

Ceramic Materials

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Science and Engineering

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*This text is dedicated to our wives
Bryony Carter and Christine Wall*

*Words cannot explain, describe, or say enough
Thanks to you both*

Preface

In today's materials science curriculum, there is often only time for one course on ceramic materials. Students will usually take courses on mechanical properties, thermodynamics and kinetics, and the structure of materials. Many will also have taken an introductory overview of materials science. In each of these courses, the students will have encountered ceramic materials. The present text assumes background knowledge at this introductory level but still provides a review of such critical topics as bonding, crystal structures, and lattice defects.

The text has been divided into seven parts and 37 chapters: we will explain the thinking behind these decisions. Part I examines the history and development of ceramic materials: how they have literally shaped civilization. We include this material in our introductory lectures and then make the two chapters assigned reading. Part II discusses the bonding, structure, and the relationship among phases. Students often find this part of the course to be the most difficult because structures are implicitly 3-dimensional. However, so many properties depend on the structure whether crystalline or amorphous. We have limited the number of structures to what we think the students can manage in one course, we give references to texts that the students can spend a lifetime studying and recommend our favorite software package. Part III consists of two chapters on our tools of the trade. Most ceramics are heated at some stage during processing. Unfortunately heat treatments are rarely exactly what we would like them to be; the heating rate is too slow, the furnace contaminates the sample, the environment is not what we want (or think it is), etc. Techniques for characterizing materials fill books and the students are familiar with many already from their studies on metals. So, the purpose of this chapter is, in part, to encourage the student to find out more about techniques that they might not have heard of or might not have thought of applying to ceramics; you could certainly skip Part III and make it assigned reading especially if the students are taking overlapping courses. Part IV discusses defects in ceramics and aims at providing a comprehensive overview while again not being a dedicated book on the subject. Part IV leads straight into Part V—a basic discussion of mechanical properties applied specifically to ceramics. The last two parts contain just over half the chapters. The two topics are Processing (Part VI) and Properties (Part VII) and are, of course, the reason we study ceramic materials. The warning is—these topics form the second half of the book because the student should understand the materials first, but it then becomes too easy to miss them in a one-semester course due to lack of time. We know, we have done this and the students miss the part that they would often appreciate most. Chapter 36 is probably the most fun for half the students and both the authors; Chapter 37 is the most important for all of us.

Many modern ceramists will acknowledge their debt to the late David Kingery. His pioneering 1960 text was one of the first to regard ceramics as a serious scientific subject. Both his book and his research papers have been referenced throughout the present text. Our definition of a ceramic material follows directly from Kingery's definition: a nonmetallic, inorganic solid. Nonmetallic refers to the bonding: in ceramics, it is predominantly covalent and/or ionic. Ceramics are always inorganic solids although they also may be major or minor components of composite materials.

Throughout the text we ask the question “what is special for ceramics?” The answer varies so much that it can be difficult to generalize but that is what we are attempting where possible. Having said that, ceramics are always providing surprises. Indium tin oxide is a transparent conductor of electricity. Yttrium barium copper oxide is a superconductor at 90 K. Doped gallium nitride is revolutionizing home lighting and is becoming a critical component for all traffic lights. Neodymium-doped garnet is the basis of many solid-state lasers.

A feature of this text is that we keep in mind that many of today’s high-tech ceramic materials and processing routes have their origin in the potter’s craft or in the jeweler’s art, and materials that are new to the materials scientist may be old friends to the mineralogist and geologist. Throughout the text we will make connections to these related fields. The history of ceramics is as old as civilization and our use of ceramics is a measure of the technological progress of a civilization.

The text covers ceramic materials from the fundamentals to industrial applications including a consideration of safety and their impact on the environment. We also include throughout the text links to economics and art. So many choices in ceramics have been determined by economics. We often think of ceramics as being inexpensive materials: bottles, bricks and tiles certainly are. Ceramics are also the most valuable materials we have: per gram, emerald still holds the record.

No modern materials text can be complete without considering materials at the nanoscale. Nanoceramics appear throughout this text but we decided not to create a special chapter on the topic. What we have done is to highlight some of these topics as they appear naturally in the text. It is worth noting that nanoscale ceramics have been used for centuries; it is just recently that we have had a name for them.

