CERAMICS IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this class is to give members of the AAS a working knowledge and ability to sort prehistoric ceramics found in Arizona. The course is intended to focus on a specific site, or series of related sites, or region of the state. Members may take this class several times to become proficient with the ceramics of various prehistoric culture areas. Prior to the class being taught the instructor shall prepare, for review and approval by the Certification Department, a detailed syllabus that focuses on the ceramic assemblage specific to the sites or region of the state of interest. The detailed syllabus shall include particulars, as they relate to the sites or region, relative to the specific types and wares to be considered and to the appropriate sections of the course outline.

Emphasis is placed on identifying specific ceramic types, recognizing vessel forms from sherds, the relationship between research questions and the design of ceramic analysis, and the key technological attributes of ceramics that are most useful for recognizing specific types.

Another purpose of the course is to build upon the technical information learned by those members who have completed the Pottery Technology course.

PREREQUISITES

The only required Prerequisite is to have successfully completed Prehistory of the Southwest.

Completion of Crew Member I, Laboratory Techniques I, and Pottery Technology is strongly recommended. Participation in the Crew Member I and Laboratory Techniques courses at the sites or in the region upon which the class will focus would be most meaningful for class participants.

FORMAT

The course is designed to be presented in 80 hours, with 20 hours of lecture and 60 hours of laboratory experience. Optional field trips would be included within the laboratory hours.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of the course, students will:

A. Have working knowledge to recognize many of the ceramic types that characterize the site(s) or region of prehistoric Arizona upon which the class is focused.

B. Be able to sort, with various degrees of familiarity, a number of prehistoric ceramic types and wares specific to the site(s) or region upon which the class is focused.

C. Understand the relationship between research topics and analysis forms.

D. Be able to identify the basic characteristics of ceramic technology.

E. Understand the various approaches archaeologists have used to describe ceramic taxonomy.

F. Understand various theories regarding cultural influences on the development of different ceramic traditions.

G. Know the kinds of research topics that can and have been addressed by sherd ceramic sorting. This would include understanding how sherd analysis fits into the overall research design for the sites upon which the class is focused.

COURSE OUTLINE

A. Introduction to the basic ceramic characteristics useful for distinguishing between various wares and types.
   1. Clay
   2. Identifying slip from a wash or carbon streak
   3. Smudging
   4. Distinguishing bowl sherds from jar sherds
   5. Distinguishing organic from mineral paint
   6. Temper
   7. Identifying specific tempering materials
   8. Distinguishing paddle-and-anvil from coiled manufacturing

B. Classification Systems
   1. Details of the classification system in use for the ceramics specific to the site(s) or region of interest.
      a. History of development of the system
      b. Ware
      c. Series
      d. Type
      e. Variety
      f. Principle of Analogous Pottery Types
      g. Rules of Ceramic Nomenclature
      h. Broken Rules of Ceramic Nomenclature
      i. Proper reference style for ceramic nomenclature

2. Brief review of other relevant classification systems.

C. Examples of research topics that have been investigated by sherd analysis.
   1. Cultural boundaries
   2. Trade
      a. Regional systems
      b. Localized production and exchange
   3. Ware characterizations
   4. Dating
      a. Assemblage dating
      b. Seriation
      c. Relative dating
   5. Vessel size
   6. Culture Change
   7. Technology
   8. Migration
   9. Relationship of sherds to whole vessels
   10. Social Status

D. Specific research goals of the course project

   This section will be different each time the course is taught. If the course is being taught as a generic course, it will only describe the research topics listed in Section III. If the course is oriented to a specific project, such as Elden Pueblo, Q Ranch, or Quass Pueblo, etc., this section will address the specific research topics for that project.

E. The sherd analysis form. (NOTE: This will vary each time the course is taught.) This topic will generally include the following information:
   1. Relationship of the form to research topics Identifying specific ceramic types.
   2. Examples of analysis forms and coding instructions
   3. The specific form in use for the course and its organization
   4. How to code the form
   5. Potential data manipulation of analysis categories
   6. Applying ceramic counts to the research topics

F. The specific types that will be taught will depend upon what project, site(s), or region, the course is focused upon.

G. Identifying basic characteristics of other (trade) wares. The specific wares that will be taught will depend upon what project, site(s), or region, the course is focused upon.

H. Replicability of results.
   1. Typing is a relative concept
   2. Replicability Studies

COURSE STRUCTURE

The topics listed above will be taught through a combination of formal lectures to the entire class and then through break-out into smaller groups for hands-on practice with type sherd collections. This will give students the practical knowledge of recognizing the various ceramic types they will encounter.

Once an acceptable lever of competence in the sorting of types is demonstrated, actual sorting of ceramics from the site(s) or region of interest will be undertaken by teams as directed by the instructor. Sorting will be verified by the instructor, and the students will enter the analysis results onto the analysis sheet.

At the close of the course, the teams will be combined into a smaller number of teams representing various locations at the site(s) or within the region. They will combine their sherd counts and prepare preliminary interpretations of their analysis as they relate to the research topics of the analysis. Each team will then present their conclusions to the class. Through group discussion, guided by the instructor, the class will evaluate the results; identify distribution patterns, similarities, and differences; and address potential reasons for these. These discussions will form the basis for suggested additions, corrections, or revisions to the research topics and analysis form.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips may be conducted to local museums, sites, or universities where complete vessels of the type being studied during the course may be viewed.

TOOLS

Each student should supply their own:

A. 10 power magnifying glass.
B. A pliers for nipping the edges of sherds (flat-ended lineman's or stained glass type are recommended).
C. A 0.5 mm lead thickness mechanical pencil for completing forms.
D. A "Tensor" lamp or other similar desk-top lamp to illuminate individual working areas.
E. An extra-fine point black "Sanford" brand "Sharpie" felt tip permanent marker.
F. White correction fluid as background for labeling dark colored sherds.
G. A 0.1 Micron "Pigma" felt tip marker (manufactured by Sakura Color Product Corporation). This provides a very fine point for writing on small sherds.

Optional supplies which may be useful would include a battery-powered, hand-held microscope; a magnet; and a pocket knife.

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