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# TOUCH

**Instructor:** Sylvia Ramachandran Skeen,  
M.F.A.

**Meeting Schedule:** TTH 9:10 AM - 12:05 PM

**Department:** Art & Art History

**Semester:** FALL 2023, First Half

**Office Hours:** Rm. 193, TTH 12:05 - 1:05  
PM or by appointment

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

### Overview

**Course** ART 2208, Section 001

**Department** Art and Art History

**Pre-Requisites** Full Major OR Intermediate OR Minor status in BFA Studio Art OR Full Major status in BFA Graphic Design

**Credit Hours** 2

**Semester** Fall 2023 (First Term)

**Description** This Foundations course, required of all BFA majors in Studio Art, introduces students to fundamental 3-D design through the use of clay. Assignments will explore visual organization using scale, multiples/repetition, pattern, actual and visual texture, and spatial perception. The practical and conceptual aspects of the sense of touch will be explored. Emphasis will also be placed on understanding how materials and process affect the development of visual art.

### Communication

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## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Please remember to:

- Maintain and regularly check your Umail account. For security reasons, the University is now requiring that all student and faculty email correspondence be conducted by Umail rather than by other personal or organizational email accounts.
- Check for announcements whenever you log into Canvas. (Click on Announcements on the menu at left.)
- Ask promptly when you need clarification of a concept, help with an assignment, or have a concern you'd like to discuss with me.

## CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

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The easiest way to contact me directly is to use the *Inbox*, located in the far left Canvas menu. You can also email me directly at [s.ramachandran@utah.edu](mailto:s.ramachandran@utah.edu). I respond to emails Monday through Friday. Please allow up to a day for a response.

Please note that when you post questions as comments on assignment submissions, you may not receive as timely response as you would through email.

## OFFICE HOURS

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You may drop by my office Tuesdays or Thursdays after class (12:05 - 1:05 PM) or make an appointment if those hours don't work for you. Zoom options are available if you cannot meet in person. Please email me if you need to arrange an appointment.

### Goals & Objectives

Course activities are designed to help you develop:

- Original, creative thought and the processes and attitudes that promote it (including disciplined work ethic, use of a sketchbook to generate ideas, and willingness to take risks).
- Consciousness of the basic elements of visual language.
- The ability to explain your design decisions and challenges using appropriate ceramic and visual arts vocabulary.
- Technical problem-solving ability based on a knowledge of the basic properties of clay.

### Teaching & Learning Methods

Methods include (but are not limited to) students completing individual and collaborative studio projects, participating in discussions, slide lectures, demonstrations, critiques, readings, brief writing assignments, and individual consultations with the instructor.

### Required Materials

Your lab fees (paid with registration) are used to cover the cost of lab technicians, raw materials, and equipment maintenance. I will provide some other tools and materials.

You will need to provide the following:

- Text: Mary Stewart, *Launching the Imagination*, Sixth Edition (older editions are also acceptable). Any other required readings will be available online.
- Sketchbook

- Clay: \$20.00 per 25-pound bag (pay at Student Services and bring receipt to class)
- Metal fork
- A cheap, soft brush, medium-sized (bamboo or hake are good choices)
- Small lidded plastic container, such as a yogurt container
- Plastic to cover your work (such as a couple of kitchen garbage bag or dry-cleaning plastic)
- Marker to write your name on the plastic

Optional:

- Apron

You may need to bring in some additional materials for individual projects depending on the approaches you decide to pursue.

## Required Work

**Expect homework.** Plan that, in addition to making full use of class time, you will need to spend hours each week outside the scheduled class period in order to complete projects satisfactorily.

## STUDIO PROJECTS

Complete three studio projects that demonstrate your ability to apply formal elements and principles effectively to solve three-dimensional design problems in clay, including the following (more detailed instructions will be given at the time each project is assigned):

1. *Surface Impressions*— Create a dynamic formal (non-objective) composition in low relief from tiles cut from textured slabs. We will explore the possibilities of a variety of found tools to create texture. Conceptually we will reflect on how texture affects an audience's bodily response the work and how this type of mark-making relates to our perception of the object's history.
2. *Transported*—Using clay slabs, build a vehicle that could metaphorically transport something you want to be rid of. Effectively use formal elements such as form, texture, scale, color, and interior vs. exterior design to accomplish your expressive purpose.
3. *Site-Specific Installation*—Design a site-specific installation using unfired clay and other materials. The piece should be at least 25% clay. Document the installation using images or video (maximum 2 minutes) for presentation in class.

## **PARTICIPATION & PROJECT CHECKPOINTS**

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You will receive credit for participating in formal and informal critiques and discussions, for completing the planning steps for your projects such as thumbnail sketches, proposals, and maquettes, and for helping to keep the studio and equipment clean and functional. You must be present in class and **submit assignments on time in order to receive credit** for participation and project checkpoints. You may miss one homework or participation assignment without penalty.

