Chemistry 3230

The following is advice from those who took the class in Spring/Fall of 1998

“For those that want to take [the class] for whatever reason, they must be physically and mentally prepared.”

“Well honestly, I’d say unless you love chem I’d stay away (or as pre-med req.). Orgo is hard!”

“Definitely take it.”

“Study the problem sets and problems given in class. Go over them and over them and over them.”

“Should attempt to stay on top of the material as it is taught.”

“Go to office hours, and do the problem sets; the book is nice (in that order).”

“Do not get behind!!”

“Don’t take it unless it is required.”

“If you’re willing to put the work into it, it’s not as bad as you think. However, it does consume more of your time than other classes.”

“Keep up; don’t fall behind.”

“Go to class! Take good notes! Do the problems or you’re screwed!”

“It is extremely difficult, but made easier if you are determined to do well by doing work on your own. A person has to be disciplined and do the problems.”

“If you need to [take it] it’s a good course.”

“I think organic chem is an extremely challenging subject but it is possible to really feel like you are improving and learning, which is a good feeling. It required a lot of work, but with effort you see improvement.”

“Go for it, just keep up with the work. Also it helps to go by the notes as guide and make an outline of major points to keep material clear in your mind.”

“Make sure you have a lot of time and desire to do it. Use Rojas; he is willing to help.”

 “[The student should] make sure she has a course schedule such that she can afford to dedicate her larger time and energies to chem. It is a very time-intensive course that requires constant repetition.”

“It is very difficult. You have to read; you have to do as many problems as possible; it’s worth more than 3 credits for the amount you have to put in to get a good grade!”

“If you don’t have to take it, don’t. If you do, practice and go to office hours.”

“Do problems, problems, problems!”
“Great class--the stereotypes are *not* true. I feel as though I have a much greater perception of the world around me after taking this class. Biology makes a lot more sense. No aspiring biologist should not be well versed in this area.”

“The material is hard and I wouldn’t take it if it wasn’t a requirement.”

“Be prepared for *much* work and frustration.”

“Use office hours as much as possible.”

“Don’t fall behind. Make note cards, and do all problems.”

“Take it. It is the most entertaining, fun, challenging, so on course I have taken at Barnard.”

“Obvious things: stay on top of the material; do problems.”

“I would highly recommend it, except that the first semester is extremely repetitive if you have already taken chemistry.”

“Seek help early, and keep your fingers crossed.”

“It was demanding yet manageable. Except for the fact that we can’t drop a grade, it seemed fair.”

“I would tell [students] to use office hours. Read and do problems in the text before doing handouts. Do handouts twice over to make sure you understand problems. Do not buy answer manual.”

“Start with a different textbook. Don’t even bother buying Jones. Do as many problems [as possible] from all textbooks. Make sure to go over class notes *every* night, so that when it comes to studying later on you can just do problems without having to go over the basics.”

“Go to class.”

“Take it! A manageable, fair, informative, undaunting, interesting class on organic chemistry. Much work. Constant work is required to do well.”

“Keep up with the material. Work hard. Do all of the problems.”

“Study every day for at least 1 hr. Try to fit it in and rewrite notes.”

“Learn how to study early on. Each person will have a different technique that works.”

**And, finally, this:**

“I would say it’s very hard and interesting. You’ll do OK on the tests if you go to class, work problems, and memorize key mechanisms as well. The thing about this class is, hardly no one takes it unless they have to. Neither pre-med nor grad school bound, I can say that I took it because I wanted to (for an actual letter grade), and I think it was worth it, even though I’ve worked more on this class than all others combined. I would tell a person who is going to take this class to take it with a grain of salt. I mean, the only reason I stuck with it for so long is because I learned how to enjoy it in a certain way, even if I didn’t understand it a lot of times. I think this is key, because for a science that is so visual and so
abstract, as far as mental gymnastics, when you can’t see it it’s extremely difficult to master, and I personally resent the people who take it twice just to get the ‘A;’ they make it harder for those of us who see the material for the first time. The universal problems with classes like this is the fact that they are extremely competitive, even at Barnard where in general the students are very chill and not mean or dishonest or stealing pages from reserves notebooks. But this isn’t something that can be altered by the professor; it’s more of a personal digression on the nature of the medium.”

