

CETL 8797 – Oral Communication for International Graduate Students

Course Syllabus

Georgia Institute of Technology

Semester: Fall 2026

Course Modality: In-person

Course Information

Instructor: Kendall Nelson

Course Description

In this course, students work on expanding fluency and accuracy in spoken North American English (NAE) to participate more joyfully, effectively, and confidently in academic, professional, and informal communication contexts.

Course Objectives / Learning Outcomes

The goals of this course are:

- To practice North American English (NAE) fluency, both verbal and nonverbal, in discussion and presentation contexts, including producing natural nonverbal language (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and vocal quality), and phrasing and highlighting key words.
- To work on acquiring a North American English (NAE) accent, including clear pronunciation of vowels and consonants, appropriate pausing, linking words, stressing syllables correctly, stressing content words while reducing function words, establishing focus words, and using intonation to communicate meaning.
- To increase confidence in speaking by practicing impromptu (improvisational) speaking, learning small-talk and conversational strategies, and practicing asking and responding to questions.

- To practice discussion skills, including summarizing key ideas, expressing opinions in academic discussions, developing and asking questions, and paraphrasing orally.

Grading Policy and Weighting

This course is graded on a **Pass/Fail** basis.

Regular attendance is required to pass the course. If a student expects to miss more than **20 percent of class meetings** (equivalent to two classes), they should consider taking the course in a future semester.

To earn a passing grade, students must:

- Attend classes regularly
- Actively participate in class activities
- Successfully complete **seven course assignments**, as outlined in the course schedule

Attendance Policy

Active participation and consistent attendance are required for successful completion of the course. Students should notify the instructor in advance if they need to miss a class whenever possible.

Individual Conferences

During the first week of the semester, students will meet individually with the instructor for a one-on-one consultation to discuss their research area, field of study, professional goals, and personal communication goals. Communication strengths and areas for improvement will be identified, and an improvement plan will be developed.

During the final weeks of the semester, students will meet again with the instructor to assess progress and design a plan for continued improvement beyond the course.

Additional Criteria for Successful Completion of the Course

Students are expected to take reasonable risks in speaking, accept feedback, and consistently work toward improving spoken communication skills.

Academic Honesty / Academic Integrity

Students are expected to comply with the Georgia Tech Honor Code. All submitted work must be the student's own and must accurately represent their participation and effort.

Acceptable Student Conduct

Students are expected to follow the Student–Faculty Expectations Agreement. Professional, respectful conduct is required at all times. Active engagement and respectful interaction with classmates and the instructor are essential to the learning process.

Disability Services Statement

Georgia Tech provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities through the Office of Disability Services. Students requiring accommodations should contact that office and notify the instructor as early as possible.