## **FINAL PROJECT CRITIQUES**

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Attendance at all formal critiques is mandatory. Have your project ready to show, and be prepared to discuss, using appropriate terminology, the assigned concepts in both your own and your classmates' work.

## **ART EVENT REPORT**

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View a ceramic artwork in person at a gallery or museum and write a two-page paper detailing your observations. I will provide the format.

## **SKETCHBOOK**

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Bring your sketchbook to all class meetings. It will figure into your participation credit as well as an end-of-the-semester sketchbook grade and will be evaluated on completeness and on thoroughness of your use of it as a thinking and planning tool. It should include:

1. Planning and documentation of all class projects, including
  - Brainstorm lists and thumbnail sketches (at least 10 per project)
  - Notes on results (what works and what you would try differently in another attempt).
2. Brief research on a different ceramic artist each week (total of 7). Make sketches of at least two of the artist's works and notes that will help you remember the work and what you find interesting about it.

# COURSE POLICIES

## Attendance

Regular attendance during the full class-period is required and **will affect your grade**.

- Missing more than two classes during the term may result in a full grade reduction at the end. ***Coming late or leaving early counts as a half absence.***
- To receive full credit for project checkpoints, you must be present in class on the date due.
- You are responsible for assignment and schedule changes announced in class, whether or not you are present. I often cover this information and other important instructions right at the beginning of class. If you can't attend class, please arrange to find out from your classmates what you missed, and check Canvas for instructions and updates to deadlines before emailing me.

## Please Be Courteous

Arriving late, talking on web surfing on your cell phone, or text messaging during class can be highly distracting both to me and to other students and can affect your productivity. It may also affect your participation credit. During open work time, listening to music and chatting with classmates is fine.

## Studio Rules

Your attention to the following is essential to a healthy and effective studio environment, as well as to your participation credit:

- *Clean up thoroughly*, including all work areas you have used (tables and floors, slab roller, glaze area, etc.). Use a wet sponge, and avoid generating dust.
- *Wear appropriate protective gear*, such as gloves when handling hot items, or dark goggles when looking into a hot kiln.
- *Mark your work in progress with your name*, and store it only on shelves designated for your class. (Clearly labelled work is less likely to be disturbed or broken.) Store finished work at home.
- *Do not move or uncover other students' work in progress*. If you should inadvertently damage someone's work, leave a note of apology explaining what happened.
- *Follow all other safety, firing, and equipment procedures as explained in class. If in doubt, ask.*

## Open Studio Time

Check the schedule on the classroom door to see when the studio is free on weekdays. The studio is also available nights and weekends. Please clean up and turn off lights and music when you leave. To gain access to the studio, you will need to have your ID coded. Forms are available at the Art Department office.

## Submitting Assignments/Late Work

Assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class period. If you anticipate you will not be able to attend, please turn work in early. Work turned in late will be counted as follows:

- Late project checkpoints will receive a 10 percent reduction in credit and must be submitted at least one class period before the finished project is due to receive credit.
- I will accept finished studio projects late for a full letter grade reduction, but late projects may not be reworked for a higher grade.
- Missed critique participation cannot be made up.

If you can't attend due to a contagious illness or an unusual circumstance (such as a death in the family), please communicate with me promptly so that we can make alternate arrangements for you to complete any missed work, and take responsibility for finding a way to submit the work in a timely way (such as emailing me pictures of sketches or maquettes).

## Grading

### BREAKDOWN

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75% Studio projects

15% Formal critique participation (10 pts. each), sketchbook (30 pts.), and art event report (20 pts.)

10% Participation, project checkpoints, and cleanup

### CRITERIA FOR GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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Specific grading criteria will be provided at the start of each project. In general, studio projects will be graded based on these considerations:

- *Level of Challenge.* How thoroughly did you investigate the required techniques and concepts, including exploring variations and formulating your own questions? How difficult or complex are your concept and form? How far did you reach beyond the obvious for original solutions? How far did you push yourself in scale or number of pieces?
- *Aesthetics/Concept.* How effectively does your piece address the assigned design problem by applying formal principles such as balance, unity, variety, emphasis, etc. to visual elements in three-dimensional space?

- *Craftsmanship.* Is your construction sound? Did you take time to plan properly and to resolve joints, edges, surfaces, and other details in an appropriate manner for your design?

## REVISING TO IMPROVE YOUR GRADE

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You may revise and resubmit any studio project in an attempt to improve your grade (provided you originally submitted it on time). Please talk with me if you decide to do this, especially if you will need to refire your project. You ***must include the original grading sheet with my comments when you resubmit.***

## UNIVERSITY OF UTAH GRADING SCALE

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Note that I usually determine semester grades by rounding to the nearest full percentage point. If you are on the borderline between grades, when I deciding whether to round up or down I also look at whether you have addressed issues discussed during the planning stages and critiques of your project and whether you have taken advantage of revision opportunities.

