

ART 4390.001 & ART 5390.00: Topics in Art: Kiln Building

Spring 2026

Course Meeting Time: Fridays, 9 am – 2:50 pm

Merrie Wright, Professor of Studio Art

Contact: mewright@uttyler.edu | 903-566-7423 (office)

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 11 am – 12:30 pm

Purpose/Objectives

This course will introduce the principles of kiln design, construction, and firing methods. Student will then put theory into practice by working together to build a low-fire wood burning kiln and explore several methods of pit firing.

Course prerequisites: ART 2379: Beginning Ceramics

BFA Student Learning Outcomes

Technical Proficiency: Students will be able to create technically proficient works of art.

Conceptual Proficiency: Students will be able to create conceptually proficient works of art.

Interpretation of Artworks: Students will be able to explain how formal or conceptual elements function in works of art.

Historical Context: The student will be able to contextualize works of art in relation to art history or contemporary practices.

Document Works: Students will be able to document works of art for the purpose of archiving, application, and presentation.

Disseminate Research: Students will be able to disseminate research through exhibition participation.

Professional Communication

When referring to any faculty member, please remember that they all have earned a high degree of respect, and should be referred to, or addressed as “Professor”, or “Dr.”. In any academic situation, sticking with “Professor” is the safest path, until you have been invited to address your professors otherwise, even then, I would be circumspect as to the propriety of doing otherwise. Likewise, engagements with university/departmental staff members should be equally respectful. Please understand that the staff members are critical partners in the department. Please refer to them as Mr./Mrs./Ms.

Office Hours & Email Etiquette

I am here to help you and I want each of you to do well in this course! I am always available to meet with you. It is always best for you to make an appointment with me during my office hours or, if this does not fit your schedule, we can arrange an alternate meeting time. The best way to contact me is through email. I will check and respond to emails during the workweek, Monday through Friday, 8 am - 5 pm. I will do my best to answer promptly, please allow 24 hours for a response. If you contact me through email, please use formal email etiquette and use your UT Tyler student email address if you wish to get a response.

Required Text

This course has no required text.

Recommended Text

Kilns: Design, Construction, & Operation by Daniel Rhodes

The Kiln Book, Materials, Specifications and Construction by Frederick Olsen

Alternative Kilns & Firing Techniques: Raku • Saggars • Pit • Barrel by James C. Watkins and Paul Andrew Wandless

Attendance

This course has no set schedule or mandatory meeting times; however, you are responsible for meeting all requirements for course assignments and critiques, as scheduled. Failure to be present for scheduled meetings and/or missed weekly studio practice documentation will result in a zero for the assignment and/or critique. No late work will be accepted.

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance should inform the instructor in writing by the end of the second week of class. Faculty should initial the request to indicate approval.

Canvas

This course utilized Canvas. You will find all course materials on the Canvas page for the course, including the syllabus, course calendar, and all assignments. All course announcements will be communicated through Canvas, so please check the site frequently.

Class Participation

The running of a ceramic studio is a community endeavor, as is the learning process. Further, this course will require a significant amount of group participation. As such, class participation is an important aspect of this course. You are required to be an active participant by being in attendance and assisting in all aspects of the course.

Final Grade

Your final grade for the course will be based upon completion of the following:

- 20% Participation in course discussions and lectures
- 20% Individual kiln design research project
- 20% Group kiln design research project
- 20% Active kiln building
- 20% Firing, analysis of results, and course documentation materials/final assessment

Numeric to Letter Grade Translation: 100 - 90% = A 89 - 80% = B 79 - 70% = C 69 - 60% = D 59 - 0% = F

Remember, Teachers do not give grades; students earn them!

Additional Information in regards to grades and course requirements:

- Graduate students will have an additional requirement for the individual kiln design project.
- Poor attendance/participation and non-adherence to deadlines will result in a lowered grade. Missing more than three classes will result in a grade of F. Arriving late or leaving early will count as an absence.
- This class has no final examination.

Classroom Etiquette

It is important to keep the studio clean and to maintain a healthy working environment. Maintenance of the studio is a daily responsibility. It includes cleaning up your workspace, and all of the equipment used. Additional clean up will be required at the end of each class period. Please take care in moving other student work, and be respectful to the work of other students and their spaces. Leave everything in better shape than when found! **Keep all cell phones and headphones turned off during class time!**

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and in extreme cases will result in the expulsion of the student from class. Examples of disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to, habitually arriving late or leaving early from class, talking during instruction and failure to listen to directions.

Artificial Intelligence

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. AI is not permitted in this course at all. All work students submit for this course should be their own. All assignments and class activities are carefully designed to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. For this course, ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process, including brainstorming, may not be used. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

Studio Safety & Maintenance

Students are required to use appropriate safety equipment and practice safe operation procedures when using any hazardous equipment or materials. The student should only use these materials and equipment after the instructor has given instruction in the safe use of such equipment and materials. The instructor has the right and responsibility to suspend any art student from operating a piece of equipment if the instructor believes the student is incapable of operating the equipment in a safe manner. This is done so not to jeopardize the health and safety of the student or other members of the class.

- Students in studio classes are required to clean up and put away supplies that have been used during the class session.
- Children and non-registered students are not allowed in the studio at any time.
- Food and drink are not allowed in the studio at any time.
- Radio use in the studio is restricted to the use of personal headphones (not during class).
- A first aid kit is located in the studio.

Facility Access & Studio Lab Safety and Mechanical Safety Training

Studio facility access is for enrolled students only. Students are required to use appropriate safety equipment (PPE) and practice safe operation procedures when using any hazardous equipment or materials. All students must successfully complete the lab safety training and mechanical safety training and quizzes on Canvas and complete an Art Safety Agreement before after hours access to the complex is granted. Failure to adhere to the terms of the Art Safety Agreement will result in the loss studio facility access.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

For your safety, you must follow all safety requirements established by the department and university. It is required that you provide your own Personal Protective Equipment for use in studio areas. This equipment includes: dust mask with at least a N95 rating and attached filter, safety glasses, ear protection, gloves, close-toed shoes, and appropriate clothing. Failure to use this equipment while working may result in the loss of studio privileges.

Materials and Chemicals

Any additional materials or chemicals not included on the course material list must be approved by the faculty member in charge of the area where the chemical (material) will be used prior to the material/chemical being brought into the studio. Students are responsible for notifying the studio technician of any new materials/chemicals the day they are brought to the studio in order to insure that the appropriate Safety Data Sheet is on file and in the SDS binder. Labels for any new, approved chemicals brought into the art studios must include the following information when they are transferred to a new container or if the original chemical label is damaged: Name of Chemical, Date chemical was opened, and any basic hazards associated with the chemical. Labels are located in each studio and must be filled out and adhered to the container immediately.

Storage/Lockers

Each student will be assigned a locker with a partner. Due to space limitations clay and tools may not be stored in the classroom unless being used at the time. Any clay or tools found will be removed. You should store your materials in your locker or elsewhere, bringing to class only what you need to work with.

Student Resources and University Policies

Please see the Getting Started & UTT Syllabus module in Canvas for a full list of student resources and university policies.

* This syllabus is subject to change

**Please see UT Tyler's academic calendar for all important academic deadlines and dates. Important dates for critiques and assignments will be posted on Canvas, announced in class, and stated on handouts. There are no required fieldtrips for this course.

*** A separate list of all required materials and supplies will be provided.