

Classroom Visit by Matthew Weinschenk

Instructor: Matthew r. Culberson

Monday, April 7, 2025

CHEM 204 (Macromolecules)

I have been working closely with Matthew during his time teaching at Emory University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan while working in Prof. John Wolfe's group. His background is in *synthetic organic chemistry* so being asked to teach Emory's Macromolecules course was always going to be challenging with its heavy biochemical focus. It is also a rather large course with ~95 students. Matthew is also teaching two other classes at two different campuses!

Today's class had two parts: 1) complete the fatty-acid biosynthesis material from the previous class, and then 2) start synthetic polymers.

Some overall comments...

- Matthew has an excellent "teaching voice". It was clear and commanded the class's attention. He was confident and spoke clearly.
- Matthew encouraged the students many times.
- There were a few times during the class that students were not clear about the material and raised their hands for clarification. Matthew tried to get the students to answer their own questions, but it seemed that they never had satisfaction. Matthew told them to come to office hours and moved on. I'm not sure if this is a time issue or not being overly familiar with the material. What I often do in these situations (when I do not have a good answer) is to explain that I don't know and that I will find out soon enough. Once I have a satisfactory answer, I then send out a Canvas announcement to everyone. I also may add it to my 'iPad notes' that are posted to Canvas. Or I can possibly clarify during my next class (but this sometimes takes too much class time).
- Matthew had a few group activities. This is a great idea. He and the LAs circulate the room and can get a feel for how students are doing with the material. These also help with student engagement.
- Matthew may try to branch out to get other students/tables involved. It seemed that the same students were answering questions during the flow of the class. I fall into this trap sometimes as well. One approach used by instructors in 150 and 202 is to call on a whole table and warn them that they will have to provide an answer once an activity is complete.
- The LAs should probably sit down when you are teaching material. There were times when you were presenting, and a table was listening to an LA. The LAs probably think they are being beneficial here, but they should wait until there are group activities.

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