

Georgia Institute of Technology
NEUR 4001: Neuroscience Research Project
Capstone Course, Fall 2026

Section: B + B01

Credits: 4

Class times: Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:20am (Lecture), 12:30-3:15pm (Lab) **Clough 341**

Prerequisites: NEUR 3010

Instructor: Thackery Brown

Pronouns: He/Him

Email: tbrown338@gatech.edu

Office: JS Coon 129 (please note, I am often in my lab – it's best to contact me first if you need to meet outside of office hours)

Office hours: Tuesday 3:30pm-5pm (post-lab)

GTA: Jaida Long

Pronouns: She/Her

Email: jaidalong@gatech.edu

Office hours: By appointment

We are available to help anytime with an appointment scheduled via email!

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to familiarize you to the methods and processes used by neuroscientists to generate scientific research. Over the course of the semester, you will gain an understanding of the process of research – from generating research questions, developing a testable hypothesis, evaluating the existing literature, data collection and analysis, interpretation of results, and communicating findings to others in oral and written form. **Our main objective is to increase your confidence in scientific literacy to help you as a consumer and generator of knowledge in life and in your future profession.**

At the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Articulate strengths and limitations of various research designs
- Locate and utilize primary literature to identify experimental designs and essential background information
- Formulate testable research hypotheses and generate tests or experiments based on operational definitions of variables
- Follow the APA Code of Ethics in the treatment of human and nonhuman participants in the design, data collection, interpretation, and reporting of neuroscientific research and follow proper biosafety procedures
- Evaluate the appropriateness of conclusions derived from research outcomes
- Identify when and where to use specific statistical tests and interpret basic statistical results

- Communicate scientific knowledge in written, graphical, and oral format and recognize importance of accurate reporting of methods and data for replication studies
- Critically evaluate classmates' research design and presentations
- Work collaboratively toward shared research goals

Course Requirements

Required readings: There is no textbook for this course. This syllabus is required reading.

This course introduces you to foundations of research in neuroscience. Readings will be posted on Canvas and should be read before class so that you are prepared to contribute to the class discussion.

Computer and Internet: A computer and a stable internet connection are required to be able to access course materials and to submit assignments. Please contact us if you need any assistance in accessing the course.

Communication: This class will communicate via Canvas and through your Georgia Tech email address. Please check your GT email address regularly so you do not miss any updates and announcements. **If not emailing directly via Canvas, please indicate your course and section number in the subject line.** The instructor and/or TA will do their best to reply to your emails within 24 hours during the school week. **To stay organized, we will not accept assignments via email.** We would like for you to have a support system for this course, so please communicate with your classmates, instructor, and TA early and often.

Canvas and Student Technology Support: This course utilizes Canvas, a virtual learning management system. Canvas is compatible with all browsers and works with your phone. You may consider downloading the app for your phone to receive notifications and alerts for your courses. Verify your email settings are set to forward your GT email address, and make sure you are receiving emails from the system.

GT Canvas site: <https://canvas.gatech.edu/>

GT Canvas app for students: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Basics-Guide/What-is-the-Canvas-Student-app/ta-p/31>

Need Microsoft Office? Get access to the FREE cloud-based version of Office 365 by visiting the GT Office 365 website and using your GT email address.

GT Office 365 Website: <http://portal.office.com>

Need tech help? Contact the Office of Instructional Technology with any technology questions or connect in the Virtual Help Desk.

Office of Instructional Technology website: <https://oit.gatech.edu/>

Email: support@oit.gatech.edu

Phone: 404-385-5555

Course Policies

Make-up Policy: Late assignments will lose 10% per day off the final grade and will not be accepted after one week past the due date. For extensive illnesses and emergencies, contact the Office of the Vice President and Dean of Students who can inform and work with your instructors. <https://studentlife.gatech.edu/request-assistance>

Federal Regulations on financial aid require all faculty to document last date of attendance for students who are not participating in classes. If a student has stopped participating in class, then the student's name must be sent to the Dean of Students. If prolonged illness or death in the family occurs, speak with the instructor about withdrawing from the class. In extreme conditions an incomplete may be approved at the discretion of the instructor using guidelines outlined by the Office of the Registrar.

Course Engagement: Student engagement in coursework and class activities is essential for learning and student success. In addition, to comply with federal mandates related to financial aid, the university is required to track attendance and engagement in course activities. Meaningful engagement in a course goes beyond logging into Canvas and may include engaging with learning materials, participating in learning activities, completing assessments, and interacting with classmates and/or the instructor. You are expected to be actively engaged in the course activities explained in this syllabus, just as the instructor and TA promise to be actively engaged, as well.