**Advice from Spring/Fall 1999:**

“It is definitely worth taking. One could definitely gain a good grasp on the subject as well as a tremendous appreciation for the wonder, relevance, and beauty of the world of organic chemistry.”

“Take it. It is an interesting and challenging subject. It requires a lot of time but if you go over the material slowly, you will pick up on it.”

“Keep up with the readings, go to office hours at least once a week and do the problem sets. Also, try not to fall behind, and ask questions if you are unclear on anything.”

“It is definitely not an easy subject but Prof. Rojas’ resources are invaluable.”

“Don’t get behind!”

“This is a tough class, but [it’s] worth the toil. There are few equally empowering experiences as that of mastering something so difficult. Taking this course has given me a great appreciation of life on earth and the complex reactions that occur even within our own bodies! It has also made me reconsider medical school on many occasions! But there is no sound reason for not taking this course because it is a challenge unlike any other in college. I have mastered my study skills and feel like I accomplished a lot. I would suggest keeping up with the material, doing problems, and taking a step back not to get caught up in the complexity of things. There is a beautiful simplicity in many of the things we study.”

“Definitely go to office hours. Take the course!!! Don’t just go to class, appreciate it.”

“I feel as though I’ve learned more in this class than in any other class I’ve taken.”

“Go to lecture! Take good notes. Do the problem sets. Go to office hours at least once a week.”

“Do what Prof. Rojas says, he doesn’t tell you to do anything that is unimportant.”

“Take this course. People get scared by the name. It isn’t an easy A but you learn a lot. You have to work on the class. The class was great.”

“If you’re willing for a challenge, it’s worth your time. But if you want to take it for pre-med requirements, try to enjoy it, why go through one year of torture. It’s not torture if your goal is to learn. One piece of practical advice: go to office hours as often as you can. It’s worth your time. Treat it as a lecture and go prepared with questions.”

“It’s a great class. Just go to all the classes and try to go to office hours and do all assigned problems and you will be fine.”

“Take it!”
“Take it! It’s probably more useful and philosophical than you’ll ever imagine.”

“This course changes your view of organic chemistry and science. Something I dreaded [was] actually, dare I say it, fun. But don’t think that means it’s cake...be ready to work your ass off.”

“It’s definitely worth it. But you must attend lectures and work out all the problem sets for it to be helpful.”

“I would tell them to go to every class, especially starting after the second test and to definitely attend office hours, they help so much b/c you go over things in such detail that little points that may be missed in class are reiterated.”

“It will be rough.”

“Pay attention in class. Start reviewing notes and problems sets early.”

“-Make flash cards with the reactions on them.
-Do all the problem sets and attend all of the lectures.
-Keep on top of the material, don’t expect to cram for the tests in one or two days and still do okay on them.”

“Are you sure you know what you’re doing?”

“I took this class in part for fun and in part so I could have it under my belt if I ever needed it. And it was fun. The problems are interesting (if you like problem solving). The text is clear and with some personality. My only advice would be: Don’t go nuts! (And buy the solutions manual.)”

“Be prepared to work. Do not take a heavy course load in conjunction with this class or you are in deep trouble!!”

“Do problem sets early (as soon as you get them). Study for exams by doing problems over and over. Learn the mechanisms but learn to quickly recognize product from given reagents and starting material or reagent from product and starting material for the exams.”

“I would say that organic chemistry is a great class. I’m not pre-med, I’m not a science major, and I love the way it is visual and logical and helps me learn about what the world is made of. Don’t be intimidated. Organic chemistry relies on logic, common sense, and thinking rather than formulas so much more than other sciences I’ve studied.”

“Go to office hours and go to recitation.”

“This course is great - mind stimulating and interesting.”

“Definitely go to office hours!! And always attend lecture and recitation. Do lots of problems.”

“It’s a lot of work but it’s great. Rojas is a phenomenal instructor whose knowledge and understanding exceeds the realm of the subject matter. Orgo may not be what most people expect of a typical chemistry class, especially after G Chem. It requires and fosters not only mathematical/scientific skills but also creativity - (not to mention artistic talents). It’s a lot of fun to allow yourself to become engrossed in the subject if you’re willing to put the time and effort in. I can’t imagine grasping the material without letting myself get lost in the intricacies.”
“Hmm...well, it is true organic chemistry and is as hard as everyone says. But if you study every week for a few hours, keep up with the problem sets, and go to ALL the lectures, you’ll be fine. Office hours will help even more. Study in groups...you not only need to practice orgo problems but also need to discuss them. In other words, if you really study and dedicate a few hours a week to this crazy subject...you’ll do fine.”