The figures generally contain much more information than is given in the text. We use this fact in some of the homework questions and hope that the extra detail will encourage the students to delve into the literature to learn more about the topic. One place to start this search is, of course, with the original citation if there is one. These citations are grouped together at the end of the text, in part for this purpose, but also to recognize the contributions of our colleagues.

On the Web site (<http://web.mac.com/ceramicsbook/iweb>), we are developing supplementary material including an extensive list of suggestions for filling any weak or missing areas in the student’s background and will update these suggestions periodically. We give annotated references to the original studies that have been quoted in the text. We also include further examples of images that supplement those in the text. The Web site will also house two sets of questions to complement those at the end of each chapter. One set consists of shorter questions that we use in pop quizzes but are also useful for students, especially those working alone, to assess their own progress. The second set includes questions, which we use for homework and take-home exams.

After reviewing some history, we consider bonding and structures (Chapters 3–8). Essentially, this set of chapters examines the science that underpins our definition of a ceramic material. The way atoms are connected together by covalent or ionic bonds is illustrated by considering simple and complex structures. We introduce glasses as a natural subsection of complex structures rather than as a separate branch of ceramics. Window glass is a ceramic material, just like lithium niobate, mica or silicon. The difference is that glasses are not crystalline: crystalline quartz has more in common with amorphous silica glass than it does with alumina. The final chapter in this sequence is important in most branches of materials science: which ceramics are compatible with other ceramics, which are not, and which of these materials react to form new compounds. We emphasize that these are equilibrium phase diagrams and that ceramics often need high temperatures and long times to attain equilibrium. (Geological times are needed in some cases.)

The next two topics (Chapters 9–10) examine two tools (in the broadest sense) that we will use: we need to prepare the ceramic material and this usually involves heating. Then we need to characterize it.

In Chapters 11 thru 15 we explore the whole topic of defects in ceramics, from point defects to voids, and elaborate on why they are important in the rest of the text. In Chapter 13 the combination of surfaces, nanoparticles and foams builds on the common theme of the surface as a defect but does not treat it in isolation from properties or real ceramic processing. The positioning of the next three chapters (Chapters 16–18) on mechanical properties was decided because of the authors' bias. This allows us to integrate mechanical behavior into processing, thin films, glass ceramics, and such in the immediately following chapters.

We begin the section on processing with a discussion of minerals and then consider the different forms and shapes of ceramic powders. The topic of glass is separated into Chapters 21 and 26 with the use of organic chemistry, the principles of shaping, and the processes that occur during shaping (sintering, grain growth and phase transformations) separating them. In this text we do not want to separate processing from the science; where we have separated them, this is only done to help the student absorb the concepts serially rather than in parallel! We discuss making films and growing crystals in Chapters 27–29. This group of chapters really gets to the heart of ceramic processing and mixes liquids (whether due to a solvent or to melting) in with the powders. We do not emphasize the mechanical aspects but make it clear that a full understanding requires that we think about them and not just for hot-pressing or for crystalline ceramics.

The remaining eight chapters cover the applications of ceramics with the emphasis on what property is being exploited, how we optimize it, and just how far we can still go with these materials; remember how the development of glass optical fibers has changed society forever in less than 40 years. Again our bias is clear. Ceramics are amazing materials and the underlying physics is fascinating but the subject of physics can easily obscure this excitement. Physicists are often not fully aware of the value of chemistry and all too often underestimate the *feel* a ceramist has for these materials. Before concluding the text with the most rapidly changing topic of industry and the environment in Chapter 37, we examine two groups of ceramics that affect us all even though we may not think about them—ceramics in biology/medicine and ceramics as gemstones. Whether as objects of beauty or symbols of something more lasting, polished natural single crystals of ceramics have inspired awe for centuries and challenged scientists for nearly as long.

