

\*Just a reminder to you all that your concerns and worries are completely valid. When teaching a course, professors need to be able to hear feedback and put a good faith effort towards doing better each semester. Teaching is a two-way street. It's important to bring our concerns to professors, deans, and anyone else who can help make change. Standing up for yourself and for other students is never wrong. And just because someone doesn't like what you have to say, that doesn't mean you're wrong, either.\*

**Overall Themes (Points mentioned in Arora's response are highlighted)**

1. More work  $\neq$  more learning
  - a. Comparison to other courses (MCB1, POB, non-science courses)
    - i. MCB
      1. Shortened pre-lecture videos
      2. Lowered weight on exams
      3. Actually shortened lab times (1.5-2 hours)
      4. No weekly quizzes- homework instead to ensure understanding of the material rather than basing success on rigor
2. Lack of empathy for:
  - a. Family member deaths
  - b. New, boisterous studying environments
    - i. Natural disasters in several states
    - ii. Care for younger siblings/ older family members
    - iii. In a typical school year majority of students are on campus which serves as an incubated environment where there are other students on campus who are performing the same activities as each other, this semester that is nowhere near the case.
      1. Students cannot conduct in person study groups
      2. There are internet issues where parts of lectures are cut out (especially in lab where videos are only shown once)
  - c. Mental health
    - i. Students that have pre-diagnosed mental disorders

- ii. Students of color that are currently experiencing additional stress due to the Black Lives Matter movement
  - iii. Students who are part of marginalized communities such as the LGBT, of insecure immigration status who fear of radical trump supporters putting their safety in harm's way
  - iv. Anxiety for students who are/have family members living in states with high infection rates
- d. Jobs
- e. Physical health
- f. Housing and financial stability
- g. Other extracurriculars
- h. Online learning is less effective than in person (especially when most of us grew up learning in classrooms)

### 3. Increased workload

- a. Postlabs and prelabs
  - b. Video lectures + zoom lectures
  - c. Lab duration
- 4. Unfair assessments
  - a. Preparing with free response vs MC
  - b. Lack of partial credit for MC
- 5. Lack of communication/feedback
  - a. Lab grades
    - i. Some students not receiving any feedback/grades or only receiving them temporarily
  - b. Lectures are not posted until friday/saturday which for many students is a time for relaxation, working, or just general care for mental health. All materials should be made available during the work week.
  - c. Recitation instructors refuse to record sessions, and they often rush through everything. Even times refusing to take questions due to lack of time.
- 6. Lack of clarity for grading
  - a. The combination of lab grades, quiz grades, and exam grades as a whole

- b. Lack of congruency between lecture and recitation where TAs often introduce topics that either contradict or disregard what has been taught in lecture making it harder for students to grasp what is true
    - i. Also each TA having a different type of test where different concepts are being tested where as other TA's have an easier test, there should be one standardized quiz for each recitation section so all students have a fair chance at success on quizzes
- 7. Lack of student-guided learning time
  - a. The overwhelming amount of work require by the course itself limits the amount of time student have to understand the material on their own which is essential for good performance on exams and quizzes
    - i. This also goes in hand with laboratory assignments that have not lined up with the lecture material until last week (which they randomly threw NMR into while learning different reaction mechanisms)
      - 1. Learning for lab on its own and then having to learn for lecture takes up twice as much time than you'd expect

## **Lecture:**

1. Lecture videos
  - a. Pls **post video lectures sooner**. Preferably not just before the weekend. Many of us have jobs and also use the weekend for self care. There are also a bunch of students with religious restrictions who cannot watch the videos on Saturdays. Post the lectures as soon as wednesday lecture is over or just any day prior to friday, it's inconsiderate to post 2 hour lectures on a friday night as if we as students don't have other commitments
  - b. The **addition of the two video lectures a week** along with all the other work we are expected to do in this class and other classes makes it difficult to find time to actually study for exams. I have a lot of responsibilities outside of school that are a direct result of the pandemic, so adding on so many extra hours of work every week takes up any time that I had to actually study for the exam. Taking notes on a 2 hour lecture actually takes four hours for me, which is four hours I could use

to actually understand the material. The exams don't really test knowledge at this point, they test to see how much extra time we have to study for it.

