

CETL 2000 NEUR UTA Preparation Course Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Christina Ragan

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Course Description:

This course is designed to support your responsibility to provide our undergraduates with the high-quality education that we desire in the Undergraduate Neuroscience Program. In addition, your teaching experience will hone transferable skills that enhance your professional development whatever your intended career path. During this course, you will build a foundation for learner-centered teaching, and you will measure how effective you are as a teacher by assessing how much your students are learning. You will practice making clear and concise explanations about concepts and reinforcing those ideas through active learning. You will build skills for facilitating inquiry-based labs, grading, and managing classroom dynamics. By the end of the semester, you will have the foundation you need to be a great teacher and to continue your professional development in teaching. This course is a required accompaniment to your first semester as a member of the Undergraduate Neuroscience Program teaching staff. We ask that you take part in the ownership of your education as a co-educator, rather than being a “student” in the more traditional and passive sense. It is our expectation that as a co-educator you will:

- Participate actively and thoughtfully at all times.
- Have the conviction to ask and respond to difficult questions, take what may seem to be unpopular positions, and admit when you do not know.
- Have patience to listen to and respect others.
- Think, write, and engage with your peers in a scholarly manner. Foster a collegial learning environment that is purposeful, open, disciplined, caring, and celebrative.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, New Teaching Assistants will be able to,

1. Create a valuable, student-centered learning experience for your students.
2. Assess the level of student understanding using inquiry teaching practices and rubrics.
3. Understand that learning new content is a part of teaching and develop strategies for doing so efficiently.
4. Craft explanations about concepts in response to students' level of understanding.
5. Identify and use active learning strategies appropriate to course learning goals.
6. Manage group and classroom dynamics, including incivilities that may arise.
7. Apply GT strategic priorities, policies, and procedures in the context of teaching.
8. Coordinate responsibilities with assigned course faculty instructors and co-TAs in a professional manner.
9. Recognize teaching as a set of transferable skills useful for TAs future career goals.
10. Reflect on own teaching practice to continually improve as a teacher.

Course Materials (all available on Canvas):

- [Teaching at Georgia Tech: A Handbook for Faculty, Instructors, and Teaching Assistants](#)
- Additional assigned readings will be listed on the course schedule and posted to Canvas

I also highly encourage you to attend workshops offered by the Georgia Tech Center for Teaching and Learning **HERE:** <https://ctl.gatech.edu/workshops/>

Course Requirements and Grading Scale:

Attendance and Participation: This course meets in person and has required attendance. However, **merely attending is not sufficient for credit.** We expect 100% participation, which we define as regular,

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on-task engagement and timely submission of in-class deliverables. We work hard to create an engaging classroom community, and we encourage you to contribute actively and positively in classroom discussions. In the event of a need to transition to hybrid or fully remote instruction, required in-person activities will be replaced with hybrid touchpoints or remote activities of equivalent point value and engagement expectations. Should the course instructor fall sick or otherwise need to be out, another instructor will take over the course. All communication about contingencies will happen via Canvas Announcements.

Reflections (5 out of 6 graded): Reflection is important to improve teaching skills. Each class session ends with a prompt that asks you to consider how the topics discussed in class relate to your teaching experience so far. Each week there will be prompts posted to respond to via Canvas in 200-300 words or in a conversational video of 200-300 words (~3 minutes). Your response should be your original work and thoughts, in your own words and using correct grammar and syntax. **To receive credit, reflections from the previous week must be posted on Sunday by 11:59pm.**

Final Reflection: (2 pages double-spaced; not able to be dropped) should at minimum contain your thoughts on these two themes: 1) what you have learned in the course and how it has impacted your teaching experience so far, and 2) how you anticipate that the course and your teaching experience will be relevant to the rest of your academic and professional career. You are also encouraged to include any other teaching preparation items from your TA assignment that reflect your growth as a teacher.

Classroom Observation: You will conduct a 30-min classroom observation of another TA or faculty member. We will coordinate a sign-up process for you to select which class/instructor you will observe. Your observation sheet will be submitted to Canvas before our discussion class day, and you will complete an activity during class based on your observations.

Pre-test and Post-test: These are diagnostic tests designed to measure your knowledge and opinions about teaching before and after you take this course. Both tests must be completed to earn the points. The survey can be found here: <http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/> Note that you should upload your results (use 'print to pdf' from the website) as a file to the Assignment on Canvas each time you take test.

Grading Scheme:

Requirements	Points
Attendance and Participation	20% (includes in-class activities and asynchronous quizzes)
Weekly Reflections (5 out of 6)	30%
Final Reflection	20%
Classroom observation	25% (your form as well as in-class activity worksheet)
Pre-test and Post-test	5% (upon full completion of BOTH)

CETL 2000/8000 is taken as a pass/fail grade mode. Grades will be assigned based on the following scale: 80 or above = pass, 79 or below = fail.

