

Senior Thesis
PSYC4600, PSYC4601
Section: TB
Credits: 3-4

Summer 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Thackery Brown
Email: tbrown338@gatech.edu

General Course Information

The Senior Thesis sequence (PSYC 4600 and PSYC 4601) is the capstone undergraduate research experience in the School of Psychology. Over the course of two semesters, you will transition from a consumer of psychology and neuroscience to an active contributor. Under direct faculty supervision, you will conceptualize an original research question, design a rigorous methodology, navigate the logistical and ethical requirements of human subjects research, and execute data collection and analysis.

Whether you are investigating the temporal dynamics of decision-making, the influences of music on memory, or the effects of aging on spatial navigation, this sequence requires high-level critical thinking, self-direction, and project management. The final product is a formal, APA-formatted manuscript and a comprehensive defense of your findings.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this two-semester sequence, you should be able to:

- **Synthesize** existing psychological literature to identify gaps and formulate a novel, testable hypothesis or integrative review framework.
- **Design** a methodologically sound empirical study, selecting appropriate behavioral and neural measures and experimental or correlational designs.
- **Navigate** the institutional research process, including securing a Second Reader, obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and managing data collection logistics.
- **Apply** appropriate statistical methods to clean, analyze, and interpret raw psychological and brain data.
- **Write** a comprehensive, publication-style empirical manuscript adhering to the highest standards of APA formatting.

Required Course Material

There is no textbook.

Grading Policy

Because this is an independent project, your grade is determined by your ability to meet critical research milestones, incorporate feedback, and produce high-quality academic writing.

Semester I: PSYC 4600 (3 Credit Hours) – The Proposal Phase

The goal of the first semester is to establish the theoretical foundation and methodological plan for your study.

- **Milestone 1: Topic Finalization & Nomination Form (10%)**
 - Submission of your finalized research question and the official signed "Senior Thesis Nomination Form." You must secure a Second Reader (regular or adjunct GT faculty) by this deadline.
- **Milestone 2: Annotated Bibliography & Literature Review Draft (20%)**
 - A comprehensive synthesis of at least 15-20 peer-reviewed articles that form the theoretical background (Introduction section) of your proposal.
- **Milestone 3: Methodology and Analysis Plan (20%)**
 - A detailed draft of your proposed Methods section (participants, materials, procedures) and your planned statistical analyses.
- **Milestone 4: IRB Protocol Draft (10%)**
 - A completed draft of your IRB application (or an amendment if integrating into an ongoing data collection), ready for submission upon proposal approval.
- **Final Deliverable: The Research Proposal (40%)**
 - A polished, APA-formatted document encompassing the Introduction, Methods, and Proposed Analysis. This must be reviewed and approved by both your supervisor and your Second Reader.

Semester II: PSYC 4601 (4 Credit Hours) – The Execution Phase

The goal of the second semester is to execute the proposed study, analyze the data, and write the final manuscript.

- **Milestone 1: Data Collection Logistics & IRB Approval (10%)**
 - Successfully launching your study. If using pre-existing data, this grade reflects the completion of data cleaning, merging, and variable coding.
- **Milestone 2: Results Section Draft (20%)**
 - A draft of your statistical findings, including appropriate data visualizations, tables, and a written narrative of the results.
- **Milestone 3: Discussion Section Draft (15%)**
 - A draft interpreting your results, acknowledging study limitations, and proposing future directions for the research.
- **Milestone 4: Second Reader Review Draft (15%)**
 - *Crucial Deadline:* The complete, integrated thesis document must be submitted to your Second Reader at least two weeks prior to the end of the term to allow time for feedback and revisions.
- **Final Deliverable: The Senior Thesis & Certificate of Approval (40%)**
 - The final, revised APA-formatted thesis. To receive a passing grade, you must also submit the "Certificate of Senior Thesis Approval" signed by both readers, and email the final PDF to the Undergraduate Coordinator.