- c. For Synchronous lecture it's difficult to understand what's going on if we haven't watched the pre recorded lectures, essential problems and at least some text-book problems. However, because there is always one or two lectures to watch beforehand in addition to doing work for our other classes, the pre labs and post labs which require A LOT of time, it's unreasonable to be able to do that much preparation in order to understand what's going on during the synchronous lectures. The pre-recorded lectures should supplement the synchronous lectures, rather than it be the synchronous lectures supplementing the pre-recorded lectures

## 2. Exams

- a. Lecture is taught in a very methodical applied way. Exams on the other hand are abstract and tricky; we prepare for free response with all the materials we're given but we're examined using MC. Very different skill set and knowledge set and therefore kinda unfair
  - i. make sure to mention this MC is designed to trip us up with no way to prepare for it
- b. For the exams, I don't like how a question with multiple correct answers is graded as completely wrong if you miss one answer. It doesn't seem fair, considering that people might've gotten  $\frac{3}{4}$  or more of the question right -- why should we get all the points off? I feel like partial credit is necessary with these types of multiple choice-heavy exams, especially given the extenuating circumstances around us (a pandemic, isolation, added stress, mental health struggles, a crucial election, and any other personal issues).
  - i. ^ and prior partial credit on previous free-response exams

## 3. Grading

- a. I wish there was more transparency about grades. I do not know my overall letter grade in the class. Last years grade distribution does not apply well. 2020 is a different time
- b. There is a lack of transparency with regards to grading. The email we received says 30% of students are in A range and 40% are in B range. How are we to know

this when the only information we have is the exam averages? I recognize that you have added historical cutoffs to the syllabus, but we would like specification in terms of what grading system you'll use. Is it a bell curve? Also, we have no idea how other students are doing in recitation quizzes. All of this could be solved by (1) releasing quiz averages per section (2) explaining in more detail/adding to the syllabus your method of curving and (3) giving each student a midterm grade on Albert.

4. Lack of empathy/accommodations

- a. I truly feel as if the professors would not care if I dropped dead. They have said in class that **they like to make us suffer**. [Side note: why is such a perverse mentality acceptable in this class or anywhere else in academia?!] Other jokes made, like claiming “we’re too young to be tired” also fit in with the professor's punitive mindset. Maybe some people took that as a joke but I don’t think it’s funny considering we’re living through a tumultuous year with a GLOBAL PANDEMIC and election and other political decisions that literally impact people’s livelihoods. BIPOC, LGBTQ+, immigrant students, religious minority, disabled, and uterus-having students are literally forced to watch their rights— and especially for Black students, their very LIVES— hang in the balance, as 200,000 people die of a virus and our families continue to struggle financially. There is zero empathy coming from the professors right now. We finished the first exam, and they felt the average was too high— a 68 is not good by non-sadistic standards, by the way— and they immediately came to us asking us to buy TABLETS, as if we can be expected to be able to afford that ESPECIALLY right now. That was dropped and the multiple choice format remained, which I appreciate, but the sentiment rubbed me the wrong way. Students have voiced concerns about the format of the class AND the workload several times and we are continually ignored. We should not be treated like whiny children— we have legitimate concerns. We are living through a pandemic and expected to perform as if we’re not. On top of that, NYU affords us little to no breaks (as evidenced by the recent evisceration of spring break!) and many students with mental health concerns are experiencing worsening depression and anxiety, myself included. I am sick of this class being

treated like a weeding out course. There is room for everyone to succeed and I am so sick of mentally ill and financially disadvantaged and otherwise marginalized students being shoved out of pre-health and other fields because they don't have the money and neurology and other privileges to make it through these unnecessarily difficult and frankly sadistic courses. It's too much. NYU has asked professors to make accommodations for students during this time. This course should be no exception.