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Contents

Preface	vii
PART I HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION	
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Definitions	3
1.2 General Properties	4
1.3 Types of Ceramic and their Applications	5
1.4 Market	6
1.5 Critical Issues for the Future	7
1.6 Relationship between Microstructure, Processing and Properties	8
1.7 Safety	9
1.8 Ceramics on the Internet	10
1.9 On Units	10
2 Some History	15
2.1 Earliest Ceramics: The Stone Age	15
2.2 Ceramics in Ancient Civilizations	17
2.3 Clay	19
2.4 Types of Pottery	19
2.5 Glazes	20
2.6 Development of a Ceramics Industry	21
2.7 Plaster and Cement	22
2.8 Brief History of Glass	24
2.9 Brief History of Refractories	25
2.10 Major Landmarks of the Twentieth Century	26
2.11 Museums	28
2.12 Societies	29
2.13 Ceramic Education	29
PART II MATERIALS	
3 Background You Need to Know	35
3.1 The Atom	35
3.2 Energy Levels	36
3.3 Electron Waves	37
3.4 Quantum Numbers	37
3.5 Assigning Quantum Numbers	39
3.6 Ions	42
3.7 Electronegativity	44
3.8 Thermodynamics: The Driving Force for Change	45
3.9 Kinetics: The Speed of Change	47

4	Bonds and Energy Bands	51
4.1	Types of Interatomic Bond	51
4.2	Young's Modulus	51
4.3	Ionic Bonding	53
4.4	Covalent Bonding	58
4.5	Metallic Bonding in Ceramics	63
4.6	Mixed Bonding	64
4.7	Secondary Bonding	64
4.8	Electron Energy Bands in Ceramics	66
5	Models, Crystals, and Chemistry	71
5.1	Terms and Definitions	71
5.2	Symmetry and Crystallography	74
5.3	Lattice Points, Directions, and Planes	75
5.4	The Importance of Crystallography	76
5.5	Pauling's Rules	76
5.6	Close-Packed Arrangements: Interstitial Sites	79
5.7	Notation for Crystal Structures	81
5.8	Structure, Composition, and Temperature	81
5.9	Crystals, Glass, Solids, and Liquid	82
5.10	Defects	83
5.11	Computer Modeling	83
6	Binary Compounds	87
6.1	Background	87
6.2	CsCl	88
6.3	NaCl (MgO, TiC, PbS)	88
6.4	GaAs (β -SiC)	89
6.5	AlN (BeO, ZnO)	90
6.6	CaF ₂	91
6.7	FeS ₂	92
6.8	Cu ₂ O	93
6.9	CuO	93
6.10	TiO ₂	93
6.11	Al ₂ O ₃	94
6.12	MoS ₂ and CdI ₂	95
6.13	Polymorphs, Polytypes, and Polytypoids	96
7	Complex Crystal and Glass Structures	100
7.1	Introduction	100
7.2	Spinel	101
7.3	Perovskite	102
7.4	The Silicates and Structures Based on SiO ₄	104
7.5	Silica	105
7.6	Olivine	106
7.7	Garnets	107
7.8	Ring Silicates	107
7.9	Micas and Other Layer Materials	108
7.10	Clay Minerals	109
7.11	Pyroxene	109
7.12	β -Aluminas and Related Materials	110
7.13	Calcium Aluminate and Related Materials	111
7.14	Mullite	111
7.15	Monazite	111

