Chemistry Department Seminars
(Stolen from Dr. Pikaart and modified.)

Ah, chemistry! Lectures, labs, research, a new building with ducks in the hallways … and what’s missing from this picture? Of course: **Friday afternoon seminars!** Why do we have seminars? Most of the speakers who come to give a talk come at their own institution’s expense – because they want to talk to you. They want you to know about graduate opportunities at their university, or jobs at their company. So why would you want to go?? Well, it’s a way for you to learn some chemistry and apply that knowledge you’ve learned (maybe even in an area of chemistry outside of your primary interest). But more than that, it puts a face on chemistry. You get to watch chemists in action, see the person behind the science, and appreciate the human side. You get a chance to put yourself in the visitor’s shoes, and see what works and doesn’t work in a seminar presentation format, hopefully picking up on some presentation skills yourself in the process. Some speakers will be entertaining and easy to follow. Some will require a little more work on your part as the listener, and may be challenging, even difficult, to understand. **All will have something you can learn from!**

In pchem seminar attendance (and a report on that seminar) is an opportunity for the much sought-after extra credit! To help you get more from your seminar participation, and to help the chemistry department plan future seminar programs, here are some questions you should consider during the seminar to help you write your report:

- What’s one thing you learned from the seminar that you didn’t know before?
- What’s one question or part you didn’t understand?
- The speaker is describing a significant piece of her/his career’s work. What do you think is the motivating factor in the speaker’s pursuit of this professional interest? How does it relate to your personal interests? Does it have impact in your career plans?
- If you were giving this seminar, what would you do? What do you think were the positive aspects of the speaker’s presentation, and what would you do differently?

These represent a subset of all questions that are worthwhile to think about and jot notes about during the seminar. Think about these things and type up a one page discussion of the talk and what you got from it. If you want to include small figures, these may be hand drawn if you desire. At the top of the page, make sure you have your name, the speaker’s name, the seminar title, and the seminar date. You must arrive on time and remain for the entire seminar in order to write it up for extra credit.

If your report is well-written and thoughtful, you will receive two points that will be added into your quiz & homework scores for the semester. If the report is mediocre, you will receive one point. You may write reports for chemistry, physics, or biology seminars, but you may not total more than 15 points of seminar extra credit for the semester.
Seminar Etiquette

• **Arrive on time.** (Generally 3-5 minutes EARLY is considered “on time”, so the room settles down for the speaker to begin promptly at 4pm.)

• **Stay until seminar is COMPLETELY over** (including the question and answer period.)

• If you know you may have to leave right at 5pm (Q&A may not be over yet), sit in the last row and leave quietly!

• **CELL PHONES OFF!!!**

• **STAY AWAKE!!!**

• **No talking!** If you have a CHEMISTRY question that is urgent to your understanding of the talk, write it down to ask later. If you need it answered immediately, you can show your written question to a neighbor and see if they can jot you an answer.

• In some seminars the speaker may tell you at the beginning to interrupt if you have questions – in this case, feel free to raise a hand and ask a question mid-seminar, especially if it will improve your understanding of the rest of the talk. Otherwise it is considered proper to save your questions for the question and answer time at the end of the seminar. Write your questions down so you remember them!

• **Asking questions is considered a courtesy. You honor the seminar speaker by asking a question.** If you have a question, even if you aren’t completely sure if it is a valid or “smart” question – ASK IT!

• **Asking questions is considered a courtesy. You honor the seminar speaker by asking a question.** There are times, usually in less than thrilling seminars, when nobody will have a question. Then it is up to a few intrepid souls to muster up a question or two from thin air. Often this is the faculty host, or another faculty member. But it shouldn’t always be. So a useful exercise in seminar is to make yourself come up with a “mercy” question during the talk so that if no one is asking questions, you can ask it. You may even find that the process of generating a “mercy” question engages you in the talk and develops “real” questions!

• If the seminar is so incredibly boring to you that you feel you can’t possibly pay any attention, doodle (preferably thermodynamic relationships) on your notepad – do NOT talk, leave, sleep, or try to do other work. At least you will appear to be taking notes, and you can improve your future test scores. (Obviously, however, if you resort to doodling to stay awake, you cannot write that seminar up in an extra credit report!)

• These are useful professional skills and courtesies for meetings and seminars that will serve you not only in Hope Chemistry Seminars, but throughout a lifetime of meetings and talks!