

Anthropology 418
Lab Methods: Ceramics
Spring 2024

Lab Exercise 2
Identification of Manufacturing Processes

The lab contains a numbered series of 24 whole pots and large sherds. Your assignment is to describe each vessel in terms of how it was made. In your descriptions be sure to note the following:

Temper. Presence or absence of temper inclusions. If present, what does the tempering material appear to be?

Construction. Evidence of main construction method (e.g., thrown on a wheel, coiled, etc.), as well as secondary methods (e.g., scraping, turning, etc.) if present.

Surface. Surface finish on both interior and exterior of vessel.

- Slipped or unslipped (if slipped, note the color).
- Glazed or unglazed (if glazed, note the type of glaze).
- If unglazed, note whether surface is smoothed or burnished.

Firing. Degree and conditions of firing, to the extent you can reconstruct it.

- Is the clay body vitrified or not? (You needn't do the tongue test on the specimens. Usually, you can identify a stoneware by its dense visual appearance and its relatively heavy weight, and/or the type of glaze.)
- What was the nature of the firing atmosphere and did it change during firing?

Sometimes conclusive identifications are hard to make. Don't be afraid to make educated guesses, and feel free to say things like "maybe," "probably," "looks like," and "I can't tell" in your descriptions. Also, there's no need to describe the decoration. We'll deal with that in our next exercise.

This is an "open book" exercise designed to give you experience. Feel free to ask questions of me, and to discuss the specimens and your interpretations among yourselves. I expect a brief write-up from each person due a week from today. In the written assignment, please use the four headings above for each pot, and sort the descriptions in numerical order. Although you're welcome to collaborate in every other respect, each person must do his or her own write-up.

Please be careful in handling the pots. Always pick them up and support them with two hands, and don't put any stress on mended seams.