

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

5.111 Principles of Chemical Science
Fall 2008

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.

5.111 Recitation Scenarios / Case Studies Led by Former 5.111 TAs

Part 1: Examples 1-4

1) The student who lacks study skills. A student who is constantly requesting more materials, including other books to read or more practice problems, thinking that this will clarify the confusion from the assigned readings and problems. A discussion on how to help your class succeed in 5.111 with good study skills, including stressing the importance of understanding each homework problem, setting aside sufficient time to study, and coming to office hours prepared with specific questions.

- led by XXXX

2) The needy student. The story of a student who takes advantage of the TA's time, refusing to put in any serious work on his/her own, requesting more and more time from the TA, and making increasingly questionable excuses for incomplete or poor work. A discussion on how to deal with this type of student, as well as students who come to office hours without specific questions, looking for lecture summaries ("acid-base...what is that about?"). Also how to deal with students who request unwarranted homework re-grades.

- led by XXXX

3) The students with identical homework answers and the student caught cheating. A case of two students that hand in identical problem sets. The MIT chemistry department policy states that students are encouraged to work together, but absolutely may not copy answers and must hand in their own work. Also, the case of a student caught cheating on an exam or with clickers. A discussion on how to handle copied homework and other forms of cheating. There can be a misconception by students that the problem set grades are more important than the experience of trying each problem themselves and assessing what areas they need to spend more time on to succeed on the exams.

- led by XXXX

4) The student with a weak science background. A student from an economically less privileged school district that has a very weak science background and struggles with the 5.111 material despite putting in an excellent effort. A discussion on how to give such students the needed encouragement and help and on the tutoring and advising resources at MIT.

- led by XXXX

Part 2: Examples 5-8

5) The student who *thinks* he/she is failing. A student who is doing fine in the course, but is convinced that he/she is failing. A discussion on students' insecurities at MIT after

being at the top of their class in high school and the perception that they don't belong here or were accepted into MIT by accident. Also as discussion on when this type of person DOES end up failing (leading into the next topic...)

- led by XXXX

6) The student who *is* failing. A struggling student who is in danger of failing this and perhaps other courses. A discussion on what steps to take, including contacting the freshman advisor to get more information, and when it might be appropriate to advise a student to drop the course. Some students in this situation are overcommitted both with the number of classes they are taking and with extracurricular activities. Also, what to do when you think the academic issue might be related to personal or mental health issues.

- led by XXXX

7) The “advanced” student who questions your authority as a TA. The case of a student that tries to trick or stump the TA with off-topic questions or makes inappropriate comments meant to undermine your authority as the teacher. This only occurs in one or two recitations each year, but it is important to be aware of so you can handle the situation before it escalates. Also how to handle “red herring” questions or questions that stray too far from the course material without confusing other students in the class.

- led by XXXX

8) Balancing classwork, lab selection and TAing. A discussion of how to balance your own time during the first semester and how to deal with the stress of trying to teach while simultaneously taking classes and trying to select a lab. How to prioritize your time, stay organized, and keep on top of your work.

- led by XXXX