ORGANIZATIONAL BLURB FOR CHEMISTRY 225, 2017

Organic Chemistry, Fall, 2017

8 am, Tu Th in TISC UC50
11am, Tu Th in GCASL C95

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Recitation Leaders

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General Course Description: Our goal is not to transmit facts to you. Facts will inevitably be forgotten, and have an uncomfortable way of changing with time. Instead we will focus on learning how to “think organic chemistry,” on how to become a good problem solver.

The first semester of this course covers structure, bonding, spectroscopy, and the fundamental building block reactions of organic chemistry: substitution, elimination, and additions. We will cover approximately 10 chapters, 1-10 (maybe 11 as well). There is a detailed schedule posted, but keep in mind that the details are certain to change as we go along.

Texts: The texts will be “Organic Chemistry, Fifth Edition,” Maitland Jones, Jr., and Steven A. Fleming, W.W. Norton, New York, and the Study Guide, also published by Norton, by Jones, H.L. Gingrich and Fleming. The Study Guide has elaborate answers to all the problems in the book, and is utterly essential. The text and lectures are separate parts of the course. There will be material covered at length in the book that we do not touch on in lecture, and vice versa. The Classes site has general chapter and page listings, but these are meant to be neither inclusive nor exclusive. You are expected to forage widely in your readings, using the index as well as other texts. We can recommend Marc Loudon’s fine book, “Organic Chemistry, Fourth Edition,” Oxford as a book that can be profitably consulted for another view on things.

Classes Site: Everything is under “Resources.” Here you will find suggested problems and answers for each chapter, old and current exams and answers, readings, assorted handouts and announcements, and, sometimes, Opportunities for additional Hour Test points. Check it often.

Problem Sets: The Classes site has suggested book problems for every chapter. There will also be "extra" problems posted each week. These are excellent models for the kind of
things you will see on the exams (many come from old exams). Unfortunately, we do not
have the manpower to grade these, so they are not required. However, you will find that
doing problems is vital in preparing for exams. You are urged in the strongest terms to do
those problems and to do them without the aid of the Study Guide or posted answers. The
effectiveness of working problems drops precipitously if you do not do them first without
the answers. There will probably be too many problems for you to do them all, especially
as the semester proceeds and demands on your time increase. One obvious solution is to do
only some of the problems. That technique seems easy, but many people are intimidated by
this simple idea and just abandon the problems until panic time. There is nothing wrong
with doing every other problem! BY FAR the best way to do the problems is to do them in
a group, with each member of the group having the task of doing one or two problems and
then explaining it to the group. If you adopt this method, you will find that the “explaining”
part is an extraordinarily effective way to learn. You are urged in the strongest terms to do
this. The problem sets, especially the later ones, do not contain “drill” problems. Such
exercises are common in the book, however. It is very important that you be in control of
the basic parts of the course before you attempt the “think” problems on the problem sets of
in the exams.

**Exams:**

Dates provided by the Deans. Please note that we do not pick these dates. They are inflicted
on us (and you). The exam schedule is far from ideal.

Exam 1  Friday, October 6, 2:00-4:00, place TBA
Exam 2  Friday, November 3, 2:00-4:00, place TBA
Exam 3  Friday, December 1, 2:00-4:00, place TBA

On the two-hour in-term exams, resist the temptation to over–analyze. Thinking “simple” is
usually the right thing to do. As Ted Williams once said, “If you don’t think too good,
don’t think too much.”

Unfortunately, on the "Final," NYU, in its infinite wisdom, mandates no more than 1 hour
50 minutes. We must go along with this regulation, no matter how much we disagree with
it.

Final is in December, place, time TBA

Please note that all exams are cumulative. Recent material may be emphasized, but you are
responsible for all the material covered so far.