- b. I understand that organic chemistry is known to be a weeder course for pre-health students and this class in particular is known to be difficult amongst NYU students. However, it seems to me as if, in both the lecture and lab portions of the course, that the professors are trying too hard to make the course reflect how it would be if we were in-person and that is being reflected through the assignments and exams. I hope the professors know that it is okay to acknowledge that we are living in times that may not be experienced again in a very long time. Everybody is going through something difficult right now and the coursework of the class does not accommodate at all.
- c. We shouldn't have to cut back on working jobs, spending time with family/friends, and taking care of ourselves for this class. Of course sometimes things need to get cut out when balancing school with other commitments but the fact that we are expected to sacrifice our lives to orgo is so upsetting. I literally cannot afford to take this class anymore due to the amount of time it requires me to take away from working a job. People shouldn't only be able to succeed in organic chemistry if they have endless resources -- lots of time to do practice problems, lots of money for a tutor, lots of money so that they don't have to work, money so that they can have an apartment/room of their own so that they have absolute peace and quiet at all hours of the day to do assignments, watch videos and take tests for orgo, etc. I know that there are plenty of other people in this class who are in a similar situation and for the professors to only cater to the students who are from the top 5% of society is unacceptable.
- d. At the beginning of the school year, they claimed that this isn't a class of competition. This has not been true at all. Although the competition against our

current classmates is relatively low, it feels like we are competing against the professors. They seem to want to “break” us, but this is a sick mindset, especially right now when most of us have experienced some truly traumatic things. A good proportion of the students are pre-health, and if anything, **these students should be encouraged to stay pre-health and not be needlessly “weeded out.”** The pandemic has made it crystal clear that we are in desperate need of healthcare providers, so I think we should encourage and support these students in the classroom so that we can increase the supply for this demand.

- e. Because of the workload of this class, **my other classes are taking a hit**. I can't spend as much time focusing on them because I'm watching 4 hours of lectures, 3 hours of practice, 5 hours on post and pre lab. The workload is absolutely ridiculous. We are premed students and are taking other hard classes at the same time. Professors cannot expect us to only care about this class (like when they say we have all the time in the world rn).
- f. This applies for both Lab and lecture but with a class of 200-300 people, as mentioned above, there are people in diverse circumstances. As would be expected with such a large number of people, **there are also a good number of students who have disabilities and mental health issues**. The lack of structure to taking online classes is difficult for everyone, but it presents unique challenges to people who have learning disabilities. Without the structure and routine, studying environment, lack of usual resources and accommodations being on campus, what takes **5 hours for most people can EASILY be more than 10 hours for people who usually have accommodations**. I think there needs to be more recognition of how online classes are affecting those of us who are in unique circumstances and keep in mind those of us who may have more difficulties and be more accommodating.
- g. I think it feels like overkill to say this but we're in a pandemic. yes orgo is supposed to be difficult and/or a weeder class but online school perpetuates class inequalities - there are many folks working fulltime to support themselves and/or family right now, some of whom continuously struggle with food/housing insecurity... which the school hasn't done much for despite their very large endowment? I applied for covid relief bc I couldn't pay rent and they said the max

they could give me was \$300? and when I wanted to talk to someone in financial aid they refused. same thing about those food mini grants after 2 times. making the argument about time management and \*putting in the work\* is kind of crass at this point. and trying to maintain averages and/or standards from previous years is kinda violent (in really silent/insidious ways that feel dramatic to call out) and also will ALWAYS leave behind Black, Indigenous, People of color (BIPOC) students behind - look at med school/premed retention rates, as one example. but we're disposable huh. I don't even go here and nyu's classism and elitism is showing. I'll be the first to admit I have some preconceived notions of who the avg nyu student is but to presume that everyone can operate "as normal" or as close to it as possible doesn't make sense. I think there are ways to maintain rigor in a course while fundamentally altering the way learning/assessment of learning happens, and/or while offering a bit more flexibility to account for the number of things going on. lab deadlines and participation feel punitive (literally "we account for the in-person folks making errors in procedure") & also hypocritical. yes I think we should be giving the TA's grace with their grading. yes **I think that grace should be given to students too**

