

I am sending this message to everyone in the class and on the waiting list. The enrollment is already overly full and I won't go over 180 students. There are usually a few students who are dropped out of the course by the computer because of prerequisites or fee issues. Normally students on the wait list move up to take those spots unless you have a hold for some reason. A few students (less than 10) have been added off of the waiting list so far. It is possible (but not certain) a few more might be added. The official enrollment for this class started off at 96 and I allowed the chair to raise the enrollment to 180 (the size of the room is 200), that is 84 extra students and that is why I will not go over 180 max.

I am sending this long message before next semester begins. I'm hoping to get you ready for the challenge that lies ahead, which will be here before you know it. This course moves fast. The first organic lecture represents 3% of our course, 1 week = 7%. You will have lots of other stuff to do: other classes, work schedule, exercise or sports, commuting, recreation, friends and family. Clearly, there is a lot of competition for your time. Now, organic is thought to be a hard course, but it's not really the material. The hard part is that it requires attention to details, discipline, consistency, persistence and organization. Those are the traits you need to succeed in this course, in your coming quarter, in your college career and in your life. Organic chemistry is really one of the more unforgiving subjects in this regard.

Be realistic about how much time and effort you can devote to organic chemistry. If you have too many units and/or too many outside commitments (work, commuting, family...), then wait and take organic when your demands are not so great. I see many students rushing to get through college as fast as they can. Sometimes the shortest distance between 2 points is not a straight line. If it takes an extra year to get a quality result, it will be worth it getting to your desired career that lasts, maybe 40 years of your life. Are you going to look back at 65 and say I regret rushing through college getting a poor record and not achieving my desired goal, or will you say "I'm glad I took the extra time to get a great record to obtain the career I really wanted". If rushing produces a bad result and you have to go back and do it over, then it wasn't worth it. It wasn't really the shorter path and you also have a bad mark on your record.

The secret to any challenging course is practice and repetition to correct the inevitable mistakes that occur along the way (translation – that means it takes time). Think back to some period when you learned a new song on an instrument, or learned fundamental athletic skills or learned how to drive or similar skills for a hobby, like sewing or drawing. How many times did you practice those basic skills to get good? Usually the answer is dozens to even hundreds of times. You want those skills to be automatic, so you have confidence in your ability and not the anxiety of your weaknesses. Now think how many times you look over a problem in a course like organic chemistry, maybe once, possibly twice? That is not enough! This is why organic chemistry seems hard.

The number one quality you need to start organic is the 'right attitude'. You need the belief in yourself that you have the discipline and consistency to put forth a quality effort to succeed. You need to start the quarter with a BIG stack of blank paper and write out every problem, check your work, correct your mistakes and do it all again until you can think through the problem in your head, without the paper and without a mistake. What you are doing here is discovering your errors before you take the exams. (You are also chemically making proteins that create "memory" synapses in

your brain and you need repetition to make those proteins permanent.) An alternative approach that I've seen students use successfully is to get a small white board that you can carry in your backpack and 'write and erase' to the nth power. The closer to daily practice you can get, the better your chances are in the course. Some foods and nutrition students need a B- in the course, so you'll need to be extra diligent. Actually, if you do what I describe above, you will probably get an A in the course, or at least a B.

I deliberately count the homework as 20% of the grade to reward your effort in the course. I don't have time to actually grade the homework. I spend a mere 1 minute to look at a paper and enter into excel takes 180 minutes (3 hours!) I glance at the homework for perceived effort (10 = good, 9 = OK and 8 = poor, 0 = you didn't turn it in). On the other hand, I grade the exam problems rigorously.

In-class iclicker questions add another 5%, which combines with homework to make up 25% of your grade. On clickers, you get 1 point for pushing the button and 1 point for the correct answer with usually 2 or 3 choices. The 100% score depends on whoever gets the most points on the clicker questions. You can actually guess your way to a decent score here, but guessing isn't a productive strategy. If you don't have a clicker, just sign the daily clicker sheet at the front desk and I will give you the 1 point for pushing the button (but no points for the correct answer). Make sure you have new batteries and make sure your transmitting frequency is set to AA (check with me if you are not sure). These parts of the grade are a gift for your effort in the course. Don't let them go to waste. You completely control this part of your grade.

