and

manage the careful drying of your work so that you can meet all deadlines. Clay requires your regular attention to achieve good results. It cannot be rushed or neglected. Full participation by showing completed work during all critiques is required along with active participation through shared ideas and commentary.

EVALUATION: In addition to specific criteria defined by individual project goals, all projects will be graded on their success in the following areas: concept development, use of design decisions to support your concepts, craftsmanship, and meeting deadlines for building, firing and critique. As previously mentioned, a sketchbook is required for recording notes and ideas and the work must be finished within the specified deadlines.

Concept / Idea: This pertains to the ability to discover and define design problems and issues in a clear and consistent language.

Solution: This pertains to the quality of your Visual and Conceptual Solution. Factors such as composition, inventiveness, originality, layout and **craft will be considered in grading.**

Class work: You are required to keep all information related to this class in your sketchbook and should photocopy the pages to create a presentation for the process of each project. Quantity (yes, sometimes over quality) and innovation are important factors. The more you do, the better your design will be.

Craft: I will not accept work that does not meet the required presentation standards (which are listed on each individual project sheet). Also important in considering project grades: Failure to meet deadlines will result in a zero. For situations that are called to my attention in advance, something can be arranged. You should always plan ahead.

Grades will also be influenced by the following criteria: evolution from proposal to finished work, aesthetic concerns, and adherence to assignments, craftsmanship, skills development, conceptual rigor, experimentation, inventiveness, risk-taking, personal investment, and critical discussions.

Reading and Reference Materials: *Portrait Sculpting: Anatomy and Expressions in Clay* Authors Philippe and Charisse Faraut, PCF Studios, Inc. 2004, ISBN: 0-9755065-0-1.

Anatomy for the Artist, Author Sarah Simbley, published by DK Publishing. This is an excellent anatomy book, which will be very helpful to you and is recommended for the class.

Modeling the Figure in Clay, author Bruno Luchessi.

The Craft and Art of Clay author Susan Peterson and *Hands in Clay*, author Charlotte Speight (are excellent texts for information for building and glaze techniques). *Ceramic Figures: A Directory of Artists* by Michael Flynn (Rutgers Press) is an excellent overview of international contemporary ceramic sculptors who work with the human figure.

MATERIALS: The materials and tools you will use during the course of the semester will vary from project to project. Required materials and tools will be discussed at the beginning of each project phase and will be kept to a minimum. Project-specific materials and costs will largely be left up to students to determine and manage. There are many available and cost-effective resources online and at the campus bookstore, which will be discussed in class. These items will not only prepare you for this course, but are designed to be functional beyond it.

Supplies: Bound sketchbook, small bucket, cut off wire, needle tool, metal rib, clay shapers Michael Sherrill Ribs *red (Highwater Clay), wax modeling tools ss153 (Sculpture House), metal serrated rib, trimming tool, small sponge, clean up sponge, plastic (to cover work in progress for controlled drying), rolling pin (optional), turntable/lazy susan (metal at Home Depot or Lowes), Kemper Mini Ribbon Sculpting Tools/Set, three wooden sculpting tools (JA 15, JA 18, JA 24 shown in class), scalpel, patching spatula, calipers (optional), ruler, blow dryer, small lidded container for slip, paint brushes, make-up sponges, a lock for your locker.

Safety: Please wear shoes and proper attire, tie back hair and loose clothing when working around shop equipment. Wear a respirator if mixing clay, or glaze materials. A proper respirator is required when spraying glazes.

Lockers: Lockers must be cleaned out and locks removed by the end of finals or the contents will be considered abandoned. However, if you are returning please note this on the locker door and your belongings will not be disturbed.

Studio Courtesy: Please leave the studio clean. Regardless of the condition you find it in, we request that you leave it clean for the next person. Remember to place all work in progress on the storage shelves. Leave the work tables clear and clean. **This is a shared studio and we all need to work together to keep it a clean and productive environment.**

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this document to the instructor. The instructor will make appropriate accommodations for any student with a disability. Please speak with the instructor about any concerns.

