

ORGANIZATIONAL BLURB FOR CHEMISTRY CHEM-UA 225  
Organic Chemistry 1, Fall 2016

Tuesday, Thursday, 8:00 am - 9:15 pm, TISC UC50

**Maitland Jones, Jr.**, 1001T Silver, 998-8004, [mj55@nyu.edu](mailto:mj55@nyu.edu), Office Hours by appointment, but see below.

Recitation Leaders

**Thomas Kwok**, ([tjk2005@nyu.edu](mailto:tjk2005@nyu.edu))  
TBA

**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 will cover structure, bonding, spectroscopy, and the fundamental building block reactions of organic chemistry: substitution, elimination, and addition reactions. We will cover approximately 12 chapters, 1-12. There is a schedule posted, but keep in mind that the details are certain to change as we go along. Our aim is to teach the best course in organic chemistry anywhere. Although we may – or may not – fall short of this goal, it will not be for lack of effort. In turn, this course demands a lot of you. For you to succeed, for you to learn how to be that good problem solver, and for you to do well, you must participate actively in the course. You cannot miss lectures. **Experience tells us that you lose about 2 points off your final average every time you miss a class.** Think about it... miss ten lectures and your A becomes a B or lower. Missing lecture is highly self destructive behavior. Moreover, you cannot sit passively in lecture and absorb information. You must actively take notes in lecture and, especially, do the problems as you work through the book on your own. Organic chemistry must be “read with a pencil.” **DO NOT** simply photograph the blackboard - that is NOT “taking notes,” and will not work - repeat: will not work!

**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. Norton usually offers a package deal in which the Study Guide is essentially free. The books are available at the bookstore and elsewhere. No, you cannot effectively use earlier editions of this book because much has been changed in going from the fourth to fifth Editions. The CD that comes with the book has computer-generated animations of many reactions, and has been used as a source of exam problems. You need it. 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*. This Classes site will have general chapter 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.

**Models:** You need a set of Molecular Models. We suggest Maruzen Models, available from the bookstore, or Darling Models available through the www:

<http://www.darlingmodels.com/>

If you can spend a bit more, better Framework Molecular Models are available though Amazon at less than \$50. One set could easily be used by two people.

**Classes Site:** Here you will find suggested problems for each chapter, old and current exams and answers, readings, assorted handouts and announcements, and, sometimes, Opportunities for Additional Examination Points. In addition, all the problems (and answers) used in the “problem solving” version of this course will be available to you on Classes. Check it often.

**Office Hours:** Office hours generally do not work 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 take your chances and come by Silver 1001T. Or, better, make an appointment by email. But DO NOT attempt to use this meeting to “negotiate” exam points. There is an official regrade procedure that works well (see below for details).

**Problem Sets:** The Classes site has suggested problems for every chapter. 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 aide of the Study Guide. The effectiveness of working problems drops precipitously if you do not do them first without the Study Guide. There will probably be too many problems in the book and on the Classes site 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! The best way to do the problems is to do them with 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. 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 or on the exams.

**Exams:** We have been assigned dates on which we can give exams (see Schedule - Please note that I do not choose these dates - they are assigned and are often very inconvenient). On all exams except the Final you will be given 2 hours. We promise that the extra time is not to allow us to write extra-long exams. Problems in organic chemistry tend to respond to contemplation, not “blitzthought.” The hope is that this system will allow those who, like MJ, work slowly, to relax during exams. There is no reason to take all the time if you are done. Leave when you are done. 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.” Please note that all exams are cumulative. Recent material may be emphasized, but you are responsible for all the material covered so far. You may drop the lowest of the three exams - see the section on grading. Sample exams and answers from 2-13 and 2015 are posted.

**Regrades.** Every so often we make an error. Usually it is technical - an example would be points awarded inside the exam but not properly transferred to the cover. Sometimes we make an error in interpretation or miss something you have written. If, after the answers have been posted, and *after you have looked at your exam*, you feel strongly that an error has been made, the procedure is to hand the exam back to your recitation leader who will check it against the copy and then give it to me. It will be quickly returned to you in recitation.

Two things:

1. Do not hand in a regrade for 1-2 points unless the issue is technical. That amount is within the noise on any exam that asks "think" questions.
2. If you hand the exam in, you are handing in the whole exam. Points may come off as well as be put on. **Important:** About 75-80% of grading errors are made in your favor. To be frank, handing in a small regrade is rarely worth it. But if you are sure, by all means do so.

**Quizzes:** In almost every weekly recitation (see posted schedule) there will be a 15-20 minute quiz, usually at the start of class. The problems will sometimes be taken from the problems in the book, but their exact makeup is the responsibility of your recitation leader. The quizzes will be graded and we will count your best 7 of 9. Sick? Lost? Relaxin' on the beach? Those are drop days for you – do **not** bug us with pleas for exceptions – we are dropping two after all!

**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, and in the Fall semester, about 65% of the students get A's and B's (so, the course is not that hard). 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*.

**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." Despite this sentence, such pleas/demands are made every year. Please do not do it! Note also that there is always some subjectivity about grades

on or close to a line. A student who improves with every exam and winds up just below a cut is likely to get boosted. A student who declines throughout the semester is not.

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

**Some More 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 petition us after the course is over 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, do not ask for "extra work" in order to raise your grade.
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." That statement is almost never true, and when it isn't true, it can antagonize the re-grader (me). Please do not make regrade requests before you have got your exam back or before the answers have been posted.