Academic Honesty and Integrity: Your instructors take academic integrity very seriously. Cheating, in any form, interferes with your success. As science is collaborative by nature, you are absolutely permitted to discuss ideas, results, and work with other people. However, **all work you submit must be your own and in your own words**. If you turn in another's work as your own, **including AI-generated material**, you should expect a failing grade for the course. Work on individual assignments should be done independently. If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to reach out to the instructor or TA. We are here to help!

Policy on use of generative AI for class work:

AI-based assistance, such as ChatGPT or Copilot, is considered unauthorized collaboration in this course when used in lieu of writing and interpreting in your own words. In your assignments, avoid anything that was not written directly by you. Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case and will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity. Use any interaction with an AI assistant as a *tool* to promote your learning experience, with your completed submitted product reflecting your interpretation and understanding of the material. <https://www.cc.gatech.edu/news/new-policies-navigate-role-ai-assistants-cs-courses>

GT Academic Honor Code: <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code>

Georgia Tech 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.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify me as soon as possible so we can resolve the issue. Students with disabilities should also contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), whose purpose is to collaborate with students, faculty, and staff to create a campus environment that ensures all students have an equal opportunity to access the Georgia Tech community. ODS can be reached at 404.894.2563, dsinfo@gatech.edu, or <https://disabilityservices.gatech.edu>. Please contact me ahead of time to discuss any issues related to disabilities. I am happy to work with you.

Office of Disability Services:

Smithgall Student Services Building

Email: dsinfo@gatech.edu

Phone: 404-894-2563

Website: <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>

Academic and Personal Support

APA Style resource: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Center for Academic Success: <http://success.gatech.edu>

- 1-to-1 tutoring: <https://success.gatech.edu/tutoring/>
- Peer-Led Undergraduate Study (PLUS): <https://success.gatech.edu/tutoring/plus/>
- Academic coaching: <https://advising.gatech.edu/academic-coaching>
- Communication Center: <http://www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu>
 - Individualized help with writing and multimedia projects

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing: Georgia Tech is committed to supporting and advancing the mental health and well-being of our students. If you or someone you know has a history of mental health concerns, is having current mental health difficulties, or if you are unsure and would like a consultation, a variety of confidential services are available.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988.

The Office of the Dean of Students: <https://studentlife.gatech.edu/dean-students/>

Smithgall Student Services Building 2nd floor

Email: studentlife@studentlife.gatech.edu

Phone: 404-894-6367

Counseling Center: <http://mentalhealth.gatech.edu>

Smithgall Student Services Building 2nd floor

Phone: 404-894-2575

- 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 **404-894-2575**.*

Belonging and Student Support: <http://belonging.gatech.edu/studentssupport>

Students' Temporary Assistance and Resources (STAR): <https://star.studentlife.gatech.edu/>

- Can assist with interview clothing, food, and housing needs.

Stamps Health Services: <https://health.gatech.edu>

740 Ferst Dr NW, Atlanta, GA 30332

Phone: 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/>

Phone: 404-385-2067

Georgia Tech Police: 404-894-2500

Non-Discrimination: Georgia Institute of Technology is committed to equal opportunity, a culture of inclusion, and an environment free from discrimination and harassment in its educational programs and employment.

Equal Opportunity, Compliance, and Conflict Management: <https://eoc.gatech.edu/>

RBI Paper Tricentennial Building, 4th floor

Phone: 404-894-5698

Assessment of your learning

Assignment		Points
Research Project – Written (375 pts)	Topic/Hypothesis/Predictions	25
	Annotated Bibliography	50
	Draft: Intro and Methods	50
	Draft: Results and Figures	50
	Final Research Paper	200
Research Project – Oral Presentation (275 pts)	Proposal Presentation	100
	Response to Peer Feedback	25
	Final Presentation	150
Journal Club Presentations (150 pts)	Presentation	50
	Written analysis	50
	Reactions (individual responses!)	50
Guest Research Lecture (50 pts)	Pre-lecture reactions	25
	Post-lecture Reflection	25
Participation (150 pts)	In-class participation and readings	120
	Trainings and quizzes	30
TOTAL		1000

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

- A 900-1000 points
- B 800-899 points
- C 700-799 points
- D 600-699 points
- F 0-599 points

Extra Credit

If an extra credit opportunity arises, we will inform you. **To be fair to all students, we cannot offer extra credit to an individual student that has not been offered to the entire class.**

Research Project: Throughout the semester, you will work on a neuroscience research project related to the overall theme of the course. You will be working as part of a team of 2-3 students to gain realistic research experience, as researchers tend to work as part of a research team. As a group, you will decide on a topic, propose your topic, collect data, analyze it using the correct statistical analyses, and present your findings in oral and written form. You will submit drafts of specific sections of the project throughout the semester and receive feedback from your instructor, TA, and peers.