Course Grading Scale (Applies to both semesters)

- **A:** 90.0% – 100%
- **B:** 80.0% – 89.9%
- **C:** 70.0% – 79.9%

- **D:** 60.0% – 69.9%
- **F:** Below 60.0%

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation Policy

Unlike a traditional lecture course, your "attendance" in the Senior Thesis sequence is defined by your consistent, professional engagement with your faculty supervisor and lab. You are required to schedule and attend a weekly or bi-weekly 1-on-1 supervisory meeting. You are expected to arrive at these meetings prepared, having completed the agreed-upon action items from the previous week. Failing to attend these meetings or consistently missing internal lab deadlines will severely impact your ability to pass the course.

Accountability and Independence

Conducting a senior thesis is an exercise in scientific independence. While your supervisor is here to guide your methodology and refine your writing, you are the project manager. It is your responsibility to monitor the progress of your IRB application, manage your data collection schedule, and proactively reach out if you encounter roadblocks.

Excused Absences and Institute Expectations

We adhere to all Georgia Tech Institute policies regarding excused absences. Absences due to documented illness, family emergencies, or Institute-approved activities will be excused. Furthermore, as a course heavily focused on workforce analytics and professional readiness, your career development is supported; absences for events such as the All-Majors Career Fair or off-campus job/graduate school interviews are permitted, provided they are communicated in advance.

Communication and Catching Up

If you must miss a scheduled supervisory meeting due to illness, family emergency, or a professional obligation (e.g., graduate school interviews), you must:

1. **Communicate Early:** Notify your supervisor at least 24 hours in advance.
2. **Submit a Progress Update:** Send a written summary of the work you completed that week and outline your goals for the following week so the project does not lose momentum.
3. **Reschedule:** Take the initiative to propose an alternative meeting time to review your work.

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

Campus Resources for Students

In your time at Georgia Tech, you may find yourself in need of support. Below you will find some resources to support you both as a student and as a person.

Academic support

- Center for Academic Success <http://success.gatech.edu>
 - 1-to-1 tutoring <http://success.gatech.edu/1-1-tutoring>
 - Peer-Led Undergraduate Study (PLUS) <http://success.gatech.edu/tutoring/plus>
 - Academic coaching <http://success.gatech.edu/coaching>
- Residence Life's Learning Assistance Program <https://housing.gatech.edu/learning-assistance-program>
 - Drop-in tutoring for many 1000 level courses
- OMED: Educational Services (<http://omed.gatech.edu/programs/academic-support>)
 - Group study sessions and tutoring programs
- Communication Center (<http://www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu>)
 - Individualized help with writing and multimedia projects
- Academic advisors for your major <http://advising.gatech.edu/>

Personal Support

Georgia Tech Resources

- The Office of the Dean of Students: <http://studentlife.gatech.edu/content/services>; 404-894-6367; Smithgall Student Services Building 2nd floor
 - You also may request assistance at https://gatech-advocate.symphlicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid383662?
- Counseling Center: <http://counseling.gatech.edu>; 404-894-2575; Smithgall Student Services Building 2nd floor
 - Services include short-term individual counseling, group counseling, couples counseling, testing and assessment, referral services, and crisis intervention. Their website also includes links to state and national resources.
 - *Students in crisis may walk in during business hours (8am-5pm, Monday through Friday) or contact the counselor on call after hours at 404-894-2204.*
- Students' Temporary Assistance and Resources (STAR): <http://studentlife.gatech.edu/content/need-help>
 - Can assist with interview clothing, food, and housing needs.
- Stamps Health Services: <https://health.gatech.edu>; 404-894-1420
 - Primary care, pharmacy, women's health, psychiatry, immunization and allergy, health promotion, and nutrition
- Veteran's Resource Center: <http://veterans.gatech.edu/>; 404-385-2067
- Georgia Tech Police: 404-894-2500