

Quantum Chemistry

Course Syllabus – Fall 2025

Courses: CHEM 4120, CHEM 4120 HON, and CHEM 6120

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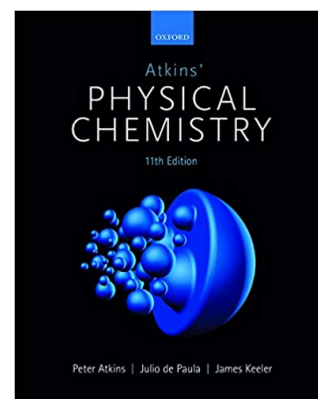
Instruction Mode: Face-to-face lectures. TR, 3:45-5:00 pm in PSC 233.

Course Prerequisites: This course relies heavily on chemistry, physics, and math concepts from CHEM 1212K, PHYS 2212K, and MATH 2202 or 2212.

Course overview: The course has five modules, each lasting around 2-4 weeks.

Textbook: "Physical Chemistry" by Peter Atkins, Julio de Paula, and James Keeler, 11th Edition, Oxford University Press, 2017, ISBN 9780198769866. A few notes and tips:

- It is possible to complete the course without having the textbook. However, the textbook is an excellent resource that explains all the topics from the class, often in a way that complements the lectures rather than just mirrors it.
- The textbook is available from several resources online, both as a rental and to buy.
- An older edition of the same textbook is fine.
- The full Atkins book has ~900 pages and has a black and blue cover. However, the publishers also have released the same book in three volumes. Most of the material in this course is from volume 2. Please be sure to get either the full textbook or volume 2 (volume 2 has the same cover but in orange instead of a blue image).
- If you plan to take Chem 4110 soon, you may need the Atkins book again. In that case, it might be a good idea to invest in the full book and/or rent for longer.



Student Resources: Resources accompanying the Atkins textbook, including additional information and the student solutions manual, are available at https://oup-arc.com/access/pchem11e-student-resources#tag_a-deeper-look.

Course Description: Quantum Chemistry is a 3-credit semester course that covers the principles atomic and molecular structure (quantum chemistry) and ends with discussing a few of the foundations of statistical mechanics. These topics serve as the fundamental basis for understanding molecular and spectroscopic properties. Focuses 7-11 and 13 from the textbook will be covered in this course.

Course Objectives: The overall objective is to understand the behavior of matter by deriving their properties at the atomic or molecular level from first principles. Students will also get a glimpse of how to connect this molecular-level understanding with bulk properties through statistical mechanics.

Homework, Extra Problems, and No-credit Practice Problems: For each module, everyone will be assigned required homework. Homework will be available on iCollege at the start of each module and will typically be due on a Monday. Homework can be attempted multiple times to fix wrong answers, but students must re-answer all questions on each attempt. Note that some questions on the exams will be very similar in format to homework questions. Mastering homework will go a long way towards better performance on exams. Chem 4120 HON and Chem 6120 students will also be assigned additional problems due on the same day. Additionally, optional no-credit problems from the textbook will be recommended for everyone wanting extra practice.

Exams: There will be five exams in this course, one for each module. The lowest exam score will be dropped and replaced by the average of the other four exams. These exams will not be given at any time other than the scheduled lecture period (see make-up policy below). Each exam will primarily test your knowledge of the corresponding module. However, some of the questions on each exam may come from previous modules. There will be no other midterm or final exam.

Exam policies:

- The exams will be open book. You may use the book, your notes, and your calculator during exams. Please consider that you will not have a lot of time to browse through your book/notes, so use your time wisely.
- Cell phones must be turned OFF (not just silent) during all exams. Cell phones must not be in any place that is visible to you or me during the exam. In case of an emergency where you anticipate you might need your phone turned on during your exam, you must clear that with me first. You cell phones may **not** be used in place of a calculator for the exams.
- I reserve the right to move anyone during exams without explanation. I typically use this simply to spread people out. If you are asked to relocate, please collect your exam and notes and move to the newly assigned seat as quietly as possible.

