To: Chemistry Graduate Students

I’ll be teaching Chemistry 650 in Spring 2002. The topic is "Orbital Symmetry Control of Organic Reactions" (also known as the Woodward-Hoffmann Rules). For those of you who are undecided about registering for the course, here is some information.

The nominal prerequisite for Chem. 650 is "two of 550-51-52" but this can be waived; in fact, three of the very best students who’ve taken this course or its quarter system predecessor had had *no* graduate-level organic chemistry at all! If you are unsure about your qualifications, please see me.

The course will probably meet twice each week (85-minute classes with a 10-minute break). There will be two take-home exams: open textbook and course notes, "unlimited time" (i.e., 4-5 days).

The major emphasis will be on the elegant experimental work done by mechanistic and synthetic organic chemists to define and test the validity of the orbital symmetry rules. A minor (but not negligible) component will be the qualitative molecular orbital theory that is the basis for the rules.

If you’d like a preview of the type of chemistry involved, look in your undergraduate organic text at the chapter titled "pericyclic reactions" or "orbital symmetry" or something like that; if no such chapter exists, discard the book and buy another!

In early November, I’ll send out another e-mail message, asking those of you who are interested in taking or auditing the course to give me your schedules for spring semester.