7.16	YBa ₂ Cu ₃ O ₇ and Related High-Temperature Superconductors (HTSCs)	112
7.17	Si ₃ N ₄ , SiAlONs, and Related Materials	113
7.18	Fullerenes and Nanotubes	113
7.19	Zeolites and Microporous Compounds	114
7.20	Zachariasen's Rules for the Structure of Glass	115
7.21	Revisiting Glass Structures	117
8	Equilibrium Phase Diagrams	120
8.1	What's Special about Ceramics?	120
8.2	Determining Phase Diagrams	121
8.3	Phase Diagrams for Ceramists: The Books	124
8.4	Gibbs Phase Rule	124
8.5	One Component ($C = 1$)	125
8.6	Two Components ($C = 2$)	126
8.7	Three and More Components	128
8.8	Composition with Variable Oxygen Partial Pressure	130
8.9	Quaternary Diagrams and Temperature	132
8.10	Congruent and Incongruent Melting	132
8.11	Miscibility Gaps in Glass	133
 PART III TOOLS		
9	Furnaces	139
9.1	The Need for High Temperatures	139
9.2	Types of Furnace	139
9.3	Combustion Furnaces	140
9.4	Electrically Heated Furnaces	141
9.5	Batch or Continuous Operation	141
9.6	Indirect Heating	143
9.7	Heating Elements	144
9.8	Refractories	146
9.9	Furniture, Tubes, and Crucibles	147
9.10	Firing Process	148
9.11	Heat Transfer	148
9.12	Measuring Temperature	149
9.13	Safety	151
10	Characterizing Structure, Defects, and Chemistry	154
10.1	Characterizing Ceramics	154
10.2	Imaging Using Visible-Light, IR, and UV	155
10.3	Imaging Using X-rays and CT Scans	157
10.4	Imaging in the SEM	158
10.5	Imaging in the TEM	159
10.6	Scanning-Probe Microscopy	161
10.7	Scattering and Diffraction Techniques	162
10.8	Photon Scattering	163
10.9	Raman and IR Spectroscopy	163
10.10	NMR Spectroscopy and Spectrometry	165
10.11	Mössbauer Spectroscopy and Spectrometry	166
10.12	Diffraction in the EM	168
10.13	Ion Scattering (RBS)	168
10.14	X-ray Diffraction and Databases	169
10.15	Neutron Scattering	171

10.16	Mass Spectrometry	172
10.17	Spectrometry in the EM	172
10.18	Electron Spectroscopy	174
10.19	Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA)	175
10.20	Thermal Analysis	175

PART IV DEFECTS

11	Point Defects, Charge, and Diffusion	181
11.1	Are Defects in Ceramics Different?	181
11.2	Types of Point Defects	182
11.3	What Is Special for Ceramics?	183
11.4	What Type of Defects Form?	184
11.5	Equilibrium Defect Concentrations	184
11.6	Writing Equations for Point Defects	186
11.7	Solid Solutions	187
11.8	Association of Point Defects	189
11.9	Color Centers	190
11.10	Creation of Point Defects in Ceramics	191
11.11	Experimental Studies of Point Defects	192
11.12	Diffusion	192
11.13	Diffusion in Impure, or Doped, Ceramics	193
11.14	Movement of Defects	197
11.15	Diffusion and Ionic Conductivity	197
11.16	Computing	199
12	Are Dislocations Unimportant?	201
12.1	A Quick Review of Dislocations	202
12.2	Summary of Dislocation Properties	206
12.3	Observation of Dislocations	206
12.4	Dislocations in Ceramics	208
12.5	Structure of the Core	208
12.6	Detailed Geometry	211
12.7	Defects on Dislocations	214
12.8	Dislocations and Diffusion	215
12.9	Movement of Dislocations	216
12.10	Multiplication of Dislocations	216
12.11	Dislocation Interactions	217
12.12	At the Surface	219
12.13	Indentation, Scratching, and Cracks	219
12.14	Dislocations with Different Cores	220
13	Surfaces, Nanoparticles, and Foams	224
13.1	Background to Surfaces	224
13.2	Ceramic Surfaces	225
13.3	Surface Energy	225
13.4	Surface Structure	227
13.5	Curved Surfaces and Pressure	230
13.6	Capillarity	230
13.7	Wetting and Dewetting	231
13.8	Foams	232
13.9	Epitaxy and Film Growth	233
13.10	Film Growth in 2D: Nucleation	233
13.11	Film Growth in 2D: Mechanisms	234
13.12	Characterizing Surfaces	235