Late Assignments:

It is important to stay current with your work in this class because it is courteous to the instructor, it allows for peer feedback in a timely manner, and it helps us gauge where you are in your development. Late assignments will be accepted with a 10% penalty within 3 days of the missed assignment. Assignments more than 3 days late will not be accepted without approval by the instructors for an appropriate reason to accommodate the extension.

Missed Class:

Please make your best effort to attend each class for the entire class period. However, we understand that life can throw us unexpected scenarios. Students unable to attend class may be accommodated on a case-

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by-case basis, ideally arranged at least 24 hours in advance via email. Vacation, work/volunteer commitments, and social events are not acceptable reasons to miss class; however, legitimate reasons to miss class include personal illness, illness or death in your immediate family, and participation in official university activities. When possible, please provide [official institute documentation](#). We also ask that you notify your TA instructor if your absences may impact the course for which you TA. Please work with us if you need assistance with this process. Note that, should you need to miss 3 or more classes (or other circumstances warrant), we may suggest you drop or take an Incomplete in the course.

Email and Piazza Policy

I encourage all questions about course content to be submitted to Piazza. Posting here allows other TAs who have similar questions to also contribute and learn the answer so that learning can be collaborative. Email your me if you have an issue with Canvas or questions that are beyond the scope of the course content or explicitly personal (e.g., absences). I am here to help!

Technology statement:

To foster an engaged and distraction-free environment for all students, a laptop, mobile phone, or tablet is permitted for use in class **ONLY** for on-task, course-related work such as note-taking or responding to an instructor prompt to use technology. Please discuss any accommodations necessary for your learning regarding technology with your instructors, and we will be happy to accommodate you.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu> as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. After you have received your accommodations letter you are welcome to email me to set up a private appointment to discuss how I can best implement these accommodations within the course.

Academic Support:

Georgia Tech offers a variety of free learning and communications support options. Learn about free tutoring resources at success.gatech.edu or at the Center for Academic Success's tutoring

Georgia Tech Inclusive Values Statement

At Georgia Tech, we see different backgrounds and perspectives as essential to learning, discovery, and creation. We strive to remove barriers to student success, and to build a welcoming community where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to our mission. As outlined in our strategic plan (<https://strategicplan.gatech.edu/values>), we want to create an environment of holistic learning where all individuals can grow and learn to lead healthy, purposeful, impactful lives.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) as Leaders: In today's educational landscape, the role of TAs extends beyond conventional classroom support. TAs bear the responsibility of being role models. As TAs, you will often be closest to both students and professors, privy to information that is sensitive, and often regarded as those who set the tone for how students should engage at GT. Please do not take this responsibility lightly. Because of this leadership role, you will need to be a bit more careful about your professional and personal choices, even when you believe no one is watching or that something 'isn't a big deal'. Students may perceive your choices as more or less permissible, more or less 'right', and this impacts the learning environment in your class and others. We will give you guidance on this in class and how to best live up to these expectations (e.g. academic honesty, wearing proper PPE, etc.), but **we remind you here that TAs serve as exemplars of academic integrity and inclusivity.** By upholding the highest standards of integrity and respect for others, TAs instill in students the values that underpin a fair and just educational environment.

Academic Integrity, Collaboration, Group Work, & AI:

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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. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18>

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

Any in-class group activities will require one submission per group. Use of AI (ChatGPT and similar tools): This course values independent thinking, critical analysis, and genuine effort in your coursework. Assignments are intended to foster intellectual growth and strengthen essential skills. The use of digital tools and online resources to supplement your study is encouraged.

But, the objective of assignments is to gauge your understanding and application of the course material and experiences, not to rely on automated responses. Your engagement with the course materials, active participation in discussions, and independent work are fundamental aspects of the learning process.

Submissions found to be generated or heavily influenced by AI tools will be considered a breach of academic integrity and will be addressed according to the institute's policies on academic misconduct. Approach assignments as opportunities for personal growth and learning. If you require clarification or assistance, please reach out for guidance.

Student Well-Being

At Georgia Tech, you are recognized as a human being navigating life's ups and downs. You may experience stressors that can impact both your academic journey and your personal wellness. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing disruptive challenges, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. A comprehensive list of student services and resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being, and you can find access that list here: <https://students.gatech.edu/student-resource-guide>

We Respect Everyone

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds will have an equal opportunity for a supportive learning environment in this course. I appreciate the variety of perspectives our TAs bring to this class. The unique experience that each TA brings can enhance our discussions and understanding of neuroscience. To this end, it is my intent to employ teaching materials and learning activities that are respectful of our student population. I encourage you to reach out to us for constructive conversations on how I may continue to strive toward every student feeling included. Additionally, if you have a religious event during scheduled class, let me know via email at least 3 days prior so that I can make the appropriate arrangements for you.

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. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation 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.

When in Doubt Contact:

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The [Dean of Students Office](#) can connect you with specific resources if you are still unsure of where to go for help. The request assistance form is helpful for sharing documentation from Stamps with your professors among other things.