**Quizzes:** There will be roughly one quiz a week, given in recitation. The best 8 of 10 will
count. See Schedule.
Office Hours: Office hours do not work well in large classes such as this one. For example, if I schedule two hours, what happens is that 20-40 people show up, lined up in the hall. Each person takes a minimum of 15 minutes. Thus, almost everyone waits in vain. The result is dissatisfaction, frustration, and anger on your part – and mine. Instead, I will hold an extra question session roughly once a week. I will try to vary the time, but NYU is very, very stingy with rooms, and it is difficult. Basically, I have to take what I can get. You can always email me (it is amazing how well email works, even in as "visual" a course as this one). You can also come by my office or, for serious problems, email me requesting an appointment.

Grades, Grading Schemes, Psychopathology, and Competition: At almost every school, the course in organic chemistry has the reputation of being very hard and, often, destructively competitive. Moreover, it is widely held that success in “orgo” is essential to gaining entrance to The Medical School Of Your Choice. We can do nothing about the last notion, as it is utterly external to our efforts here. Most Important: In this course, you are not in competition with your neighbor. What he or she gets has NO - repeat: NO - bearing on your grade. There is NO curve, which simply means two things: 1. There is no pre-set number or percentage of A’s, B’s and so on. There can be a year in which everyone gets an A. 2. Exams will not be scaled to some pre-set number. We aim for a median of about 65 on all exams. Historically, 65 has been roughly the B – B minus divide. There are two methods of calculating your score. You will get the better of the two possibilities. 1. We drop the lowest score on the three in-term exams. The average of the remaining two counts 60%. The Final counts 30% and the quiz grade counts 10%. 2. We count all three exam grades. The exam average counts 65%. The Final counts 25% and the quiz grade counts 10%. Your overall grade is made up of 75% course grade and 25% lab grade.

HOWEVER, you must pass both components of the course. An F or D in the lab will not be offset by a higher score in the course, and vice versa.

I am going to supply some rough historical grade cutoffs. If this information generates too much wear and tear through complaining, it will not be repeated. Please read the following information carefully. WATCH OUT! These numbers refer to the course part of the grade – remember, the lab will be factored into the overall grade.

ROUGH historical grade cutoffs: Nota bene: There is a price to this information. Cutoff lines are drawn where there are breaks, not at arbitrary scores. Those breaks vary a bit from year to year. DO NOT - repeat: DO NOT! - send me an email that says something like, “You said the cutoff for an A was about 81 and I got a 81.0001 and therefore I demand a grade change.”

Lowest A about 81-82
Lowest A minus high seventies
Lowest B plus 72-73  
Lowest B about 65  
Lowest B minus about 61  
Lowest C about 46-47  
Lowest D about 40  

Things To Do:

1. Come to class. Attendance in this course is not good. Consider the following piece of data, which has been replicated many times. The exam average of those students in the classroom after an exam is approximately 20 points higher than the average for those absent. Statistically, every single absence costs you about 2.5 points on your final average. We don't deduct for absences, nature does it automatically.

2. Take good, extensive notes. Involvement is key in this course. Do not photograph the board - that's hopeless and a recipe for grade disaster. There is a connection between the pencil and the brain. Maintain it!

3. Go to Recitation! Here, too, attendance has been less than optimal. This year's group of Recitation leaders is outstanding (honest, it really is).

4. Work the problems, if possible in a group.

Some Things Not To Do:

1. Do not take an exam, hand it in, and then plead for a makeup. If you are sick, or have an academic conflict we will do our best to accommodate if you let us know. But if you decide to take the exam, it counts, period.

2. Do not, after the course is over, petition us to change the whole grading system.

3. Do not, after the course is over, petition us to create a special grading system just for you. In particular "this grade hurts my GPA, please raise it" is not grounds for a grade change. We get this exact request every year.

4. Handing in a regrade request is just fine, but do not be combative or nasty. No one is out to get you. Graders do make a few mistakes - that's part of the human condition - but that's all it is, a simple error. Be especially wary of saying "My answer is exactly what the answer key says." It is almost never true, and when it isn’t true, that statement antagonizes the re-grader (me). Please do not make regrade requests before you have your exam back or before the answers have been posted.