

## *A "Message in a Bottle" to the CH 221 Fall 2023 class from the CH 223 Spring 2023 class*

### **Section 01 students:**

Taking the General Chemistry series at MHCC has been a very positive experience. Following the end of the pandemic, in-person classes were a little awkward, but I got through it and learned a lot. If I had one piece of advice to give to new CH221 students, I would say to visit the professor during office hours. At the beginning of the term, I mostly kept to myself and didn't ask questions, which was a mistake. Only after multiple weeks had gone by did I consider stopping by during office hours. Once I visited the professor, I immediately recognized how important it was. For me, it was an opportunity to enhance my learning and ask questions, both inside and outside of the curriculum. Overall, I think the time spent asking science questions during office hours is what made this class so fun for me. To any new CH221 students, I wish you good luck, and don't hesitate to make use of the professor's office hours.

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To the fall class of 2023; I took chemistry with Mike for a full year (221-223). For both 221 and 222 I was in section H1, and for spring term I took 01. As someone who has lived, learned, and messed up, let me just tell you; STUDY!! Getting into the routine of these classes structure is so important for success. Plan your homework days based on due dates, for H1 everything is due by Wednesday, do NOT procrastinate till Tuesday!! Been there...it doesn't end well. When he says make note sheets, take advantage of that! Even if you don't think you will need one, it's great for studying and keeping things fresh in your head. For every exam and quiz, take advantage of all his sample quizzes and exams. They're accurate to what types of information you'll be tested on. One thing I really benefited from was his chapter guides. Watching his individual video screen caps of each topic from lecture and taking notes on them was way easier for me to learn than reading the textbook for those who struggle to learn that way. On that note, keep a notebook and TAKE NOTES! Every term I filled up an entire notebook, and it helped me immensely. And lastly, to those stuck between picking online vs in person...his in-person labs are extremely fun. :) Best of luck to all of you with your future!

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Dear future chemistry students... I recently took the chemistry sequence section 01 in person class. I highly recommend taking the in person class! Chemistry can be really confusing at first but don't give up!! Go to the tutoring center as often as you can; the guys up there are very helpful and will give you many tips and tricks to memorize and understand concepts. I went to the tutoring center so much over the year! I learned so many things from them that helped me a lot on exams and quizzes! Try to make friends in the class and study/ do homework together. Always do your homework on time and try super hard not to fall behind in the class. I know it's really easy to want to skip lecture, do homework last minute, and not study for the quizzes, but if you work hard and get things done on time you will learn so much and you won't feel overwhelmed and stressed when it comes to tests, grades, and finals. Watch the online videos and do the sample quiz every week before the actual quiz!! This helped me so much for the actual quizzes! Do all the sample exams before each exam and go through all of the concept guides. The sample exams were the best thing that helped me study!!! Keep all of your labs, homework, quizzes, and exams neat in a binder or folder. Don't throw them away till the end of the year!!! (you will want to have them later in the class, and if you're taking more chemistry classes such as Ochem, you might want to keep your papers for longer). The class may seem overwhelming at first but you'll get the hang of it and learn the best ways to study. If you get stuck or don't know how to study, go to office hours or the tutoring center! If I were to do this class again I would have gone to office hours and the tutoring center more often. This class is hard but it's totally worth it and you CAN get an A in the class if you study, do your homework on time, and try your best! Even if you get a low grade on an exam, don't give up! Sometimes the best way to learn is to fail first. Learn from your mistakes so the next time you see that problem on a quiz or exam, you'll know how to solve it. Don't get hung up on a bad grade from a quiz or exam. I know it's really easy to get upset and down on yourself for doing bad on a quiz or exam but you'll still be okay in the class if you learn from your mistakes! There's also lots of extra credit opportunities. Just remember to also have fun! Chemistry is a hard class but that doesn't mean it isn't a fun class :) “

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My tips: attend the lectures. Pay attention, even if it means not taking notes. If you can attend Wednesday's recitation to see how the problem sets are done (take pictures of the chalk board). Doc is helpful, so if you have questions, go to his office hours or email him. Finishing your project paper/presentation before the term starts (and during your breaks) helps. It's gonna be a trip with painful pot holes, but you'll make it. Do your best. And eat your god damn vegetables.

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As I reach the end of my own chem sequence, I look back on what I have learned and experienced, and I want to offer some advice to the students who are just starting theirs. The first thing that I would like to say, is that chem will be interesting, fun, and at times challenging. Because of this, I recommend taking advantage of all the amazing resources offered to you, such as office hours, tutoring, and any extra challenges found in the companion/website. I recommend this even if you feel confident, as asking questions and challenging yourself will be tremendously helpful. Lastly, just remember to be inspired and have fun, especially in the labs and projects.