- h. "Business as usual" actually exposes the fact that **schools are businesses** that don't care about students :))
- i. A student has expressed that after a family member passed away and they asked for a much needed and fair extension for the exam, **they were not granted the extension.**

## **Labs:**

### 1. Workload

- a. the amount of time we put into lab vs the amount of time it appears the professors and instructors put in is very unequal. we are expected to complete 1-2 hour prelab tasks, 4 hour labs, and 4 hour post labs every week but the feedback is almost nonexistent — we see -2 points or -4 points but zero explanation for why. and that's only on postlabs. **zero feedback on prelab or data notebook pages.** emails are often not answered in a timely manner and sometimes not at all. I'm at



the point where I'm considering withdrawing from the course and taking this class with the off track professor because it truly does not seem like these professors care about our mental well-being

- b. Because of the intensity of the workload, specifically the postlab, we feel like we aren't actually learning anything, but simply going through the motions of trying to submit one assignment after another. We have no opportunity to actually learn and understand the material because we only have time to work on and submit the post lab.
- c. We have so much work to do for lab that it prevents me from putting in the time to watch the recorded lectures in a timely fashion which then just snowballs and becomes a vicious cycle where if you devote time to one part of the class then it prevents you from managing to do work for another part of the course.

## 2. Grading

- a. Lab workload is ridiculous compared to its proportion of the overall grade. Also absolutely unclear about the grading scale and little to no feedback on postlabs that we get like 4-5 weeks later, especially due to the low correlation between lab and lecture in terms of material.
- b. The fact that they're super unclear about the grading scale in class and were more than halfway through the semester. They say it's a rough estimate but they also keep saying the course is "easier now." How do we know they won't totally jack up grades and make it like a 90 to get an A.
- c. Not to mention we only got a few grades back when it's already November. I know TAs are busy, but we have our own lives to take care of too. if they can't keep up with grading, how are they expecting us to keep up with everything.

## 3. Communication and Feedback

- a. Feedback for labs needs to be sooner. Without feedback we are not sure where we need to improve and are likely to make the same mistakes. Also, an answer key to the labs would be helpful for students so that they can see where they went wrong. I received my first lab grade 4 weeks later!
- b. The fact that we got GC-FID questions 3 weeks in a row without any feedback is ridiculous.

## **Time Devoted To Organic Chemistry Breakdown Per Week**

### Blended Student

1. Video Lectures = 3 to 5 hours
2. Practice = 3 hour
3. Reading the textbook = 2 to 3 hours if I even have the time
4. Pre lab = 1 to 3 hours (this includes notebook prep and videos/reading)
5. Post lab = 2 to 5 hours

Lecture: 2.5 hours

Lab: 3-4.25 hours

Total = 11 to 19 hours

Expected during a normal school year = 10 to 15 hours

### Potential Factors that Have Made This Difficult

1. Mental health issues exasperated by global pandemic, political uncertainty, and civil unrest
2. Physical Health
3. Stress caused by family member infection
4. Family/friend's death
5. Studying from home, expected to care for siblings/other family members. Lack of quiet study environment.
6. Time zone differences (some students are in extremely different time zones, e.g. 14 hours, yet are still expected to give the same amount of effort/participation for the class. This poses great difficulty, especially for lab which may run throughout the night for some people)
7. Even on campus, many students are living with other people and have limited access to quiet places to study. Bobst closes at 9pm on weekdays and 7pm on weekends. With

classes and work during the day, the early closing of bobst leaves students unable to study somewhere quiet at night.

8. Stress of living as a minority right now
9. Jobs
10. Other classes requiring more work (ie. video lectures)
11. Moving
12. Lack of socializing with peers / group studying