

Bits of Good VIP Syllabus Fall 2026

Variable Credits

Meetings: Async

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Drop-in Hours & Location
Ronnie Howard	rhoward46@gatech.edu	Location/Link, Hours, Days
Co-Instructor(s)	Email	Drop-in Hours & Location
Dr. Kris Nagel	Email address	Location/Link, Hours, Days

Description

Bits of Good (BoG) is a long-standing, student-run organization at **Georgia Institute of Technology** that partners with nonprofit and social-impact organizations to design, build, and maintain high-quality software solutions that address real community needs.

Operating as a **Vertically Integrated Project (VIP)**, Bits of Good brings together students from multiple majors and experience levels who work on projects over multiple semesters. Teams collaborate closely with nonprofit clients to develop products such as web applications, data platforms, and internal tools that nonprofits would otherwise not have the resources to build on their own.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

There are no pre-requisites or co-requisites for this course.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course sequence, students will be able to:

- **Contribute effectively within a multidisciplinary project team** by completing responsibilities associated with their assigned role (e.g., development, design, data, testing, project coordination) in support of a shared project goal.
- **Apply software engineering best practices** appropriate to their role, including version control, documentation, testing, code review, and iterative development.
- **Collaborate with real stakeholders** by participating in requirements clarification, feedback cycles, and client-facing communication relevant to their team responsibilities.

- **Develop and maintain production-quality artifacts** that support a real-world, socially impactful software system, ensuring usability, reliability, and sustainability.
- **Demonstrate professional accountability and continuity** by producing clear documentation and participating in knowledge transfer and client handoff processes that enable long-term project success.

Course Requirements & Grading

VIP teams function like real-world project teams. Members work on different aspects of a shared project, ranging from sophomores to graduate students, and from first-time participants to those with multiple semesters of experience. Students may enroll for variable credit hours, which are considered in grading.

Note: Zero-credit enrollment is reserved for paid participants and follows the same grading criteria.

Grading Overview

- Grades will be based on your team evaluations first and foremost. A good evaluation will start you with an A. A mediocre with a B, a poor evaluation with a C, and a terrible evaluation with an F.
- Then from there, I will deduct letter grades based on the following for journal entries:
 - 0-2 missed journal entries, no letter deduction
 - 3-4 missed journal entries, 1 letter grade deduction
 - 5-6 missed journal entries, 2 letter grade deductions.
 - 7-8 missed journal entries, 3 letter grade deductions.
 - 9-10 missed journal entries, 4 letter grade deductions.
- Then from there, I will deduct letter grades based on presentation attendance:
 - there will be 2 required presentations where you outline your current progress.
 - Miss 1: 2 letter grade deductions
 - Miss 2: Failure in the course as I have no way to evaluate your work.
 - Note that a really poor presentation will be considered the same as missing but I reserve the right to do other "lesser" penalties for poor presentations as well.

Course Materials

Materials/Resources

No materials are required for this course.

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

Canvas and MS Teams will be used in this class.

Course Policies, Expectations, & Guidelines

VIP is a collaborative, multidisciplinary, project-based learning and research experience. Your success in this course depends not only on your technical contributions but also on your active engagement with your team and the broader learning process.

Your Role in the Learning Process

As a VIP student, you are expected to:

- Take initiative in exploring and applying knowledge relevant to your project.
- Collaborate effectively with team members across disciplines and experience levels.
- Document your work thoroughly.
- Reflect on your learning and contributions throughout the semester.

This course is a real-world team environment, where learning is dynamic, self-directed, and collaborative. Your growth depends on your willingness to engage, contribute, and learn from others.

Team Meetings and Participation

Attendance and active participation in **team meetings** and **sub-team meetings** are required. These meetings are essential for:

- Coordinating project tasks and timelines.
- Sharing progress and receiving feedback.
- Learning from peers and mentors.
- Contributing to team decisions and direction.

Failure to attend meetings without valid reason may negatively impact your grade and your team's progress. If you anticipate missing a meeting, communicate with your team and advisor in advance.

