

Experience Southwest Silversmithing
Jan Term 2026
January 4 – 24, 2026

Welcome letter for Silversmith Students

Dear Silversmith students,

Shortly we will be together at Ghost Ranch creating jewelry and learning about silver and stones and Southwestern cultures. We wish to welcome you to our class Experience Southwest Silversmithing and tell you a little bit about ourselves and what you can expect from our program. This class is a three-week immersive course in how to make southwest-style silver and stone jewelry, including an introduction to the history of Southwest jewelry-making and its role in the culture and economy of the Southwest. This class is for both beginners and experienced silversmiths. Students will learn a variety of silversmith techniques, including sawing and soldering, overlay, bezel setting, cold-connections, stone cutting and polishing (lapidary), channel inlay, tufa casting and stamping.

Class participants will spend three weeks in the beautiful and fully equipped Ghost Ranch silversmith studio with master teachers and guest artists. Participants will also interact with silversmith artists from Santa Fe and the Pueblos, tour several Santa Fe museum collections, and engage with native artists at the historic Santa Fe Plaza where makers have been selling their jewelry for generations.

Each week of this three-week course will have a distinct focus, with different co-instructors having expertise in the techniques being taught. Week 1 will focus on introductory silversmith skills, including design, sawing, soldering, bezel setting, and stamping. Week 2 will focus on lapidary and tufa casting, including the construction of beautiful channel inlay bracelets. Week 3 will be an open studio focusing on refining learned techniques and the construction of western-themed jewelry such as bolo ties and statement rings.

Silver jewelry making in the Southwest has a long and rich history. Today, the making, trading and selling of silver and stone jewelry is a vital part of Southwestern art and culture. This class is both a hands-on course in the basics of making silver jewelry and lapidary with stones and shell, and in the history of Southwest jewelry-making and its role in the culture and economy of local families and communities. In addition to time in the studio with master teachers and guest artists, participants in the class will have the opportunity to tour museum collections and visit the historic Santa Fe Plaza where native makers have been selling their creations for generations. All participants will leave the class with wearable and sellable jewelry of their own making.

The Ghost Ranch jewelry studio is fully equipped with tools, supplies, silver and stones to work with. If you have hand tools of your own and wish to bring them to class, please make sure your name is on them. If you have your own silver and/or stones to use, please bring them along, too.

PLEASE NOTE: While class tuition includes the supply costs for consumables and most stones used in the class, students should plan on an additional cost for the silver used in class projects—it will be available for purchase at the studio. Based on experience, students should expect to spend an additional \$200-\$500, or more, for their silver purchases and perhaps some special stones, depending

*upon the desired number and types of jewelry pieces you wish to make. We occasionally have higher-quality rocks such as turquoise available for purchase. Silver prices continue to increase, so this is an estimate based on the current silver market. **Cash or Checks are the preferred payment method.***

Students should bring warm clothes (its wintertime!) and clothes that can get soiled as our work involves chemicals and tools that can damage clothing. Please see the Ghost Ranch website for additional information about what to bring with you to the ranch.

The class schedule is 9AM - noon and afternoons from 1:30 – 4PM, weekdays. For those who are interested, the studio may remain open late afternoons and evenings, though participation in other Ghost Ranch activities is highly encouraged. Ghost Ranch is a wonderful place with many things to do and places to explore. The class will also take a field trip into Santa Fe, weather permitting, to visit the jewelry collections at the Wheelwright Museum and learn about the history of southwest jewelry arts. We will visit the Santa Fe Plaza and its Native American jewelry artists, several art galleries, and perhaps a Santa Fe jewelry supply store.

For this class, we anticipate that many students will have had no experience with jewelry-making, and we are excited to teach you new skills. Some of you many come to the class with prior experience, and we offer you a chance to develop your skills further in the inspiring environment of Ghost Ranch!

Your instructors:

Jamie Halpern, Lead Instructor, is an accomplished silversmith, lapidary artist and instructor. His work reflects southwestern art and jewelry-making styles and is influenced by his extensive travels. Jamie works with silver and colorful semi-precious stones through metal fabrication, casting and inlay. Through his teaching with beginning and advanced jewelry students and artists, Jamie celebrates creativity and nurtures artistic expression. He leads the silversmithing and lapidary arts program at Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, New Mexico and has taught classes at Ghost Ranch for over 14 years. He works in his studio in Santa Fe, NM and his jewelry is sold through private commissions.

JEHalpernJewelry.com

Patte Ranney, Co-Instructor Week 1, has been coming to Ghost Ranch since 2009 and has enjoyed a wide variety of workshops through the years. Admiring the end-of-week display of a silver class, about a decade ago, rekindled her long lost love of smithing - a craft she had dabbled with in high school. Actually, it lit the torch!

Since that awakening, she has dedicated nearly all her ranch time to the silver studio. She credits Jamie with teaching and guiding her to develop her smithing and lapidary skills. Though she once claimed that her trips to the ranch in both January and July were enough to quench her thirst for all things silver, she now has a complete studio at home. Her work is recognized for excellence in craftsmanship.

Patte spent her career as a licensed boat captain, interpretive naturalist, and environmental educator in the lowcountry of South Carolina. In her retirement, she has become a full-time artisan working in silver, leather, fiber, and paper. She is an exhibiting artist with the Art League of Hilton Head and sells

her pieces at local markets and by commission. You can find her at <https://www.instagram.com/thesetwohandsstudio/>

Steve Wikviya LaRance, Co-Instructor Week 2, is an acclaimed artist of Hopi descent. He has studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe NM. He has exhibited his work and won numerous awards at some of the most prestigious Native American Art shows in the nation including The Heard Museum Indian Market (Phoenix, AZ), Eiteljorg Museum Native Arts Market (Indianapolis, IN), National Museum of the American Indian (Washington DC) and the Santa Fe Indian Market. His work is on exhibit at many prestigious institutions — in the Arizona State Museum (Tucson, AZ), Linden Museum (Stuttgart, Germany), Museum of Indian Arts & Culture (Santa Fe, NM), National Museum of Turkmenistan (Ashgabat, Turkmenistan), among others.

Mr. LaRance creates unique one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces utilizing the Tufa Cast technique originating from the metal smiths of the Native Southwest. This casting technique uses the volcanic Tufa stone found in the region. The tufa serves as the mold in which creative designs are carved by hand into the tufa. Molten silver is then poured or cast into the tufa molds to create beautifully textured artistic creations in jewelry. Steve's work is found in many private and public collections throughout the world. <https://denipahlarancefineart.com>

Brandon Ruppert, Co-instructor Week 3, has always been a maker and a builder of things. One of his fondest memories is as a child building birdhouses with his grandpa. Brandon attended the Krenov School of Fine Woodworking as a young adult where he developed an eye for craftsmanship, balance in design, and the method of building with raw materials, often with self-made tools. Brandon has spent the last three decades raising a family and working at his family's cattle ranch in northern New Mexico, while continuing to create in both wood and metal medias. In 2021 Brandon attended the silversmithing class taught by Jamie Halpern at Ghost Ranch and has found it to be a wonderful creative outlet. Brandon's work can be seen at MoMo Taos in Taos, New Mexico.

If you have any questions about our classes, please feel free to e-mail Jamie at: finnpern@gmail.com
We are excited about the opportunity to be with you and help you bring your jewelry creations to life!

Sincerely,
Jamie, Patte, Steve and Brandon