As a group, you will present your proposal and final presentation to the class to gain experience presenting to a scientific audience (**see in-class presentation dates**).

Individually you will turn in a full APA-style manuscript of your research findings. More details will be provided throughout the semester (**see due dates; submit via Canvas**).

Written Components:

Research Idea and Team Contract (group activity): In 2-4 sentences, broadly explain your research question, testable hypothesis, and predictions. Your Team Contract is a document all team members will discuss and agree upon to promote successful collaboration.

Annotated Bibliography (group activity): Students will provide an in-depth literature review that provides enough information on the background and previous research done on your topic of interest. **You should include a minimum of 10 references per person** from academic journals for this assignment, but plan to add more, especially for the final manuscript. Explanations for each reference can be in bulleted format. **Generative AI should not be used for this assignment.**

Introduction and Methods (individual activity): To assist you with the process of writing your manuscript, each student will submit a detailed Introduction and Methods section before submitting their final manuscript. If Generative AI is used for this assignment, it must be acknowledged. **Copying and pasting from any GenAI prompt is unacceptable per the policy outlined above and will be penalized with a zero on the assignment and reported to the Office of Student Integrity.** GenAI is a tool you can use responsibly, but it is not a replacement for your own thoughts.

Results and Figures (individual activity): To assist you with the process of writing your manuscript, each student will submit their Results section with figures before submitting their final manuscript. **Generative AI should not be used for this assignment.**

Final manuscript (individual activity): The capstone course is designed to be a culmination of all of your coursework and learning at Tech. We would like to assess **individual learning** through your final manuscript. This individual assessment is a common practice not just in capstone courses at Tech, but at many institutions. Being able to write in your own words and integrate information is an important skill for

any graduate to have. If Generative AI is used for this assignment, it must be acknowledged. **Copying and pasting from any GenAI prompt is unacceptable per the policy outlined above and will be penalized with a zero on the assignment and reported to the Office of Student Integrity.** GenAI is a tool you can use responsibly, but it is not a replacement for your own thoughts.

Oral Components:

Research Proposal (group activity): Each group will present their proposals to the class and will get feedback from instructors and peers. The proposal will comprise of their major research question, hypotheses, brief background, methods, expected results, and limitations. This presentation will be approximately 20 minutes in duration plus time for questions. You will submit as a group a written response on how you plan to address feedback in your final presentation.

Final Presentation (group activity): Each group will give a 20-minute presentation of their experimental results, including the background and significance, the hypothesis, the methods used, and the interpretation of the results.

Journal club presentation and 2-page analysis (group activity): Each group will consult with the instructor to select an original, empirical research paper (not review!) related to their research topic (plan on these being core references for your group project / Annotated Bibliography! Let this assignment help with the bigger one!).

Summarize the main points in a “journal club” style presentation and discussion with their peers (up to 20 minutes duration). **To gain competence and practice interacting with Generative AI in an ethical, efficient, and reliable manner, each group will prompt GenAI to summarize their chosen paper.** The group will analyze this summary and use visible “track changes” (accessible in Microsoft Word) to correct and improve it.

The final submission should be a track-changed document in Microsoft Word (2-page max) outlining the rationale for the study, the hypothesis, the approach and major findings, major conclusions, limitations of the study, and potential logical future experiment(s). The presentation and written analysis are intended to foster critical analysis of research papers and help prepare for the remaining oral and written assignments.

Reactions (individual activity): Throughout the semester, you will be asked to submit two (2) reactions. Unlike most assignments, these will be due at the START of the class, because their purpose is first and foremost for you to express what you hope to learn, found interesting, or confusing for the upcoming Journal Club or Guest Speaker.

Reflections (individual activity): Following the guest speaker, describe what you learned from the Guest Research Lecturer, both during their lecture and during the discussion with your peers and instructors after. All reflections should be approximately 300 words.