Use of External Resources

You are encouraged to consult external sources to support your learning and project work. However:

- **Do not present someone else's work as your own.**
- Always **cite and reference** external materials used in your notebook, code, presentations, or other deliverables.
- Proper attribution is essential to maintain transparency and integrity in a collaborative research environment.

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 Links to an external site.](#) and the [student Code of Conduct Links to an external site.](#)

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing 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 Links to an external site.](#) (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.

Attendance and/or Participation

Meetings are required and failing to meet will result in a penalty on your final grade as outlined in the grading policy

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

No extensions will be given without an excused absence. As the notebooks already include a life happens policy, no extension will be given on these except for institute approved absences.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

As our meetings will be virtual per team, we will continue as normal.

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 Links to an external site.](#) 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.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

When in meetings, the student should be alert and attentive and not using their mobile devices.

Additional Course Policies

VIP Room and Equipment Use Policy

VIP rooms and equipment are shared resources used by multiple teams. To ensure a productive and respectful working environment, the following rules apply:

1. Room Usage Priorities

Room use is prioritized as follows:

- 1. Scheduled team meetings, lectures, and learning modules
- 2. Weekly sub-team meetings (multiple groups may share the space)
- 3. Video conferences or special meetings with VIP stakeholders
- 4. Other project-related work (multiple groups may share the space)

Room schedules are available on the VIP website.

Note: A “good neighbor” policy applies—students may use rooms during other activities as long as they do not cause disruption. Quiet individual work or studying is allowed when it does not interfere with scheduled uses. Similarly, multiple groups may use a VIP room at the same time.

2. Cleanliness and Conduct

- • Everyone is responsible for keeping rooms clean.
- • Food is allowed, but spills must be cleaned immediately.
- • Gum must be disposed of properly—do not stick it under desks or on carpets.
- • Rooms are monitored by cameras; violations may be reviewed via video.

3. Equipment Use

- • Equipment may be designated for general use or assigned to specific teams.
 - General use examples: Projector in Klaus 1440, monitors in VL 465 and VL 463B.
 - Equipment assignments may change each semester.
- • If unsure about equipment access, contact: vip-request@ece.gatech.edu
- • Use equipment only for its intended purpose. Misuse may pose safety risks.

Important Equipment Rules:

- • Equipment may not be removed from VIP rooms without a signed loan agreement approved by a VIP Director.
- • You are financially responsible for any equipment not returned in good condition.
- • You must know how to operate equipment safely. Approval to use equipment does not imply safety training has been provided.

4. Computer Accounts

- Accounts are for individual use only—do not share with others.
- All usage must comply with Georgia Tech, USG Board of Regents, and State of Georgia policies.
- Respect privacy and data integrity. Having access to a file does not mean you are authorized to read or modify it.

5. BuzzCard Access

- Access is a privilege and is logged.
- Rooms are under video surveillance. In cases of theft, vandalism, or messes, logs and footage will be reviewed.
- Do not allow unauthorized individuals into VIP spaces.
- Always secure the room (close the door) when leaving.

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:

A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and information about advising can be found at [Success at Tech Links to an external site.](#)

- 1:1 Tutoring: Students looking for additional assistance outside of the classroom are advised to consider working with a peer tutor through Knack. Georgia Institute of Technology has partnered with Knack to provide students with access to verified peer tutors who have previously aced this course. To view available tutors, visit [joinknack.com Links to an external site.](#) and sign in with your student account.

Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources:

A list of resources for graduate students is given on the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education Links to an external site.](#) website. Specific information for [current graduate students Links to an external site.](#) includes

- [Academic Resources Links to an external site.](#) such as the Communications Center, Language Institute, Library, Catalog, Registrar, resources for conducting research, Advocacy and Conflict Resolution resources, and how to manage unexpected situations that may impact your academic performance;
- [Student Resources Links to an external site.](#) such as Campus Services, Child Care/Family programs, Health & Wellness, Career Services, and the Student Resource Guide; and

- [Professional Development Links to an external site.](#) such as the programming from the Career Center and other professional development resources and events”]

Student Well-Being:

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list Links to an external site.](#) of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#))