13.13	Steps	239
13.14	<i>In Situ</i>	240
13.15	Surfaces and Nanoparticles	241
13.16	Computer Modeling	241
13.17	Introduction to Properties	242
14	Interfaces in Polycrystals	246
14.1	What Are Grain Boundaries?	246
14.2	For Ceramics	248
14.3	GB Energy	249
14.4	Low-Angle GBs	251
14.5	High-Angle GBs	254
14.6	Twin Boundaries	255
14.7	General Boundaries	258
14.8	GB Films	259
14.9	Triple Junctions and GB Grooves	262
14.10	Characterizing GBs	263
14.11	GBs in Thin Films	264
14.12	Space Charge and Charged Boundaries	265
14.13	Modeling	265
14.14	Some Properties	265
15	Phase Boundaries, Particles, and Pores	269
15.1	The Importance	269
15.2	Different Types	269
15.3	Compared to Other Materials	270
15.4	Energy	270
15.5	The Structure of PBs	271
15.6	Particles	272
15.7	Use of Particles	276
15.8	Nucleation and Growth of Particles	276
15.9	Pores	277
15.10	Measuring Porosity	278
15.11	Porous Ceramics	279
15.12	Glass/Crystal Phase Boundaries	280
15.13	Eutectics	281
15.14	Metal/Ceramic PBs	282
15.15	Forming PBs by Joining	283
 PART V MECHANICAL STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS		
16	Mechanical Testing	289
16.1	Philosophy	289
16.2	Types of Testing	291
16.3	Elastic Constants and Other “Constants”	292
16.4	Effect of Microstructure on Elastic Moduli	294
16.5	Test Temperature	295
16.6	Test Environment	296
16.7	Testing in Compression and Tension	296
16.8	Three- and Four-Point Bending	297
16.9	K_{Ic} from Bend Test	298
16.10	Indentation	299
16.11	Fracture Toughness from Indentation	300
16.12	Nanoindentation	301
16.13	Ultrasonic Testing	301

16.14	Design and Statistics	302
16.15	SPT Diagrams	305
17	Deforming: Plasticity	309
17.1	Plastic Deformation	309
17.2	Dislocation Glide	310
17.3	Slip in Alumina	312
17.4	Plastic Deformation in Single Crystals	313
17.5	Plastic Deformation in Polycrystals	314
17.6	Dislocation Velocity and Pinning	315
17.7	Creep	317
17.8	Dislocation Creep	317
17.9	Diffusion-Controlled Creep	318
17.10	Grain-Boundary Sliding	318
17.11	Tertiary Creep and Cavitation	319
17.12	Creep Deformation Maps	321
17.13	Viscous Flow	321
17.14	Superplasticity	322
18	Fracturing: Brittleness	325
18.1	The Importance of Brittleness	325
18.2	Theoretical Strength: The Orowan Equation	326
18.3	The Effect of Flaws: The Griffith Equation	327
18.4	The Crack Tip: The Inglis Equation	329
18.5	Stress Intensity Factor	329
18.6	<i>R</i> Curves	330
18.7	Fatigue and Stress Corrosion Cracking	331
18.8	Failure and Fractography	332
18.9	Toughening and Ceramic Matrix Composites	335
18.10	Machinable Glass-Ceramics	338
18.11	Wear	338
18.12	Grinding and Polishing	339
PART VI PROCESSING		
19	Raw Materials	345
19.1	Geology, Minerals, and Ores	345
19.2	Mineral Formation	345
19.3	Beneficiation	347
19.4	Weights and Measures	347
19.5	Silica	348
19.6	Silicates	348
19.7	Oxides	351
19.8	Nonoxides	354
20	Powders, Fibers, Platelets, and Composites	359
20.1	Making Powders	359
20.2	Types of Powders	360
20.3	Mechanical Milling	360
20.4	Spray Drying	362
20.5	Powders by Sol-Gel Processing	363
20.6	Powders by Precipitation	363
20.7	Chemical Routes to Nonoxide Powders	364
20.8	Platelets	365
20.9	Nanopowders by Vapor-Phase Reactions	365

