

Chem 231 WebCT Discussion Assignment
Instructors: Prof. Jeff Moore, Mr. Tyson Miller
Fall Semester 2003

Hello Everyone!

WebCT is the campus supported online gradebook for UIUC. It has multiple capabilities, including grading online quizzes, storage of grades, e-mail, and various avenues for communication, including discussion boards.

A fair number of you probably have extensive experience with online asynchronous chatrooms, otherwise known as discussion forums or discussion boards. For those that have limited or no experience, this will be your opportunity to gain experience using a now common form of communication.

Simply put, discussion boards are similar to e-mail, except that you can more easily follow the thread of responses that are posted on the discussion board. It is an asynchronous form of communication, meaning that responses are not in real time – people can log in and respond to any query without the restraint of time. In this assignment, you are asked to be a member of a 5-6 person team (a Subgroup) that collaborates together to solve a potential test question.

All discussion towards solving the problem will be held between you and your colleagues on your Subgroup's private discussion board. After working together to find a solution, your Subgroup will post your answer on a "Group" discussion board that is shared by 13 other Subgroups who are answering all different potential test questions. You will have the opportunity to see the answers of other Subgroups and to respond to those answers. At the end, I will compile the answers to each potential test question for all to review before the exam. Each of you will have an opportunity to look at other Subgroups' answers to your question, as well as other questions.

As you can see, there are multiple objectives being served with this assignment. One, at least two of the questions posed via this assignment will be on the first exam. The rest of the questions pertain directly to other concepts that will be asked on the first exam. In short, this assignment will assist your study for the first exam. Two, most Subgroups draw students from all three lecture sections, which will increase communication between the Section A and Section B face-to-face students and Section B1 distance education students. Three, you will have an opportunity to meet other students in the class to form study groups with throughout the semester. Finally (and most important), by experiencing the benefits of collaborative learning through the use of discussion boards, it is hoped that students will continue to utilize discussion boards as a primary means to get organic chemistry questions answered by students and by Mr. Miller.

Now that you understand the impetus for the assignment, the next couple of pages gives some details of what you need to do to make this assignment a success. (Oh yeah, and to get your 10 points!) ☺

TO DO LIST FOR THE WebCT DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Log in to WebCT on the course website. Your username (Net ID) is also your password the first time you log in. After the first log in, you must change your password. You all have taken Prelecture Quizzes by now, so you should have changed your password already.
- 2) Click on WebCT Surveys. Complete the WebCT Pre-Assignment Survey by Friday, September 12th at Midnight (Friday Night/Saturday Morning).
- 3) Click on Discussion Board, either in the Navigation Bar on the left side or on the Discussion Board line on the main page.
- 4) You will then see a number of discussion boards available to you. **All** is a board that lists all posts you can see. **Main** and **Notes** will be at the top and will be locked to student access – this is the forum Mr. Miller will use to post messages to the whole class. (“Locked” means you can see messages, but you yourself can’t post in the forum.) Each of you will have an **Instructor’s Office** board, which is where you can post questions to Mr. Miller so others can see your question and my answer. If you want your correspondence to me to be private, contact me via e-mail (tmiller2@uiuc.edu). Each of you will have an **Espresso Bar**, where you can talk about any non-controversial subjects not related to organic chemistry. Your particular **Espresso Bar** forum will link you to your “Group” at the start. A forum will be established later that will let you converse with the whole class. You will have an **Orientation** forum, where you can get to know the members of your Subgroup with the 8 Nouns activity (explained below). Finally, you will have a **Subgroup** forum to collaborate with your teammates and a **Group** forum where your designated team member will post your Subgroup’s final answer for everyone in your Group to see.
- 5) From the main page of the course website, if you click on Handouts, you will see the WebCT Subgroup and Group Assignments for the class. Double check to make sure that the Subgroup and Group Discussion boards you have access to match the Assignment sheet. If you have access to the wrong Subgroup’s forum, don’t have access to any forum, or you are missing any of the listed forums above, contact Mr. Miller via e-mail immediately.
- 6) Click on your Subgroup’s **Orientation** forum and post your 8 Nouns activity. The 8 Nouns Activity: Find 8 nouns that best describe you and give a brief explanation as to why the nouns describe you. Deeply personal information is neither required nor suggested here. Just give nouns that serve as a brief introduction of yourself to your Subgroup teammates. This is an icebreaker to help you get acquainted with your colleagues in preparation for the group activity. An example of Mr. Miller’s 8 Nouns will be provided in your forum.
- 7) Make contact with the other members of your Subgroup in the **Subgroup** forum. It is *strongly suggested* that everyone posts as soon as possible to establish a timeline for completion of several milestones. Milestone 1: establish a timeline for everyone posting his/her initial answer to the question in the **Subgroup** forum. Milestone 2: establish a timeline for Subgroup discussion of the initial answers in deriving a consensus answer for the question. Milestone 3: establish which team member will be responsible for constructing the rough draft answer to the

question for Subgroup review and posting of the final answer in the **Group** forum on behalf of the Subgroup.

