

**Anthropology 418**  
**Lab Methods: Ceramics**  
**Spring 2024**

**Lab Exercise 3**  
**Identification of Temper and Decorative Technique**

The lab contains a numbered series of sherds. Your assignment is to describe the sherds in terms of temper and decorative technique.

*1. Construction and Surface Finish.* Quickly assess the construction method (e.g., wheel thrown, coiled, etc.) and the general surface finish (e.g., slip, glaze, burnish). Does it look like an earthenware or stoneware?

*2. Temper.* Note the presence or absence of temper inclusions. If present, what does the tempering material appear to be?

*3. Plastic Decoration.* If the sherd is decorated with a plastic technique, tell me all you can about the way the decoration was put on. That is, name the specific technique, describe the tool employed, and infer the state of dryness of the paste when the decoration was put on.

*4. Painted Decoration.* If the sherd is painted, describe the various colors and the order in which they were applied (if one can tell, that is). Can you tell what sort of paint was used? (This is often very difficult to do without chemical analysis, so don't worry if you can't.) If the sherd is glazed, be sure to specify whether the paint is overglaze or underglaze.

*Remember,* 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.

This is not a test, but 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. (Although you're welcome to collaborate in every other respect, each person should do his or her own write-up.)