20.10	Characterizing Powders	366
20.11	Characterizing Powders by Microscopy	366
20.12	Sieving	366
20.13	Sedimentation	367
20.14	The Coulter Counter	368
20.15	Characterizing Powders by Light Scattering	368
20.16	Characterizing Powders by X-ray Diffraction	369
20.17	Measuring Surface Area (the BET Method)	369
20.18	Determining Particle Composition and Purity	370
20.19	Making Fibers and Whiskers	370
20.20	Oxide Fibers	371
20.21	Whiskers	372
20.22	Glass Fibers	372
20.23	Coating Fibers	373
20.24	Making Ceramic–Matrix Composites	374
20.25	Ceramic–Matrix Composites from Powders and Slurries	374
20.26	Ceramic–Matrix Composites by Infiltration	375
20.27	<i>In Situ</i> Processes	375
21	Glass and Glass-Ceramics	379
21.1	Definitions	379
21.2	History	380
21.3	Viscosity, η	383
21.4	Glass: A Summary of Its Properties, or Not	385
21.5	Defects in Glass	386
21.6	Heterogeneous Glass	386
21.7	Yttrium–Aluminum Glass	386
21.8	Coloring Glass	386
21.9	Glass Laser	388
21.10	Precipitates in Glass	388
21.11	Crystallizing Glass	388
21.12	Glass as Glaze and Enamel	390
21.13	Corrosion of Glass and Glaze	392
21.14	Types of Ceramic Glasses	393
21.15	Natural Glass	394
21.16	The Physics of Glass	396
22	Sols, Gels, and Organic Chemistry	400
22.1	Sol-Gel Processing	400
22.2	Structure and Synthesis of Alkoxides	401
22.3	Properties of Alkoxides	402
22.4	The Sol-Gel Process Using Metal Alkoxides	403
22.5	Characterization of the Sol-Gel Process	406
22.6	Powders, Coatings, Fibers, Crystalline, or Glass	407
23	Shaping and Forming	412
23.1	The Words	412
23.2	Binders and Plasticizers	413
23.3	Slip and Slurry	413
23.4	Dry Pressing	414
23.5	Hot Pressing	414
23.6	Cold Isostatic Pressing	415
23.7	Hot Isostatic Pressing	416
23.8	Slip Casting	417
23.9	Extrusion	418

23.10	Injection Molding	419
23.11	Rapid Prototyping	420
23.12	Green Machining	420
23.13	Binder Burnout	421
23.14	Final Machining	421
23.15	Making Porous Ceramics	422
23.16	Shaping Pottery	422
23.17	Shaping Glass	423
24	Sintering and Grain Growth	427
24.1	The Sintering Process	427
24.2	The Terminology of Sintering	429
24.3	Capillary Forces and Surface Forces	429
24.4	Sintering Spheres and Wires	429
24.5	Grain Growth	431
24.6	Sintering and Diffusion	431
24.7	Liquid-Phase Sintering	433
24.8	Hot Pressing	433
24.9	Pinning Grain Boundaries	434
24.10	More Grain Growth	435
24.11	Grain Boundaries, Surfaces, and Sintering	436
24.12	Exaggerated Grain Growth	437
24.13	Fabricating Complex Shapes	438
24.14	Pottery	439
24.15	Pores and Porous Ceramics	439
24.16	Sintering with Two and Three Phases	440
24.17	Examples of Sintering in Action	441
24.18	Computer Modeling	441
25	Solid-State Phase Transformations and Reactions	444
25.1	Transformations and Reactions: The Link	444
25.2	The Terminology	445
25.3	Technology	445
25.4	Phase Transformations without Changing Chemistry	447
25.5	Phase Transformations Changing Chemistry	448
25.6	Methods for Studying Kinetics	449
25.7	Diffusion through a Layer: Slip Casting	450
25.8	Diffusion through a Layer: Solid-State Reactions	451
25.9	The Spinel-Forming Reaction	451
25.10	Inert Markers and Reaction Barriers	452
25.11	Simplified Darken Equation	453
25.12	The Incubation Period	454
25.13	Particle Growth and the Effect of Misfit	454
25.14	Thin-Film Reactions	455
25.15	Reactions in an Electric Field	457
25.16	Phase Transformations Involving Glass	458
25.17	Pottery	459
25.18	Cement	459
25.19	Reactions Involving a Gas Phase	460
25.20	Curved Interfaces	461
26	Processing Glass and Glass-Ceramics	463
26.1	The Market for Glass and Glass Products	463
26.2	Processing Bulk Glasses	463
26.3	Bubbles	467

