

BMED 4000 Syllabus

Art of Telling Your Story
Summer 2026
1 credit

Instructor Information

Instructor

Dr. Ellen Zerbe

Email

ezerbe3@gatech.edu

General Course Information

Description

In this course you reflect on your skills, values, and experiences and learn to communicate them in a way that is compelling and impactful. Developing a repertoire of stories about your experiences will help you make sense of your journey and communicate who you are and what you care about. These stories are also useful as you look for your first job, prepare for grad school admissions, or take whatever your next step is.

Storytelling is also an important professional skill for engineers. Biomedical engineers must learn to listen for and appropriately tell other people's stories as they uncover the needs of users and stakeholders throughout their career. Through stories, engineers identify the problems that need solving, communicate why their work matters, and inspire others to join their efforts.

In this course you will learn to craft, share, and listen to stories in a variety of ways for different audiences, developing a skill set that supports both professional communication and leadership in engineering.

Core Impacts

Not applicable

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to...

1. Identify personal experiences that illustrate a clear narrative point.
2. Apply fundamental story structure to draft, revise, and refine personal narratives.
3. Deliver stories with clarity, confidence, and effective presentation skills.
4. Provide constructive, actionable feedback during peer review.
5. Incorporate peer feedback to improve narrative quality.
6. Analyze and integrate connections across academic and personal experiences.
7. Synthesize personal narratives to identify recurring themes and characteristics that reflect personal values, strengths, and patterns of growth and apply those toward professional development.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

This class is intended for 3rd year+ BME students. There are elements of professional development in this class, so it is ideal for students who are preparing for their next steps.

Required Course Materials

None required

Course Policies

Grading Policy

All assignments are submitted and graded through Canvas. A>90; B>80, C>70, D>60
If you need specific accommodations in the class or expect regular conflicts with assigned due dates, then reach out to your instructor. Accommodations and extensions can only be made if there is sufficient communication before an issue arises. Extensions on assignments will not be offered after the due date has passed.

Assignment	Points	Description
Story Board Assignments	4 points each	Stories about you in response to a specific prompt. Stories will be posted to a discussion board on Canvas. If you do not feel comfortable posting it on Canvas, you will receive credit for submitting your story via email. There will typically be one story or equivalent assignment per week.
Small Weekly Assignments	1 point each	Small assignments due each week. These are submitted directly to the assignment in canvas. These cannot be turned in late for credit.
Peer Feedback	1 point each	You will give feedback on two other students' stories each week. This is done by commenting directly on the discussion board in Canvas. These cannot be turned in late for credit.
In-Class Participation	1 point each	Attendance and participation in class
Story Lab	7 points	You will tell the class a story you have revised based on feedback you have received. This is the "exam" for this class.
User Story Project	15 points	Story written about a community partner, along with other assignments to set up the

Assignment	Points	Description
		project and reflect along the way. Points distributed across several assignments due throughout the semester.
Final Story Lab	15 points	Very similar to the story lab during the semester, however everyone focuses on the same prompt. Serves as the final exam for the course.

Attendance and/or Participation

Attendance and participation are required, with one unexcused absence allowed. Participation is defined as arriving on time, staying through class, and engaging respectfully in activities. Excused absences follow Georgia Tech’s official policy, and students must notify the instructor as soon as possible. In-class participation will be awarded a binary grade (i.e., 0 points or 1 point) for each class period. For virtual sections, please keep your video stream on the whole time unless we ask you to do otherwise for the purposes of a specific exercise (Note: Please mute your audio unless you are sharing).

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

We would like you to share your work with the class. We also expect you to read and comment on (in an appreciative and constructive way!) at least two other students’ work for each week. Please comment on different students each week. We will do this via posts in dedicated threads on Canvas.

If it turns out you want to write a story that you’d rather share only with the instructors, that’s OK, just let us know. In that case, you will need to submit your work directly to the instructors via email. However, ideally most of your stories will be shared with others since sharing is a great way to build community as well as to improve your story writing skills.

While it may be tempting to use AI to complete the writing prompts, you are doing a disservice to yourself. By doing so, you learn nothing about yourself, you can’t relate to the content, and you are no more prepared for communicating your skills and values than you were without the course. The prompts you will be writing about are not going to quiz you on technical content knowledge. They just ask for genuine reflection on your own experiences. You know yourself more than an AI model knows you. That being said, if you find writing a story particularly daunting, you can use AI for feedback or to check your grammar and spelling. Even still, the instructor, TA, or your friends in the class can give you that same feedback.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech’s Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Specific to this course, we will work together in our first week of class to develop our own Rules of Engagement for reading, responding, and listening to each other's stories.