“It’s difficult but very satisfying!”

“Be prepared to work.”

“If you’re going to take this course, keep the rest of your course load light. Allow a lot of time for reviewing notes and attempting problem sets.”

“The course is not as hard as its reputation implies. Don’t psych yourself out just because it’s “orgo”. Contrary to popular belief, organic chemistry is actually fun.”

“(1) Get your mechanisms straight! (2) Don’t even think about forgetting stuff from first semester! That stuff will pop up again when you least expect it.”

“Be prepared. Organic Chemistry I is not the same as Organic Chemistry II. The material is difficult and challenging, but entirely do-able. Expect to spend as much time on orgo as you do on all of your other classes combined. Most of all, ENJOY Organic Chemistry because it is an amazing course. And remember, Organic Chemistry, as you will find, will be useful and stay with you everyday of your life.”

“I would say take it only if you are preparing for graduate school or the pre-health professions. I must say that it would be fun auditing the class and watch reactions make sense by a push of a few arrows. Sometimes, I think of reading the whole Jones books after I graduate just to enjoy seeing how reactions and mechanisms make sense after I completed the year round course.”

“Do all the problems over and over and over again until you’re doing them in your sleep.”

“Take it if you like doing reactions. This course is all about reactions, reactions, reactions.”

“‘You should love science, but don’t worship it,’ [Rojas has] said. Be serious about this class, but also have fun with the material. Look for underlying trends in the mechanisms, don’t take yourself too seriously, though it’s hard when you look around at other people. Basically, orgo is its own game; you must make your own rules though, and only follow them, and set a pattern in your studying, in your process and stick to it. Most importantly, be patient. Don’t expect to get everything perfect the first try, trust yourself.”

“Study everyday.”

“If you’re going to take Orgo II, be prepared for a faster moving, more challenging course than Orgo I. Take advantage of ALL available resources, and keep up with the material. The class is enjoyable and interesting, but extremely time consuming and challenging.”

“Please when you take it - enjoy it - it can be a lot of mechanical energy, i.e. work. But I love it - it’s like playing a game with rules, only you get graded. Not bad.”

“I would recommend the course if he/she finds the material/topic interesting. [Professor Rojas] makes himself very accessible to his students when they need help.”
“Go to lecture, use the text to fill in the picture, do the problems in the text, do the problem sets, and then...do it all again 3x. Oh yeah, go to a lot of office hours.”

“Orgo II is much harder than Orgo I and the mechanisms aren’t explained as clearly as last semester (with recognizable patterns).”

“It’s fun - take it!!”

“It’s hard!! But not un-manageable. Keep up with the new material! Don’t fall behind. Always do problem sets and assigned text problems! Form study groups - very helpful!”

“Not all tests are the same difficulty yet 1 point is 1 point so do well on the first two exams so you don’t need to stress. Make notecards. They help. Problem sets are more important than you think.”

“I would say that it is a time-consuming course that requires a lot of effort and dedication.”

“First semester - fine. Second semester- hell.”

“Definitely take it, if you like science.”

“Interesting overall.”

It’s not that bad if you keep up with problems -- ALL of the problems.”

“STUDY A LOT! Everyday. Go to class, use your notes, expect NO life, expect no sense of humor from your peers.”

“If there is one piece of advice that I would offer to anyone taking the class, it would be to find the time to enjoy the material. In a class where a large number of people take it for reasons other than the personal satisfaction of learning science, it’s hard to set the competition and stress aside. I regret taking Organic Chemistry II with four or five other classes. I always found the time to study for the tests, I just never found the time this semester to chill, sit back, and appreciate it. Nonetheless Organic Chem. turned out to be an interesting experience. After completing one year of it, I’m glad I took it not just to satisfy a pre-med requirement but to learn and gain an interest in a subject that I otherwise would not have gained if I didn’t take the class at all. And in the end, Organic has turned out to be my favorite subject (despite my initial fears of taking it) and clarified a lot of the other sciences I’ve taken.”