26.4	Flat Glass	468
26.5	Float-Glass	469
26.6	Glassblowing	470
26.7	Coating Glass	472
26.8	Safety Glass	473
26.9	Foam Glass	473
26.10	Sealing Glass	473
26.11	Enamel	474
26.12	Photochromic Glass	474
26.13	Ceramming: Changing Glass to Glass-Ceramics	474
26.14	Glass for Art and Sculpture	476
26.15	Glass for Science and Engineering	478
27	Coatings and Thick Films	481
27.1	Defining Thick Film	481
27.2	Tape Casting	481
27.3	Dip Coating	484
27.4	Spin Coating	484
27.5	Spraying	485
27.6	Electrophoretic Deposition	486
27.7	Thick-Film Circuits	488
28	Thin Films and Vapor Deposition	494
28.1	The Difference between Thin Films and Thick Films	494
28.2	Acronyms, Adjectives, and Hyphens	494
28.3	Requirements for Thin Ceramic Films	495
28.4	Chemical Vapor Deposition	495
28.5	Thermodynamics of Chemical Vapor Deposition	497
28.6	Chemical Vapor Deposition of Ceramic Films for Semiconductor Devices	498
28.7	Types of Chemical Vapor Deposition	499
28.8	Chemical Vapor Deposition Safety	500
28.9	Evaporation	500
28.10	Sputtering	501
28.11	Molecular-Beam Epitaxy	502
28.12	Pulsed-Laser Deposition	503
28.13	Ion-Beam-Assisted Deposition	504
28.14	Substrates	504
29	Growing Single Crystals	507
29.1	Why Single Crystals?	507
29.2	A Brief History of Growing Ceramic Single Crystals	507
29.3	Methods for Growing Single Crystals of Ceramics	508
29.4	Melt Technique: Verneuil (Flame-Fusion)	509
29.5	Melt Technique: Arc-Image Growth	511
29.6	Melt Technique: Czochralski	511
29.7	Melt Technique: Skull Melting	514
29.8	Melt Technique: Bridgman–Stockbarger	515
29.9	Melt Technique: Heat-Exchange Method	516
29.10	Applying Phase Diagrams to Single-Crystal Growth	516
29.11	Solution Technique: Hydrothermal	517
29.12	Solution Technique: Hydrothermal Growth at Low Temperature	519
29.13	Solution Technique: Flux Growth	519
29.14	Solution Technique: Growing Diamonds	521

29.15	Vapor Technique: Vapor–Liquid–Solid	521
29.16	Vapor Technique: Sublimation	522
29.17	Preparing Substrates for Thin-Film Applications	522
29.18	Growing Nanowires and Nanotubes by Vapor–Liquid–Solid and Not	522

PART VII PROPERTIES AND APPLICATIONS

30	Conducting Charge or Not	529
30.1	Ceramics as Electrical Conductors	529
30.2	Conduction Mechanisms in Ceramics	531
30.3	Number of Conduction Electrons	532
30.4	Electron Mobility	533
30.5	Effect of Temperature	533
30.6	Ceramics with Metal-Like Conductivity	534
30.7	Applications for High- σ Ceramics	535
30.8	Semiconducting Ceramics	537
30.9	Examples of Extrinsic Semiconductors	539
30.10	Varistors	540
30.11	Thermistors	541
30.12	Wide-Band-Gap Semiconductors	542
30.13	Ion Conduction	543
30.14	Fast Ion Conductors	543
30.15	Batteries	544
30.16	Fuel Cells	544
30.17	Ceramic Insulators	546
30.18	Substrates and Packages for Integrated Circuits	548
30.19	Insulating Layers in Integrated Circuits	549
30.20	Superconductivity	550
30.21	Ceramic Superconductors	551
31	Locally Redistributing Charge	556
31.1	Background on Dielectrics	556
31.2	Ferroelectricity	560
31.3	BaTiO ₃ : The Prototypical Ferroelectric	562
31.4	Solid Solutions with BaTiO ₃	565
31.5	Other Ferroelectric Ceramics	565
31.6	Relaxor Dielectrics	565
31.7	Ceramic Capacitors	565
31.8	Ceramic Ferroelectrics for Memory Applications	568
31.9	Piezoelectricity	569
31.10	Lead Zirconate–Lead Titanate (PZT) Solid Solutions	570
31.11	Applications for Piezoelectric Ceramics	571
31.12	Piezoelectric Materials for Microelectromechanical Systems	572
31.13	Pyroelectricity	572
31.14	Applications for Pyroelectric Ceramics	573
32	Interacting with and Generating Light	575
32.1	Some Background for Optical Ceramics	575
32.2	Transparency	577
32.3	The Refractive Index	578
32.4	Reflection from Ceramic Surfaces	579
32.5	Color in Ceramics	580
32.6	Coloring Glass and Glazes	581
32.7	Ceramic Pigments and Stains	581