OTHER GUIDELINES: The instructor, the Art Department and specifically the Ceramics Department are not responsible for student work left in workspaces, installation spaces, the critique space, the shops, or the classrooms. Projects/materials are not to be stored in the group working space. Each student is responsible for ensuring that his/her projects and materials are safely stored, displayed, installed, and removed from the classroom and critique space. Projects must be set up and removed from the critique space at the times and spaces designated for each project.

Students must check their school email accounts regularly. Students are responsible for any information, deadlines, and updates emailed to their webmail accounts.

Students should check with the instructor or another student outside of class time when they miss a class (prior to missing the class if possible), as in- and out-of-class exercises are spontaneously assigned. Students should bring a doctor's note for any class from which they expect to be excused.

Please address any concerns, problems, and questions regarding this class to the instructor as they arise. Outside class, the instructor is available by appointment, or through email. Students can expect a response to email within 24 hours.

Always be open-minded when considering new ideas and constructive criticism. Critique ideas; not people. No side conversations during presentations or critiques.

Do not use cell phones, music devices or headphones during class time. No text messaging. Also please turn cell phones off or ringers off during class time, **before you arrive to class.**

Disruptive Behavior: Be advised that you can and will be dismissed from class if you engage in disruptive behavior. Students who intentionally act to impair, interfere with, or obstruct the mission, purposes, order, operations, processes, and functions of the University shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action by University authorities for misconduct, as set forth in the applicable rules of the Board of Regents and the University and state law governing such actions.

Philosophy: Texas A&M University -Commerce is an institution which encourages the intellectual and personal growth of its students as scholars and citizens. As an educational institution, the University recognizes that the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, and the development of individuals requires the free exchange of ideas, self-expression, and the challenging of beliefs and customs. In order to maintain an environment where these goals can be achieved safely and equitably, the University promotes civility, respect and integrity among all members of the community. As stated in

the Standard of Ethical Conduct, students are expected to exhibit high standards of behavior and concern for others.

Course Structure (Methods of Instruction): This class meets twice a week for a period of 3 hours each session. It encompasses brief lectures, projects, group discussion / critique, reading / writing exercises, and group presentation(s). Participation is required and is imperative to your final grade.

PROJECT 1: THE PERCEPTUAL

This project focuses on the direct study of the human figure using a personalized plaster cast.

Personalized Body Cast of Hand(s):

In this project, you will sculpt from life using a plaster cast of your body and will double the size (at minimum) of the original casting and replicate it in clay. Each student will create a life-cast or his/her hand(s). Consider the pose and gesture of the hand. If you are doing two hands or both feet please pose them together to be cast as one compositional unit. The body casting will be done with alginate. The alginate mold will be cast in #1 molding plaster to create the plaster model. The alginate mold is a non-permanent mold that is cut away when the plaster model cures. The result will be a personalized plaster cast.

When the life casting is completed you are to sculpt a life-scale maquette (sketch in clay) to practice modeling and fine-tune your perceptual skills. Look for relative proportions, composition in the round, effects on volumes in the round. With this study model complete you will move to the large sculpture. The final sculpture will be modeled solid and then hollowed at the leather-hard state. This is a traditional technique for life modeling used to create many of the terra cotta sculptures in the Renaissance. The technique of working solid allows the use of both additive and subtractive methods of sculpting. Detail will be developed as the sculpture becomes leather hard. After detail is completed, the sculpture will be sectioned to hollow it before firing. Terra sigillata will be applied to the sculpture at the bone-dry state. The piece will be bisque-fired and glaze patinas will be rubbed into the surface after which the sculpture will be glaze-fired.

Size:

14"-16" or 2 times life scale. Scaling the larger sculpture accurately will be discussed in class

Materials:

Some special materials are required for this project: alginate (a non-permanent and gelatin-like casting material often used in Dental Offices), plastic container of appropriate size to be used as a rigid holder for the alginate, and #1 molding plaster. The #1 molding plaster will be provided.

