

Course Evaluation

CHEM 421 01 – Professor Alanna Schepartz

Question 1

Looking back on Chemistry 427 01, what is your overall assessment of the course? What are its strengths and weaknesses, and in what ways might it be improved?

Response 1

I loved the course. It was a great balance between lecture and discussion. It was a lively environment as well as a great learning experience.

Response 2

The class was ridiculously hard. I felt very unprepared for it and I feel that sometimes the Professor was unprepared too.

Response 3

For a first year, I thought this course was fairly successful. It was for the most part interesting, informative, and unique in the sense that the students learned more about current research and interest in the field than actual scientific facts or principles. The workload was a bit heavy and at times impossible, and some topics were rather tedious. Class discussions and section were helpful to understanding.

Response 4

Chem 421 really peaked my interest in chemical and biochemical research. The material covered was interesting and was presented in a reasonable manner. Case studies provided welcome and ample opportunity for analytical thought, but could be improved by posing more specific and directed questions (as were posed towards the end of the semester). Also, both lectures and case studies could be improved by specifying which of the posted readings are most essential. People seldom had enough time to get through all of the uploaded papers. Therefore, it would be helpful to identify for students those papers that you feel merit particular attention and that consequently should be read first in preparation for a given lecture or case study. Furthermore, important posted papers that are not covered in lecture could be covered in section instead of the additional papers that are posted specifically for section. The substitution of an original research proposal (ORP) for a more standard final examination was commendable and

consistent with the character and structure of the course. However, many students felt ill prepared for such an immense undertaking. The gap between thinking about potential applications of a technique in the framework of a case study and independently recording these ideas in a full-fledged research proposal is a large one. Perhaps more could be done to prepare students for the final leap. Finally, whether by design or not, problem sets reflected only marginally the ideas presented in lecture. More useful problem set questions would require critical consideration of the discussed techniques and would probe potential applications. Restructuring of the problem sets in this vein would go a long way towards preparing students for the ORP. One last point: lectures are MUCH easier to follow on power point than on the black board.

Response 5

Strength: It exposes the students to the most cutting edge research that is going on in the field of chemical biology and its various application.

Weakness: Does not teach a lot of fundamental scientific principles. In addition, course structure is a little disorganized.

Response 6

This course had a good first year under Professor Schepartz. The idea of a science course that is accessible to sophomore where all of the material is papers written in the last few years is amazing. Similarly, the amount of discussion and the fact that the final was an original research proposal was really great. However, Professor Schepartz skipped several classes. While I enjoyed at moments not having to get up for a 9am Class some days, in retrospect I wish we had the time. Also, the units in the course felt more disjointed than they could have been. I understand that this was a high level survey course. However, it could have benefited from more organization.

Response 7

Good course. Extremely interesting topics, but sometimes a ton of journal reading for a single night. I learned so much about modern chemical biology. Much better than reading textbooks.

Response 8

Topics were very interesting- good choice of papers. Powerpoints were helpful- especially the images not found in the papers read for that class. The lecture days were well organized, but the discussion weren't as well,

especially at first. What helped was when specific questions were handed out, which were different (or the papers were different) for each group. It might help to have smaller groups- it could be difficult to discuss. Also, a different room might help, because the chairs were fixed to the floor, where it would be nice to form a circle. Guest lecturers were interesting when the topics warranted. It would be helpful if the papers for the week were out by the weekend before. Section was better when we discussed papers- maybe it could replace the discussion days.

Question 2

Please evaluate each instructor of Chemistry 421 01. What are the instructor's strengths and weaknesses, and in what ways might his/her teaching be improved?

Response 1

Alanna was very learned and approachable. She was also very understanding.

Response 2

Alanna needs to understand that not everyone understands chemical biology as much as she does. Most of the classes were spent frantically trying to catch up with what she was saying and what she was writing on the board or showing slides. The lectures were interesting however and could be made better if they were more accessible to the people the class was supposed to be designed for—second semester sophomores who just finished organic chemistry.

Response 3

Alanna is very energetic professor who seems devoted to teaching. She imparts material in a clear, interesting manner, but often goes too fast and is not as concerned with the student's abilities to keep up. However, she makes the material interesting with her enthusiasm and is generally approachable.