32.8	Translucent Ceramics	583
32.9	Lamp Envelopes	584
32.10	Fluorescence	585
32.11	The Basics of Optical Fibers	586
32.12	Phosphors and Emitters	588
32.13	Solid-State Lasers	589
32.14	Electrooptic Ceramics for Optical Devices	590
32.15	Reacting to Other Parts of the Spectrum	594
32.16	Optical Ceramics in Nature	595
33	Using Magnetic Fields and Storing Data	598
33.1	A Brief History of Magnetic Ceramics	598
33.2	Magnetic Dipoles	599
33.3	The Basic Equations, the Words, and the Units	600
33.4	The Five Classes of Magnetic Material	601
33.5	Diamagnetic Ceramics	601
33.6	Superconducting Magnets	602
33.7	Paramagnetic Ceramics	603
33.8	Measuring χ	604
33.9	Ferromagnetism	604
33.10	Antiferromagnetism and Colossal Magnetoresistance	605
33.11	Ferrimagnetism	606
33.12	Estimating the Magnetization of Ferrimagnets	609
33.13	Magnetic Domains and Bloch Walls	609
33.14	Imaging Magnetic Domains	610
33.15	Motion of Domain Walls and Hysteresis Loops	611
33.16	Hard and Soft Ferrites	612
33.17	Microwave Ferrites	614
33.18	Data Storage and Recording	614
33.19	Magnetic Nanoparticles	616
34	Responding to Temperature Changes	619
34.1	Summary of Terms and Units	619
34.2	Absorption and Heat Capacity	619
34.3	Melting Temperatures	621
34.4	Vaporization	623
34.5	Thermal Conductivity	624
34.6	Measuring Thermal Conductivity	626
34.7	Microstructure and Thermal Conductivity	626
34.8	Using High Thermal Conductivity	628
34.9	Thermal Expansion	628
34.10	Effect of Crystal Structure on α	630
34.11	Thermal Expansion Measurement	631
34.12	Importance of Matching α s	632
34.13	Applications for Low- α	632
34.14	Thermal Shock	633
35	Ceramics in Biology and Medicine	635
35.1	What Are Bioceramics?	635
35.2	Advantages and Disadvantages of Ceramics	636
35.3	Ceramic Implants and the Structure of Bone	638
35.4	Alumina and Zirconia	639
35.5	Bioactive Glasses	640
35.6	Bioactive Glass-Ceramics	641
35.7	Hydroxyapatite	642

35.8	Bioceramics in Composites	644
35.9	Bioceramic Coatings	645
35.10	Radiotherapy Glasses	646
35.11	Pyrolytic Carbon Heart Valves	646
35.12	Nanobioceramics	647
35.13	Dental Ceramics	648
35.14	Biomimetics	648
36	Minerals and Gems	652
36.1	Minerals	652
36.2	What Is a Gem?	653
36.3	In the Rough	653
36.4	Cutting and Polishing	654
36.5	Light and Optics in Gemology	656
36.6	Color in Gems and Minerals	660
36.7	Optical Effects	661
36.8	Identifying Minerals and Gems	663
36.9	Chemical Stability (Durability)	664
36.10	Diamonds, Sapphires, Rubies, and Emeralds	664
36.11	Opal	666
36.12	Other Gems	667
36.13	Minerals with Inclusions	669
36.14	Treatment of Gems	670
36.15	The Mineral and Gem Trade	670
37	Industry and the Environment	675
37.1	The Beginning of the Modern Ceramics Industry	675
37.2	Growth and Globalization	676
37.3	Types of Market	677
37.4	Case Studies	677
37.5	Emerging Areas	680
37.6	Mining	682
37.7	Recycling	683
37.8	In the Nuclear Industry	685
37.9	Producing and Storing Hydrogen	685
37.10	As Green Materials	687
Index		691
Details for Figures and Tables		701