Exam make-up policies:

- At the end of the semester, there will be an opportunity to take one make-up exam. This exam is available to anyone who has missed an exam during the semester and does not wish to use that exam as their drop grade. A list of topics included in that make-up exam will be provided. Typically, this will be a selection of topics from multiple modules. The difficulty of the exam will be like other exams.
- If you miss two exams during the semester, you can make up one and use the other as the drop grade.
- Any additional exams missed will be assigned a grade of zero.
- When multiple missed exams and/or assignments are due to ongoing illness or hardship during this semester, please talk with your instructor as soon as you can to discuss early withdrawal, emergency withdrawal, or incomplete grade options. Incompletes are only assigned if students have completed most of the required material for the course and have a passing grade by the "last day to withdraw" date.

Discussion Forum: For each module, there will be a discussion forum which can be used to post resources or questions about lectures, homework, and additional practice problems. Students can either post questions or reply to questions. However, please do not give direct answers to homework questions. Feel free to use the forum to post any reading material, videos, websites, or notes you found useful and relevant to the course.

Participation: Participation will be assessed based on contributions to the discussion forum. Up to 5 points will be awarded **for each module** as follows:

- 0 points for no participation at all.
- 1 point for very minimal engagement with the discussion forum and class.
- 2 points for minimal engagement (only viewing posts on the discussion forum but not participating).
- 3 points for some engagement (regularly reading the discussion forum but not posting).
- 4 points for participating sometimes (e.g., ~1-2 post on the discussion forum or ~1-2 questions in class).
- 5 points for regularly participating (e.g., over 2 posts in the forum or questions in class, plus browsing the forum).

Grading: The grade breakdown for this course is as follows:

<u>Module</u>	<u>%</u>
1	20
2	20
3	20
4	20
5	20

Here is the breakdown of grades for each module:

	Chem 4120 (%)	Chem 4120HON/6120 (%)
Participation	5	5
Homework	45	30
Exam	50	50
Extra problems	0 (not required)	15

The following plus/minus grading system will be used for everyone:

Grade	%
A+	98+
A	90-98
A-	87-90
B+	84-87
B	80-84
B-	75-80
C+	70-75
C	65-70
C-	60-65
D	50-60
F	< 50

Last day to withdraw is **Tuesday, October 24th, 2025**.

The University requires faculty, on a date set by the provost after the mid-point of the course,

1. to give a WF to all those students who are on their rolls but no longer taking the class, and
2. to report the last day the student attended or turned in an assignment.

Student Integrity Policy: All exams and assignments must represent the student's individual, unaided efforts. Receiving unauthorized outside information or offering unauthorized information to another student during an examinations or assignments is cheating. This includes recruiting direct help through "tutoring" or "study" tools while solving assignments, such as Chegg, which counts as unauthorized help. Any suspected offenses will be referred to the Department of Chemistry and the College of Arts and Sciences for appropriate action. The academic penalty for cheating that is recommended by the Department of Chemistry is a failing grade for the course. Please refer to GSU's [Academic Honesty Policy](#) for more information.

Accommodations: Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Access and Accommodation Center. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the [Access and Accommodation Center](#) of a signed **Accommodation Plan** and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which accommodations are sought.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act: In keeping with USG and university policy, this course website will make every effort to maintain the privacy and accuracy of your personal information. Specifically, unless otherwise noted, it will not actively share personal information gathered from the site with anyone except university employees whose responsibilities require access to said records. However, some information collected from the site may be subject to the Georgia Open Records Act. This means that while we do not actively share information, in some cases we may be compelled by law to release information gathered from the site. Also, the site will be managed in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which prohibits the release of education records without student permission. For more details on FERPA, [go here](#).

Course Evaluation: Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

Modules and course schedule:

The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; please note that deviations may be necessary.

If you miss the deadline for homework or can't attend exams for reasons outside of your control (i.e., emergencies) please notify me as soon as you can.

Holidays: Labor Day: Monday, Sept 2. Thanksgiving Break: Nov 25-Nov 29.