Goals:

This project will be evaluated for accuracy in representing the dimensional relationships present in the original plaster model, proportions, depth, and transitions. The realism, articulation of form, detailing and anatomical structure will be evaluated.

Dates:

June 10th – 11th

Bring tools, a container for making mold of body part, and alginate to class.

June 11th

Small life-size maquette is due. We will start our large-scale hands.

June 17th

Body part studies are due wet. We'll take a quick look at them as a class.

July 25rd

Critique

PROJECT 2: THE SKULL

Exercise 1: Human Skull Study

You will begin your sculpting experience by reading and studying the illustrations for the technique used by Philippe Faraut to sculpt the human skull and muscle structure of the human head. A supplementary video showing this process will be shown in class. This objective of this study is to learn the human anatomy so that you fully understand what creates the structure of the human head and neck and why we move as we do. In this study you will be using the Faraut technique of solid modeling the skull. Skulls will be modeled at life size.

Building Method:

Slab construction over plastic and filler.

Size:

Full scale

Dates

June 18th

Skull demonstration and begin construction

July 2nd

Last day of skull and female model detail

July 16th

Critique skull and female model

PROJECT 3: FIGURE IN CLAY: FEMALE

A female model will pose for class as the subject of your sculpture. The modeling sessions will be scheduled during 3 class periods for one week only.

The female figure will be in a reclining pose to limit considerations of gravity.

Building Method:

Modeled solid and hollowed.

Size:

The size limitation on the figure is 24" across.

Resources:

A video showing the sculpting process of contemporary Italian sculptor Bruno Luchessi will be shown to offer a demonstration of tools and methods. Review the illustrated books by Luchessi: modeling the figure and the terra cotta portrait.

Materials:

Please find or purchase a flat board 1/2" or 5/8" in thickness to be used for a surface to build on. Thinner boards will warp. It is suggested that the board is sealed with Thompson's Water Seal and/or covered with canvas (either will keep the board flat). A turntable or lazy susan is required. You also might find wood carving tools interesting to experiment with at this time (reference the Lucchesi video).

Surfacing:

You can use terra sig and patinas or underglazes and stain with an overglaze or glaze.

Criterion for grading:

Anatomical accuracy, proportion, and gesture will be evaluated and discussed as you work.

Dates	July 9th First day of female model
	July 23th Last day of female model
	July 30th Critique female model

PROJECT 4: SELF

SLAB-BUILT SELF PORTRAIT PROJECT:

These Portrait sculptures are to be modeled nearly life-size in scale. This project will be evaluated for likeness, proportions, sculptural depth and mass conveyed, and smoothness within volumetric transitions. You will be asked to provide photos of your head in the round and a mirror. Photos should include a shot of each profile, $\frac{3}{4}$, front, back and top views of your head. Put all photos on a reference board to bring to class. These will be your perceptual resources for the project.

A demonstration of how to build using stacked slabs and building solid will be shown in class. You will be working on an armature and bending the clay in and out by pinching the walls. The two previous exercises will lead you to understand structure. This project will help develop perceptual skills.

The sculpture will be surfaced by underglaze or staining and covered with a shop glaze. Test tiles are available for view in the glaze lab. Metallic or stone glaze suggested also. A glaze demonstration will be done in class.

Dates:

- July 15th**
Begin self-portraits
- July 16th**
Critique: skull
- July 30rd**
Last class workday on self-portraits
- August 5th**
Critique Self-portraits

PROJECT 5: WALL MOUNTED FIGURE

During this final figure project, you will incorporate the vertical wall plane into your construction. The figurative sculpture will have a narrative component and individualized to each person. Group discussion will help push the conceptual frame work. Anatomical articulation and gesture should activate the space. Focus on developing a modeling style and how sculptures are displayed.

Building Method:

Option to work solid, with slabs or pinch.

Size:

The size of this figure will be increased to 20" - 30" H.