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“Welcome to MHCC chemistry! While chemistry isn't always easy, by putting in effort and reaching out for help you're bound to succeed. Making sure to not study last minute definitely helps, I recommend beginning to review material three days after lecture as it helps solidify what you learned as well as using concept maps to connect everything you've learned together. Be sure to give yourself time to complete problem sets so that you have time to seek help if any problems arise. Don't forget to stop end time doing things you love to avoid burnout, you've got this!”

### **Section H1 students:**

As a section H1 student, I found the labs to be one of the most fun and informative parts of the class, so utilize them. It can help with your conceptual understanding of what is taught through videos. When it comes to problem set recitation, carefully note on your paper important tips and step by step information on how to complete problems you struggle with. You can use these as a study guide for the exams! And finally- utilize every resource provided on the class website. Literally everything you need is on there.

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My advice for new students of ch221 of section H1 is that if you want to make sure that you will do great on the quizzes, then you should do the practice quiz which can be found at the bottom of the chapter guides found on the class webpage. If you have a question during the lab, don't be afraid to ask Mr. Russell for help, he is a great teacher and won't be angry at you for asking for help. Checking out the class webpage is very helpful in telling you what is due that week and you can also check your grades. If you can't make it to class in person you can ask Mr. Russell to put you in the online class for that week. Lastly is to have fun, either by making friends or having fun with the labs (or you can just enjoy Mr. Russell's jokes).

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Congrats on starting a new, challenging class that will hopefully spark new interests for you and help you achieve your career goals! I'm super excited for you! In Dr. Russel's class, I was a hybrid student for both CH222 and CH223, and that worked pretty well for me. Make sure you take advantage of the lecture videos before your class period so you can come with questions, and especially take a look at the last slides of the PowerPoint notes, which have important equations to know and concepts to understand. Now as hard as I tried in both of these classes, I had a really hard time grasping these concepts, as chemistry is not my forte, as much as biology and medical things are, but office hours were a huge help! Going to Dr. Russel's office hours was a lifesaver! I could get focused time to get my questions answered, concepts explained to me, and get help tackling homework problems or post-lab questions which really saved my butt a few times! Dr. Russel is an incredible teacher, a great communicator, and overall just a really swag guy (No, I am not being persuaded to say this lol). I can't even tell you how much it means to me and I'm sure many other students, to have a teacher who is constantly available for help, willing to repeat himself a dozen times to get a concept in your head, and never ever makes you feel dumb or incompetent for not understanding something. So as tempting as it can be to sit in the back of the class and never speak a word to your teacher or classmates which I am totally guilty of, please don't be scared to form that relationship with a teacher or your peers and make time to get one on one help from them, because it may be a complete game changer! Good luck!

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If I had to say something to the next incoming chem classes I would start out by saying that I was in the hybrid section H1 class, which worked the best for me since it was one day a week in person for a couple of hours. I had started out in 221 watching the lectures and reading the textbook then in 222 I just watched some lectures and the chapter guides, but I found out in 223 what worked best for me was to watch the chapter guides and do the problem set and if I ran into troubles then I'd watch the recitation video linked on the problem set. A lot of the times I would wait to do things over a couple days before I had to go to lab, so I wish that I would've given myself more time to go over concepts and to look over what the textbook said as well and a lot of times I would forget that the companion holds a lot of sample quizzes and exams that might give you an idea of what concepts to study for although sometimes it would be different than what's in the companion. Basically I would just say that all of the things you would need to pass the class are mostly in the companion and on the website and to definitely keep all of the work from each term since they're definitely gonna need it for the final.

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CHEM (H1) is doable no matter how foreign or scary the lingo seems. There are no dumb questions, Dr. Russell prioritizes your understanding of the material, and he truly is there at all times. Visit office hours, and become friends with your classmates/lab partners it will make the experience more rich. Try your best and strive to be a hip chemist.

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Dear CH221 student: Welcome to General Chemistry! My name is Cherish, and I completed CH221 – CH223 taught by Dr. Russell in section H1 (hybrid). I am excited that you have decided to embark on this fascinating journey through the world of chemistry. Here are a few tips that I found helpful while taking CH221: 1) Start the homework early – There is nothing more stressful than cramming in homework and being confused on new material before a quiz. Personally, I tried to finish the Problem Set by the end of the weekend (Sunday) before my quiz + lab on Wednesday. Also, for each lab, stay for the entire time to work on post lab questions. At home there will be many distractions, so take advantage of the time you have set aside for class and complete as much of the lab as possible. 2) Take advantage of the practice Problem Sets, Quizzes, and Exams – These practice problems are very helpful! Not only are they great ways to review difficult concepts, but they are excellent examples of what questions your quiz/exam might have. 3) Ask questions – The best way to learn to is to ask questions! Your instructor is here to help you learn, and if you have a question, most likely your classmates have the same question too! 4) Have fun! – Chemistry can be very fun and is a fascinating subject to study. Take time to step back and look at what you have learned each week. Get to know your classmates, share phone numbers, and create a study group. Inevitably, you will hit a topic that is frustrating or difficult to understand; but always remember that you have an instructor rooting for you and you have the skills to succeed! You got this! Have a fantastic term!