Module	Chapters in book	Start date	HW Due date	Exam Date	% of final grade
1	Topics 7A-C	8/26	9/15	9/18	20
2	Topics 7D-E	9/23	10/6	10/9	20
3	Topics 7F, 8A-8B	10/14	10/27	10/30	20
4	Topics 8C, 9A-C, 11A	11/4	11/17	11/20	20
5	Topics 10A-C, 13A-B	12/2	12/8	12/16*	20

*Exam time on 12/16: 2:00 pm.

The following pages will list specific learning outcomes and tasks for each module.

Module 1 (M1): Introduction to Quantum Chemistry

Outcomes:

- Identify different subfields of physical chemistry and their relationship.
- Define some basic but important terms that will be used throughout this course.
- Review some of the major scientific problems that could not be solved by classical mechanics.
- Discuss the nature of light
- Discuss the nature of other particles.
- Define a wavefunction and the Born interpretation of a wavefunction.
- Construct eigenvalue equations with different operators and discuss their properties.
- Explain the uncertainty principle.
- Explain the postulates of quantum mechanics.

Tasks:

1. Attend M1 lectures.
2. Familiarize yourself with the syllabus.
3. Read Topics 7A-7C in the textbook.
4. Post questions, answers, comments, or resources in the M1 discussion forum.
5. Complete the M1 homework and submit by due date.
6. Take the M1 exam.

Module 2 (M2): Solving the Schrödinger equation for different potentials.

Outcomes:

- Apply quantum mechanics to translational motion
- Use the particle in a box model to discuss degeneracy and quantum tunnelling
- Apply quantum mechanics to vibrational motion.

Tasks:

1. Attend M2 lectures.
2. Read Topics 7D-7E in the textbook.
3. Post questions, answers, comments, or resources in the M2 discussion forum.
4. Complete the M2 homework and submit by due date.
5. Take the M2 exam.

Module 3 (M3): Atomic Structure.

Outcomes:

- Define angular momentum and apply quantum mechanics to rotational motion.
- Apply quantum mechanics to the hydrogen and hydrogen-like atoms.
- Use the hydrogen atom solution to the Schrödinger equation to discuss the electronic structure of hydrogen.
- Extend the lessons from hydrogen to many-electron atoms.
- Explain the Pauli exclusion principle and use.
- Determine the electronic configurations of many-electron atoms.

Tasks:

1. Attend M3 lectures.
2. Read Topics 7F and 8A-8B in the textbook.
3. Post questions, answers, comments, or resources in the M3 discussion forum.
4. Complete the M3 homework and submit by due date.
5. Take the M3 Exam.

Module 4 (M4): Molecular structure and spectroscopy

Outcomes:

- Use the rules of quantum mechanics to discuss the spectra of hydrogen and many-electron atoms.
- Define spin-orbit coupling.
- Apply valence-bond theory to explain molecular bonding.
- Apply molecular orbital theory to explain molecular bonding in different diatomic and polyatomic molecules.
- Define photoelectron spectroscopy and how it relates to molecular electronic structure.
- Discuss the variational principle and its application in molecular orbital theory.
- Discuss the Hückel approximation and other approximate solutions for solving electronic structure of polyatomic molecules.
- Discuss electronic transitions in molecules and associated properties and experimental techniques.
- Discuss spectroscopies that probe rotational motion in molecules.
- Discuss spectroscopies that probe vibrational motion in molecules
- Explain how vibronic features arise in electronic transitions and excited-state decay.

Tasks:

1. Attend M4 lectures.
2. Read Topics 8C, 9A-C, and 11A in the textbook.
3. Post questions, answers, comments, or resources in the M4 discussion forum.
4. Complete the M4 homework and submit by due date.
5. Take the M4 Exam.

Module 5 (M5): Symmetry and Statistical Mechanics.

Outcomes:

- Determine symmetry operations and point groups of molecules.
- Use point groups to determine properties of molecules.
- Introduce and discuss the Boltzmann distribution and molecular partition functions.

Tasks:

1. Attend M5 lectures.
2. Read Topics 10A-C and 13A-B the textbook.
3. Post questions, answers, comments, or resources in the M5 discussion forum.
4. Complete the M5 homework and submit by due date.
5. Take the M5 exam.