Resources:

Slides will be shown in class of ceramic figure sculptors who work within an academy style or with evident anatomical consideration including: Doug Jeck, Ron Meuch, Joseph Chinard, August Rodin and others.

Choose a figurative sculptor (realist) whose aesthetic style captures your interest. The artist can be from any period in Art History or a contemporary figurative sculptor. The sculptor does not have to work exclusively in clay.

Goals:

This assignment requires that you research the style of the sculptor by looking at, at least ten sculptural pieces by the artist. Choose one piece and do a drawing where you note proportions and body type. Analyze it and list the elements of the sculptural style including; massiveness, gesture, articulation (hair, eyes, hands) simplification, posture, draped/nude, facial expression, etc.

Incorporate this "sculptural style" into the life sculpture of the figure. The sculpture may or may not remain anatomically correct and as "realistic" as your skills and perception will permit. The style for modeling, however, might emulate Rodin, loose and flowing, might reflect Donatello's style tight and linear (compare to Ingres in drawing) or like Michelangelo's muscular articulations; massive hard and robust.

Surfacing:

You can use terra sig, patinas, underglazes, stain or any other justifiable material.

Dates

July 22th

Begin individualized wall mount forms

August 5th

Last day to work on wall mount figure and begin installation

August 6th

FIGURE SCULPTING RUBRIC:

	Advanced 10-9 points	Proficient 8-7 points	Basic 6-5 points	Dire 5-0 points
Composition and Aesthetics	The student has created a composition that incorporates several elements and principles; line, shape, space, balance, emphasis, movement, unity, etc. The student displays these as well as purpose for their composition, and general care in its' construction.	The student has created a piece that uses a composition with some of the elements and principles in mind. There is some evidence that the student had a direction with their composition.	There is slight evidence that there were intentions and directions thought out prior to initial work. The student shows components of elements and principles, and little to no care about of craftsmanship.	Elements and principles are not evident in the overall composition, and care/effort is overlooked.
Ability to follow directions	The student listens attentively, patiently, quietly, persistently. Minimal questions that relate to information which is clearly stated and understood by other students.	The student completes all the required work and has legitimate questions. The student raises their hand, and awaits a response. Minimal disruptions to the lesson.	The student shows an attempt and will to learn the new techniques, but is either easily distracted or is the distraction. The student speaks out without regard.	The student was a major disruption, and caused others to be out of sync. The student needed continually "discipline".
In progress and final critique	The student has stated specific factual statements that correlate to their understanding of the assignment. The student will do this during in progress and final critiques.	The student has a general understanding of the project and states some information that pertains to its use, and composition.	The student has little to no idea what and why they made this piece of art work and its' validity to the assigned curriculum.	The student makes no attempt to discuss the finished work in class and during the various critiques.

Respect of project	The student completed the project with intentions to create a piece of artwork that they would exhibit freely, and expect others to commend them on their skills and achievement.	The student completed the project with all directions, and procedures comprehended. The student was reserve in actions, and intentions.	The student had little or no attempt at appropriate behavior, actions, and reactions to instruction and materials. The student showed signs of immaturity.	The student was ill regard with the materials, processes, instructions, and their behavior.
Individual interaction and creativeness	The student shows a serious interest in the process of creating, process of learning new material, and the thought process that is challenged from this new material.	The student successfully completes the assignment, using thought and insight, but does not challenge themselves with the material information, or ideas.	The student has some understanding of the project, but has not rationalized the reasons why it is useful in human growth, and in society.	The student is disturbed with the project, process, and/or purpose for the assignment. The student makes no attempt to understand.

This rubric pertains to all assignments and general studio practices.

Albeit that some projects will have other factors involved including but not limited to; anatomical correctness, precision of measurements, surface treatment, display, deadlines met, written explanations, resemblance, tardiness and absenteeism, etcetera's.

Assignments are worth 100 points each and grades will be lowered if late, unfinished, unprofessional, and disrespectful to others and / or the university, and all of the aforementioned items.