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**Section W1 students:**

To the incoming CH22X-W1 students, I wish them luck. I would want them all to know that general chemistry is not easy and ultimately they will have to work to earn the grade they want. I'd urge them to take advantage of the resources and supports available to them, both the ones at MHCC campus and those offered them online. I'd want to share that for me what worked was supplementing lectures with videos from Khan, Crash Course, and the lecture videos themselves again. What also helped me was looking at the sample quizzes and exams to know what kind of questions to study for, for the quizzes and exams. Also going directly to the course instructor for clarification when needed, because this professor cares about you, your success, and WANTS you to be comfortable with the material.

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This term has definitely been rough. I took a break from chemistry for about 7 months and my first mistake was not preparing for it. I didn't do a quick refresher beforehand and I could say life events and new jobs kept me busy but those are still excuses. I have attended tutoring sessions online with my previous chemistry classes and for some reason didn't prioritize it this term. The perk to an online class is that you can keep reviewing the material at all times, which really helped me in times when I needed a tutor at my own pace. I wish I could have attended tutoring way more than I did and made it a priority. Online classes take much more discipline, and I was not prepared for that this term. Knowing your limits will also help in setting you up for success. Mentally, I have been struggling and maybe taking the final class in the series of biology and chemistry in one term was not the brightest idea. Regardless, staying positive and being grateful for what I have learned has kept me in a better mindset. Although the grades I have been receiving this term have been upsetting, they're just setbacks and don't take away from the knowledge I am leaving this term with. Chemistry is a lot of fun and really an amazing topic and field. Starting your 221 journey, always keep that in mind and don't let your joy of learning be diminished by any fears or hesitations.

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The best advice that I have for a new student taking CH223 is to start early on all of your assignments. As soon as the link to an assignment is sent out, look over the assignment so that you can identify if there is anything on the assignment that you do not know how to do. That way, you have time to ask the instructor questions or watch videos on the material that you are confused on before the assignment is due. As someone who took section W1 (the completely online section) of this course, it was very very difficult to find a group to study with. Luckily, I'm not super into group studying so this was not a large issue for me. If you are interested in group studying my advice to you would be to email/reach out to other members of the online section of the course, or consider taking the course in person instead. Good luck in your chemistry class at MHCC! Start early, study often in small doses, and don't be afraid to reach out to the instructor with any questions that you may have!

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As a W1 student, I didn't get the opportunity to learn in person for the lecture and the lab due to personal circumstances, however, Professor Russell made sure to keep me updated with what was going on during the week and when the deadline was. His chemistry website is easily accessible, simple to navigate, and provided so many materials and videos for each chapter. For future students who are taking CH 221 in the fall, I would recommend reaching out to Professor Russell (by email or during office hours) whenever you have any questions or you're stuck on your assignments. For me, I get anxious when talking to my professors, even by email for some reason, but I reached out to Professor Russell when I got stuck on my assignment and he was so helpful and gave hints to where I made a mistake. So! Take advantage of Professor Russell for those who are either doing in-person or hybrid and always ask for help when you need it. Don't be afraid! He's here to help you understand the material better because chemistry is not an easy subject to understand.

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Dear student: As someone who has recently completed the CH1511-CH223 online sequence at MHCC, I wanted to send you this message to offer some insights and advice for your upcoming journey. First, online classes require a lot of self-motivation and organization, I encourage you to get a planner to help establish a structured and disciplined study routine. Make use of the online resources that Dr. Russell and MHCC have made available to you, take advantage of the video lectures, chapter guides, and podcasts in the class portal. In hindsight, I wish I had set aside more dedicated time each week to delving into these resources to get a better grasp on some of the core concepts, so I highly recommend incorporating consistent practice and review sessions into your weekly study plan. And finally never hesitate to reach out to Dr. Russell directly, he's an excellent resource and cheerleader who only wants you to succeed and be the best chemist you can be. Remember, just because you're physically distant, you're a part of the vibrant learning community that is MHCC, embrace the opportunities that online learning offers, and make the most out of your learning experience.