8) Each Subgroup selects a member to post that Subgroup's collective answer in the **Group** forum.

9) Read the answers posted by other Subgroups in your **Group** forum. Post comments about the answers that constructively help everyone to learn from the answers.

10) Answers to every question provided by all 112 Subgroups in the class will be posted in the **Question #** forum, which will be established after the exercise is graded.

11) Complete the WebCT Post-Assignment Survey by Friday, September 19th at Midnight (Friday Night/Saturday Morning).

RULES AND TIPS TO ONLINE PERFORMANCE AND BEHAVIOR

1. When creating a post in WebCT, it is always a good idea to write what you want to say in NotePad, Microsoft Word, or some other word processing program first and save it!! WebCT discussion boards do not save what you write until you post it. If the program shuts down inadvertently or you choose to move from one window to another, you may lose what you have typed. By saving it in an external word processing program, you can simply cut and paste what you wrote without fear of losing it.

2. When you are ready to post on a discussion forum, click on the "topic" of the appropriate forum. In that forum, click on the gray button Compose Message. A window will appear with the words "Compose Discussion Message" up top. Double check the Topic line to make sure you are about to post in the forum you want. Type a phrase in the Subject line that will let your readers know what your post is about. Type (or paste from a word processor) your message in the Message text box. When you are ready to post your message, click the gray Post button in the lower left-hand corner. Avoid the Preview button – it more often than not just leads to an erasure of your message without posting it. Only click the gray Cancel button if you change your mind about posting your message.

3. Please keep your messages focused to the topic of the particular discussion forum. Posts unrelated to the forum can lead to frustration, a lack of focus, and stifling of the discussion. Feel free to take any unrelated discussions you wish to the **Espresso Bar**. If you accidentally post in the wrong forum, contact me in the **Instructor's Office**.

4. WebCT discussion boards will obey HTML commands. You can use this to add color, boldness, underlines, and much more to your post. Ask Mr. Miller for details.

5. You must participate in all phases of the activity to receive any points for the assignment. Failure to provide your 8 Nouns or to participate in your Subgroup's work will constitute forfeiture of all individual and group points as established by the rubric on the next page. The score will be recorded as 0/10 points.

6. Online communication lacks all of the non-verbal forms of communication that accompanies face-to-face speech or voice inflection over the phone. Therefore, without careful consideration of the words chosen to express oneself via e-mail or discussion board post, misunderstandings and hurt feelings can often result from criticisms or phrases that were intended to be benign. It is *strongly recommended* that you review at least twice each and every writing you construct before posting to prevent an accidental posting of comments with inappropriate content or tone. Once you post it on the discussion board, it cannot be removed.

7. Your postings should be written with good grammar and in small case lettering (i.e., John and I went to the store to buy milk.). Capitalize words only to highlight an important point. Otherwise, it is considered SHOUTING and is rude.

8. **Online Netiquette:** Each and every student is expected to observe a high level of respect, dignity, and professionalism towards any other student in this course, online or face-to-face. Disagreements between Subgroup and Group members are likely to happen. However, conduct in negotiating the disagreement must remain professional, respectful, and civil. Profanity (implicit or explicit), slurs, destructive criticism, or any other content or language deemed inappropriate (Mr. Miller's judgment) will NOT be tolerated. Any violations will result in an automatic score of 0/10 points for the assignment, removal of WebCT privileges for the remainder of the semester, and any other actions deemed necessary as stated in the UIUC Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to All Students. Maintaining civility is the key to meaningful and successful communication with your colleagues in the class and beyond.

9. We reiterate the importance of collaboration with your fellow colleagues and with the instructors beyond just this assignment. *Mr. Miller will maintain regular discussion board office hours throughout the semester as a way to maintain communication with all students in the class.* You will all find this tool very useful, especially around test time when face time with instructors will be limited (660+ of you, 2 of us). Your questions could be asked by someone else and the answer to it will likely lie on the discussion board for all to see. So, use this assignment to gain confidence and mastery with a tool that can serve you well in the coming weeks.

Cheers!

Mr. Miller and Professor Moore

DEADLINES:

Friday, September 5, 2003 – First log on to the Discussion Boards; verify Subgroup and Group assignments; meet your Subgroup team members online.

Friday, September 12, 2003 – Complete 8 Nouns Orientation activity; Subgroup completes Milestone 1 by deciding on a timeline for initial postings, time for everyone to review and give comments, and designation of the person who will post the final answer for the Subgroup.

Monday, September 15, 2003 – Recommended Subgroup completion of Milestone 2 by posting initial answers to question.

Friday, September 19, 2003 – All Subgroups must have posted their final answer in the Group Discussion Forum by 12:00 AM Midnight (Friday Night/Saturday Morning).