### Letter Scoring

A	100% - 94%
A-	93% - 90%
B+	89%–87%
B	86%–84%
B-	83% - 80%
C+	79%–77%
C	76%–74%
C-	73% - 70%
D+	69%–67%
D	66%–64%
D-	63% - 60%
E	59%–0%

### Use of Images of Student Work

At the end of the semester, I select examples of each student's best work to photograph and use in future teaching. My preference is to give credit to the student artist by labeling each slide with his or her name. Please let me know if you have objections to me using images of your

work in this way or if you would prefer not to have your name displayed in future slide presentations.

## Accommodations

### DISCLAIMER

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**Accommodations will be considered on an individual basis and may require documentation.**

Please contact your instructor as soon as possible (preferably shortly before the semester begins) to request accommodations of any kind.

### CONTENT WARNINGS

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Some of the presentations, discussions, and student projects you are asked to review in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. This is a workshop-style course involving the production of art with instructor and peer feedback given to each student producer. Since much of the work will be new to the audience and the instructor, there will be no practical way for the instructor or fellow students to predict which pieces or discussions about them may be a problem for you. Carefully consider the nature of this course before committing to taking it. If you do have any concerns, please let me know right away.

### EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

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Please **contact your instructor as soon as possible** if an extreme personal circumstance (hospitalization, death of a close relative, natural disaster, etc.) is interfering with your ability to complete your work.

In some special situations, I may be able to make additional accommodations. Please remember:

- If you have an extreme personal circumstance such as those listed above, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements for completing work.
- If a physical or mental health challenge arises that you think might affect your work over a large portion of the semester, promptly contact the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and your instructors to arrange appropriate accommodations. It's in your best interest not to wait too long.



## RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

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To request an accommodation for religious practices, **contact your instructor at the beginning of the semester.**

## ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY

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If you are student on active duty with the military and experience issues that prevent you from participating in the course **because of deployment or service responsibilities, contact your instructor as soon as possible** to discuss appropriate accommodations.

## DISABILITY ACCESS

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All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services (CDS). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. Prior notice is appreciated. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q of the [Instruction & Evaluation regulations](#)[Links to an external site.](#).

If you will need accommodations in this class, contact:

### Center for Disability Services

801-581-5020

[disability.utah.edu](http://disability.utah.edu)[Links to an external site.](#)

162 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

## Changes to the Syllabus

**This syllabus is not a contract.** It is meant to serve as an outline and guide for your course. Please note that your instructor may modify it to accommodate the needs of your class.

**You will be notified of any changes to the Syllabus.**

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE — FALL 2023, FIRST TERM (SECTION 001)

This schedule may change based on the needs and pace of the class. Please check Canvas for any updates if you miss class. Be ready to turn in assignments by the beginning of class on the date due.

	Tuesday	Thursday
<b>Week 1</b> Aug. 22, 24	Course overview Studio Orientation Slide discussion: Texture, Touch, and Material Introduce Project 1: Surface Impressions Demo: Making textured clay tiles	Due: General supplies, clay receipt, and found objects for creating texture. Read Chapter 9 in <i>Launching the Imagination</i> . Work in class on Project 1
<b>Week 2</b> Aug. 29, 31	Due: Project 1 tiles, unfired. Read Chapter 5 in <i>Launching the Imagination</i> Informal critique of Project 1 tiles Slide discussion: Color in Ceramics and 3-Dimensional Design, Interior/Exterior Introduce Project 2: Transported Demo: Making slip, using the slab roller, building with clay slabs	Due: Project 2 brainstorm and 10 thumbnail sketches. Read Chapter 6 in <i>Launching the Imagination</i> Load dry tiles in kiln Work on Project 2: Roll out slabs and build maquettes
<b>Week 3</b> Sept. 5, 7	Due: Read Chapter 10 in <i>Launching the Imagination</i> Demo: Heightening texture with value or surface contrast, arranging and mounting tiles Build Project 2 and/or work on arranging Project 1 tiles	Due: <b>Art Event Report</b> , bring paints/stains, brushes for Project 1. Demo: Ceramic underglazes (for Project 2) Work on Projects 1 & 2
<b>Week 4</b> Sept. 12, 14	<b>Critique Project 1: Surface Impressions</b> Work on Project 2	Due: Project 2 unfired. Read Ch. 11 and pp. 351-356 in Ch. 15 <i>Launching the Imagination</i> Informal critique of Project 2 in progress Slide discussion: Meaningful Materials and Site-Specific Works Introduce Project 3: Site-Specific Installation
<b>Week 5</b> Sept. 19, 21	Due: Project 3 brainstorm and thumbnail sketches. Read Chapter 7 in <i>Launching the Imagination</i> . Load Project 2 into kiln.	Due: Project 3 Proposal Finish surfaces on Project 2
<b>Week 6</b> Sept. 26, 28	<b>Critique Project 2: Transported</b>	Informal critique of Project 3 in progress
<b>Week 7</b> Oct. 3, 5	<b>Due: Sketchbooks</b> , photo documentation of Project 3 (bring your digital files and, if possible, your computer)	<b>Critique Project 3: Site-Specific Installation</b> All work must be removed from the studio by the end of class.