Some guidelines for the essay assignments:

The on-line CPR essay system can be accessed at the URL:
http://cpr.molsci.ucla.edu/cpr/cpr/login.asp

The first time you arrive at the login page, click

"New users: first time logging in?"

Upon doing this, the system will ask you to "Select your institution". Choose "New York University". The system will also ask for your student ID. For the CPR system, your ID is YOUR NYU NetID (i.e., the first part of your e-mail address). Do NOT type in your "N number". If you identify your institution and type in your NetID correctly, then the system will already know about you - it’s been waiting for you! You will be given a NEW username (which is easily forgotten, so write it down). You’ll need to establish a password (which is even more easily forgotten, so write it down).

Upon your first entry into the system, you’ll be given a "Tour" and then you’ll take a pre-test. The tour gives all of the information that you need for the pre-test, so PAY ATTENTION :)

After the pre-test, you’ll be able to view the assignment. Everything should be pretty easy to understand, but like any computerized system, if you don’t follow the instructions, the computer won’t do what you’d like it to do. Solution: follow the instructions.

Write your essay before the due date. Don’t wait until the last minute. Do a good, thorough job. Spell correctly, use proper grammar, proofread your essay, save your work often, ... Obvious suggestions, but you’d be surprised by how many people don’t follow this advice. ALSO - VERY IMPORTANT - PREVIEW your essay by using the "Preview" button within CPR. Often a symbol or word is misinterpreted as an HTML tag by the CPR system and your grader(s) will not see the essay as you intended it (unless you preview and fix any such errors).

Once you’ve written AND SUBMITTED your essay (note that "saving" your work does not "submit" it. You must "submit" it once you feel that it is ready for assessment) you’ll proceed to the "calibration" stage.

The calibration stage is there to train you how to assess the essays written by others and to give you some experience in carrying out that part of the assignment. Don’t treat it as a trivial stage. I have set the system so that it will not deduct credit from your grade during the calibrations, but this is still an important part of the assignment. If you don’t learn how to assess essays, then your grading of essays will be inconsistent with the grading by other students and then you will lose credit. Furthermore, if the system identifies you as a poor grader, it will give you a low "rating" as a grader and your opinions will count for very little when you grade your classmates (which means that you can’t hurt or
help them, but you can still hurt yourself by grading inconsistently). The moral here is to use the calibration stage to become the best grader possible. Then the grades that people receive from you will be justified AND you won’t lose credit for your grading of their essays. Everyone comes out ahead.

In grading the essays of your classmates, be objective. If their work is good, give a good grade. If their work is poor, give a low grade. Don’t be influenced by worries that other students won’t be fair. They will be fair. The idea that a harsh grader will benefit by making others look bad is not valid because a harsh grader will be inconsistent with the majority and will end up with a low grade for their reviewing. The hope that everyone in the class will be lenient is also unrealistic - primarily because most students will want to do a good job, but also because of the fear that not everyone will be lenient and the lenient few will lose out because of their inconsistency.

I want you to grade the essays for the quality of the information content. If the essay is accurate, clear, and complete, then the style of writing is definitely of less importance. This is not a writing class. However, don’t be sloppy and don’t tolerate sloppiness. This is college and students should be able to spell and construct grammatical statements (if English is not your first language it may require more thought from you than from native speakers, but at least you’re getting a second type of learning experience here - you must put forth the effort).

In addition to answering some specific questions about each essay that you read, you’ll assign a numerical rating between 1 and 10. Only a truly outstanding essay deserves a 10. A good essay should earn an 8. A borderline passing essay would be around a 6. A low quality scribble earns a 4. A truly horrendous, unpleasant, inaccurate waste of paper (or screen space, in this case) might get a 1 or 2. This is the same grading scale as used on an exam. Hardly anyone gets a 10 or 20 on an exam, but then few earn 100 either. A good, solid exam score is in the 80’s. Right?

The last stage is to assess your own work AFTER having seen the calibration essays and after having read the work of your classmates. Again, be fair and be realistic. If the other essays were better than yours, don’t give yourself a high grade. If you believe that your work is as good or better than the other work that you’ve seen, do give yourself a high grade. This contribution to your overall score depends as much upon your consistency with the opinions of others as it does upon the rating that you give to your own essay.

You might enjoy the on-line essay experience ... and you might not. While I do hope that you enjoy chemistry, I don’t think that getting pleasure from this particular component of the course is as important as the benefit of having to think through an entire topic and then explain it. Nothing else in the course can give you this experience. If you’re in college to learn, this is just the thing you’re looking for!