Participation (individual activity): Participation is crucial in this intensive, research-based course. You are expected to attend the lecture and lab portions of this course for a truly engaging experience. Attendance is a large part of your participation grade and tardiness will be deducted from your attendance points. It is essential to engage with your lab partners and your instructors in-person and remotely to complete the tasks assigned and troubleshoot any problems. If you think of additional questions off-

hours, or if it is your preference, you can always post questions at any time on Piazza. Discussion on Piazza is encouraged, and questions and answers posted there will count as in-class participation.

How to succeed in this class

Science is collaborative, innovative, and also kind of hard sometimes! Experiments do not always go as planned, and we should never set out to “prove” our hypotheses. Negative data, confusing data, no data – these are all possible (if not, probable) outcomes for some of our experiments this semester. Your success in this class will not be judged by the outcome of your experiments, but by your participation, creativity, determination, and communication. We will work together throughout the semester, and your success will depend on your willingness to engage deeply with the research and work in collaboration with your partners.

Proposed Schedule: Subject to change; any changes will be posted on Canvas and announced in class.

Week	Date	Lecture	Lab	Reading	What's Due
1	Tues 8/25	Course introduction	Lab safety, get into groups	Syllabus	Biosafety trainings
	Thurs 8/27	Navigation as a window into individual differences and cognitive health	Foundational paper discussion	Article 1	
2	Tues 09/01	Orientation to our VR tasks	Mental health and well-being (MHWB) project overview (JL+TC)		Online MRI safety training
	Thurs 09/03	Forming a hypothesis; experimental design	MHWB Qualitative data collection (behavioral)		
3	Tues 9/08	VR Task Practice, survey practice (pre-data collection)	MHWB Qualitative data collection (behavioral)		(1) Group Topic focus (2) Team Contract
	Thurs 9/10	Confounds and threats to validity	*CABI MRI Safety Training*		Experimental design plan
4	Tues 9/15	Ethics	MHWB Qualitative data collection (1hr)		
	Thurs 9/17	Scientific presentation tips – how to tell a story (prep for analysis proposal)	MHWB Qualitative data collection (2hrs)		
5	Tues 9/22	Modeling and how to interpret fMRI data	MHWB Qualitative data collection (2hrs)		Team assessment
	Thurs 9/24	Reverse inference and misleading statistics	Scanning **AT CABI** (2hrs)		Annotated bibliography
6	Tues 9/29	Human Brain Anatomy overview and how to navigate MRI	Scanning **AT CABI** (2hrs)		Hypothesis and predictions
	Thurs 10/01	Presentation prep	Proposal presentations; peer feedback		Proposal presentation slides
7	Tues 10/06	HOLIDAY	HOLIDAY	HOLIDAY	HOLIDAY
	Thurs 10/08	Troubleshooting experiments – when science doesn't work	Addtl. Data collection day **AT CABI** (1hr)		Response to peer feedback
8	Tues 10/13	SPM preprocessing walkthrough	Preprocessing fMRI (TB)		Journal Club article choices
	Thurs 10/15	Writing Introduction and Methods	Preprocessing fMRI + modeling (TB)		
9	Tues 10/20	How to analyze your data – statistics and interpretation	Modeling and statistical analysis I (TB)		
	Thurs 10/22	Modeling fMRI	Modeling and statistical analysis II (TB)		Introduction and Methods
10	Tues 10/27	Presentation prep	Journal Club Presentations	J.C. articles 1-4	Journal club presentation slides and analysis
	Thurs 10/29	Data Collection: Imaging and visualization for writing workshop	Data analysis + visualization for projects		

11	Tues 11/03	Remote work day	Remote work day		Team assessment (2)
	Thurs 11/05	Data analysis	MHWP Data analysis + visualization (JL + TC)		
12	Tues 11/10	Writing Results/Discussion	Data analysis + visualization		
	Thurs 11/12	Individual Conferences	Individual Conferences		Results and Figures
13	Tues 11/17	Guest Research Lecture	Discussion and reflection on research presentation Work day: writing workshop		Guest Reactions (due BEFORE class to promote Q/A w/ speaker)
	Thurs 11/19	Work day: writing workshop	Work day: writing workshop		Guest Research Lecture Reflection
14	Tues 11/24	Work day: presentation prep	Work day: presentation prep		Final paper
	Thurs 11/26	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday	Holiday
15	Tues 12/01	Work day: presentation prep	Work day: presentation practice		
	Thurs 12/03	Final presentation prep	Final Project Presentations		Final presentation slides
16	Tues 12/08	TBD			

***All deadlines are 3:15pm Eastern on Canvas unless otherwise noted**