Response 5

A good instructor who shows a great deal of interest and understanding for the course materials. She is enthusiastic and this enthusiasm is contagious. However, she tends to write too fast on her lectures and she goes through her lecture materials way too fast. It would be better if she could spend

more time explaining the materials more thoroughly rather than trying to blast through the materials as fast as she can.

Response 6

Professor Schepartz is an absolutely brilliant scientist. She knows an enormous amount and could answer any question excellently at any time about almost anything even remotely related to the material. That said, there were times when she was condescending and somewhat unwilling to listen to student concerns about the course, which had both undergrads (sophomores) and grad students who were supposed to be on equal footing (and weren't).

Response 7

Good Professor. She is extremely excited about her work and the field which is always a good thing for a class.

Response 8

Alanna had well prepared lectures.

Question 3

Please evaluate your teaching assistant here (discussion section, leader, lab section leader, grader, or other assistant). What are his or her strengths and weaknesses as an instructor, and in what ways might his/her teaching be improved? Please evaluate only the teaching assistant that you are most familiar with. Note: If the instructor of the course led your discussion section, please evaluate your discussion section in this part of the evaluation.

Response 1

Jorge was helpful and knowledgeable.

Response 2

Jorge was great. Section was fun and made things a lot clearer.

Response 3

I didn't go to section too frequently—but Jorge seems knowledgeable and very willing to help the students and answer questions. Sometimes he's a

bit less clear than ideal but most of the time Jorge does a good job leading discussions of papers and going over homework.

Response 4

Jorge was a very good TA. He shows great understanding for the materials discussed in class. He also tries his best to answer any questions we have. It would be better if he had a better knowledge of Molecular Biology since some of our materials are closely tied to this field.

Response 5

Jorge taught good sections and was responsive most of the time. His grading of one of the problem sets was very strict, but at least this hurt everyone equally.

Response 6

Jorge was helpful.

Question 4

How would you summarize Chemistry 421 01 for a fellow student? Would you recommend Chemistry 421 01 to another student? Why or why not?

Response 1

It is a great chance to study chemistry in an exciting setting. Great chance for non-chemistry majors to really see the interdisciplinary connections.

Response 2

I would recommend this class to graduate students in Alanna's lab but probably not to other undergraduates who haven't had a strong foundation in biochem.

Response 3

It is a tough class for people who are willing to work hard, but in the end it is relatively rewarding. I would recommend this to a student who might be interested in research and pursuing a career in chemistry or chemical biology. This is not an easy class for premeds to simply fulfill requirements and it's at times a ridiculous amount of work. The student has to devote a

lot more time and effort than normal to get anything out of this class. Also, the midterm and final paper are a pain in the neck.

Response 4

An interesting look at current topics in chemical biology.

Response 5

Yes, if you want to know what the field of chemical biology research is all about. No if you want to learn some fundamental scientific principles.

Response 6

This is a class in the current scientific research about chemical ways to modify biological systems. It will teach you how to read journal articles and how to really understand them and comprehend the limitations in each experiment. The articles are often different to read, but the lectures normally clarify any problems. Be prepared for the professor to skip lectures, and be prepared for material to entirely go over your head. However, the advantage of an original research proposal as a final project is that you can focus on the part of the course that you liked.

Response 7

Take it, but be ready to read a lot to learn. It is sometimes intimidating with the grad students.

Response 8

Interesting topics, not really hard. Half grad, half undergrad. A final would have been really hard, so it's nice that there was a paper.

Question 5

Overall, how would you rate the workload of this course in comparison to other Yale courses you have taken?

Response 1

Much Less

Less

Same

Greater

Much Greater

Response 2

Much Less Less Same Greater Much Greater

Response 3

Much Less Less Same Greater Much Greater

Response 4

Much Less Less Same Greater Much Greater

Response 5

Much Less Less Same Greater Much Greater

Response 6

Much Less Less Same Greater Much Greater

Response 7

Much Less Less Same Greater Much Greater

Response 8

Much Less Less Same Greater Much Greater

Question 6

What is your overall assessment of this course?

Response 1

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent

Response 2

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent

Response 3

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent

Response 4

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent

Response 5

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent

Response 6

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent

Response 7

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent

Response 8

Poor Below Average Good Very Good Excellent