

CETL 8797 Syllabus

Fall Semester 2026

August 24th – December 7th

Monday/Wednesday, 11:00–11:50 a.m.

Location: East Architecture, room 107

Instructor

Kendall Nelson

Email: Kendall.Nelson@lifetimelearning.gatech.edu

Office: O'Keefe 106

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday, 12:00–1:00 p.m., or by appointment

Course Description

In this class, you will work on expanding your fluency and accuracy in spoken North American English (NAE) communication in order to participate more joyfully, effectively, and confidently in academic, professional, and informal situations.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, you will have opportunities to:

Develop fluency in North American English

- Use natural nonverbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and vocal quality.
- Organize speech into meaningful phrases and highlight key words.

Improve North American English pronunciation

- Pronounce vowels and consonants clearly.
- Pause appropriately and effectively.

- Link words appropriately.
- Stress syllables correctly.
- Stress content words and reduce function words.
- Establish focus words.
- Use intonation to communicate meaning.

Build confidence in speaking

- Practice impromptu and improvisational speaking.
- Develop small-talk and other conversational skills.
- Practice asking and responding to questions.

Develop discussion skills

- Summarize key ideas.
- Express opinions in academic discussions.
- Develop and ask questions.
- Paraphrase ideas orally.

Grading

Regular attendance is important to pass this course. You must attend 80% of the classes to pass. If you know that you will miss more than 20% of the classes, you should consider taking this course during a future semester.

Grading is Pass/Fail based on attendance and successful completion of seven course assignments. Assignment details are included in the course schedule below.

Individual Conferences

During the first week of the semester, you will meet with me for a one-on-one consultation. We will discuss your research, major, or field of study as well as your professional and personal communication goals. We will identify your communication strengths and areas for improvement and develop a plan for the semester.

We will meet again during the final two weeks, for a final consultation to assess your progress and develop a plan for continued improvement.

Class Guidelines

The following guidelines will help you successfully complete this course:

- Participate actively. Communicate your ideas, contribute to class discussions, ask questions, and engage with your classmates and instructor.
- Communicate with the instructor if you need to miss class, have questions, or need additional support.
- Avoid distractions during class. Limit phone use and stay engaged with class activities.
- Support your classmates. Be willing to take reasonable risks, make mistakes, learn from feedback, and contribute to a supportive learning environment.

Course Schedule

Weeks 1–2: August 24, 26, 31 and September 2

Topics:

- Pronunciation: vowels, consonants, rhythm, pitch, speed, and volume
- Pronunciation: vowels and thought groups

Assignments and activities:

- Assignment 1: Individual consultation
- Student Information Survey

Weeks 3–4: September 9, 14, 16 and 21

No class Monday, September 7 (Labor Day).

Topics:

- Pronunciation: word stress rules, syllable stress, rhythm, and clarity
- Presentation skills: defining complex terminology

Assignments and activities:

- In-class extended definition

- Assignment 2: Present an introduction to your research

Weeks 5–6: September 23, 28, 30 and October 7

No class Monday, October 5 (Fall Break).

Topics:

- Pronunciation: intonation patterns, pausing, thought groups, and mimicking
- Presentation skills: using dramatic pausing

Assignment:

- Assignment 3: Short monologue from American Movie Rhetoric

Weeks 7–8: October 12, 14, 19 and 21

Topics:

- Pronunciation: sentence stress and intonation
- Discussion skills: engaging in academic discussions and expressing opinions

Assignments and activities:

- Individual consultation
- English Language Engagement Log

Weeks 9–10: October 26, 28 and November 2, 4

Topics:

- Pronunciation: intonation and thought groups
- Active listening and responsive answering
- Discussion skills: engaging in academic discussions, agreeing, and disagreeing

Assignments and activities:

- Assignment 4: Academic discussion
- Discussing an article

Weeks 11–12: November 9, 11, 16 and 18

Topics:

- Speaking skills: networking and small talk
- Discussion skills: asking for clarification and paraphrasing ideas

Assignment:

- Participate in a networking activity

Weeks 13–14: November 23, 30 and December 2

No class Wednesday, November 25 (Thanksgiving Break).

Topics:

- Pronunciation: linking in fluent speech, including reductions, elisions, and assimilation
- Discussion skills: engaging in non-academic discussions and keeping a conversation going

Assignments:

- Assignment 5: Tell a non-academic story using stress and intonation
- English Language Engagement Log

Weeks 15–16: December 7

Topics:

- Pronunciation: word endings, including past tense “-ed” and plural “-s”
- Presentation skills: responding to follow-up questions after presentations or discussions
- Assignment 6: Impromptu speaking

Assignment and activity:

- Assignment 7: Final individual consultation

Last class meeting: December 7