The rest of the grade comes from two midterms (20% or 0%) and the final exam (35% or 55% or 75% or 100% → read the syllabus). I have a web page (it's NOT Blackboard) with prior midterm and final exams and keys. You can also look at the Chem 314 exams for many similar questions (but on the 314 exams there are also some problems there that we do not cover). The first midterm comes around the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> week and the second midterm is the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> week. The early material is easier than the later material, which gets progressively harder. You probably want to get the best score(s) you can on the first exam. An added bonus is that material on the midterms makes up about 50% of the final exam, so it counts twice. That can be doubly good or doubly bad; you decide.

Link to "Courses" web page: <http://www.cpp.edu/~psbeauchamp/courses.html>

Link to "Exams" web page: [http://www.cpp.edu/~psbeauchamp/sample\\_exams.html](http://www.cpp.edu/~psbeauchamp/sample_exams.html)

We are at the beginning of the semester, so hope, expectations and possibilities are high. However, within 2 weeks your path through the course will be set and I can pretty much predict how you will do in the course. Make sure your path follows the direction to where you want to finish. It sounds corny, but the everyday choices you make here decide your future career and life. You make those choices, not your friends, not your family and certainly not me. There are about 180 of you in organic chemistry this semester, too many for me to keep track of. I can barely keep track of my own life. Don't find an excuse for failure (the course is too hard, the teacher is no good, etc.), instead find reasons for success (hard work, discipline, persistence, organization, etc). If you say you don't have time to do all of this, then ask yourself if you will have time to take the course all over again, plus the bad grade, plus more money, plus you only get 3 tries. This course moves fast, so make sure you move a little faster by staying ahead of the lectures.

So, when you come to class on Thursday:

1. Have your books in your possession (text and solutions).
2. Turn in your syllabus quiz. Make a unique mark that you can quickly recognize to pick it up when passed back in the next lecture.
3. Pre-read chapter 1 and try some problems, check your work and correct your mistakes, then try the problems again. This helps you to discover your deficiencies and errors before the exams (not during the exams).
4. Turn in all homework. These can count 20% of your grade if you take advantage of them. The average percent of students who took advantage of this last quarter was about 90% (on 20% of the entire grade). Homework will be returned in the following lecture in 4 piles at the front of the lecture room (A-F, G-M, N-T and S-Z). Remember there are about 180 of you guys, so mark your papers with some symbol and/or color that allows you to quickly pick your work out of a big pile of papers in case you have to pick it up from a box outside my office.
5. A study buddy (or buddies) gives you someone you can share your ideas back and forth with. If you can't explain it, then you don't really know it. Your buddies can help keep you on track and keep you honest, but it's you that has to do the work. No one can do it for you, but it helps to have fellow students who share a common goal. Help each other.
6. Look at prior exams on my "Exams" web page so you know the format of the exams and the types of questions that will be on the exams. Practice doing them as we go along so you know how to do the problems. There are keys so check your answers. Don't wait until the last moment. I'm not really very tricky. My exams are too long, so that you have choices as to the problems you want to try, but you have to know your strategy before the exam for that to work to your advantage. My exams have a similar structure so you can pretty much know what to expect.
7. Make sure you push your clicker button in lectures. Think about it. What if you could add 4-5 percentage points to your grade for free at the end of the quarter (the average clicker score last semester for the entire class was 4.4/5%). You might be sitting 2 percent away from a B, but you didn't use clickers, so you get a C. Or, you did use clickers and now you are 2 percent over a B, so you get a B. I see it happen every quarter. It's a gift, don't waste it.
8. To resolve questions, use the solutions guide or study with your friends or visit office hours. Do this as quickly as possible. (Did anyone hear "First Day!") Don't let questions build until they are too big to resolve easily. That can happen in 1 week of avoidance. Don't avoid organic, embrace organic chemistry, and it will embrace you back. Hugs all around!