

NEUR 335 – Molecular, Developmental, and Systems Neuroscience  
Spring 2024; Section 003

Instructor: Dr. Sarojini Manju Attili  
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Meeting time: Wed 10:30-1:10 am EST  
Meeting location: Enterprise Building; 173

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Information:

This course is one of the required Neuroscience courses for majors. Developmental neuroscience is the study of the cellular and molecular events during embryonic development of the nervous system. We will cover patterning of the nervous system, cell differentiation, axon guidance, synapse formation, and neural death. Systems neuroscience involves the study of neural circuits, organized into sensory and motor systems, whose activity gives rise to complex functions. For each of these systems, pathways of information flow, information processed at each level, overall function, and consequences of injury/damage will be discussed. Students are also expected to become familiar with the scientific methods used to tackle questions in developmental/systems neuroscience as well as current questions and/or controversies in the field.

Required Textbook:

Purves, D., et al. (2017) *Neuroscience, 6th Edition*. Sinauer Associates. ISBN: 9781605353807

Online Resources: [oup-arc.com/access/purves-6e](http://oup-arc.com/access/purves-6e) (includes animations, flashcards, etc.)

Technological Requirements: Access to Blackboard and email.

Graded work:

Chapter Quizzes: Students will take an online quiz (via Blackboard) after attending each lecture before the assigned due date. All quiz questions are multiple-choice and cover topics that will appear on exams. Quizzes are open book/note but there is a time limit. You may only take each quiz once. There will be a total of 11 chapter quizzes, and your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Participation: Attendance and active participation are required. Some activities may be done in groups, but each student will be graded on his or her individual participation during class.

Exams: There will be a total of three non-cumulative exams consisting of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and/or short answer questions. Exams will be taken in class. There will also be an OPTIONAL cumulative final exam that can be used to replace a low score on Exam 1, 2 or 3.

News & Views Report: Students will research and write a 1-2 page "News & Views" style summary of a primary research paper. Sample reports and guidelines will be available on Blackboard. Reports must be submitted via Blackboard by the assigned due date.

### Tentative Course Calendar

Last Day to Add – Jan 23

Last Day to Drop – Jan 30 (100% refund), Feb 6 (50% refund)

Date	What we are discussing	Reading Material	Other
Week 1 – Jan 17	Course introduction & Basic concepts		
Week 2 – Jan 24	Early Brain Development	Purves Ch 22	Quiz 1 due Sunday 1/28
Week 3 – Jan 31	Construction of Neural Circuits	Purves Ch 23	Quiz 2 due Sunday 2/4
Week 4 – Feb 7	Experience-Dependent Plasticity	Purves Ch 24	Quiz 3 due Sunday 2/11
Week 5 – Feb 14	<b>Exam 1</b>		
Week 6 – Feb 21	Vision & Central Visual Pathways	Purves Ch 12	Quiz 4 due Sunday 2/25
Week 7 – Feb 28	Auditory System	Purves Ch 13	Quiz 5 due Sunday 3/3
Week 8 – Mar 6	Spring Break		
Week 9 – Mar 13	Chemical Senses	Purves Ch 15	Quiz 6 due Sunday 3/17
Week 10 – Mar 20	Somatosensory System	Purves Ch 9	Quiz 7 due Sunday 3/24
Week 11 – Mar 27	<b>Exam 2</b>		
Week 12 – Apr 3	Lower Motor Neurons	Purves Ch 16	Quiz 8 due Sunday 4/7
Week 13 – Apr 10	Upper Motor Neurons	Purves Ch 17	Quiz 9 due Sunday 4/14
Week 14 – Apr 17	Basal Ganglia	Purves Ch 18	Quiz 10 due Sunday 4/21
Week 15 – Apr 24	Cerebellum	Purves Ch 19	Quiz 11 & Written Report due Sunday 4/28
Week 16 – May 1	<b>Exam 3</b>		
Week 17 – May 8	<b>Optional Cumulative Final Exam</b>		

#### Grading Scale:

A+ 97-100%	B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D 60-69%	F 0-59%
A 93-96%	B 83-86%	C 73-76%		
A- 90-92%	B- 80-82%	C- 70-72%		

#### Grade Breakdown:

10 Quizzes	15%
1 Written Report	10%
Attendance & Participation (in-class activities)	15%

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%

How do I do well in this class?

- This course relies heavily on material presented in the book. You are expected to read the chapters and the material presented in lecture will be over that content.
- I recommend skimming the chapter before we talk about them in class, and then reading again after lecture and when doing classroom activities.
- Also, communication is key to doing well in this course. You will be graded on your written and oral communication, but communication is necessary when you are confused in class.
- Active participation is required.

Student responsibilities:

- Attend all sessions & participate in discussions.
- Be respectful to others, ask questions, and don't interrupt.
- Communicate about missing class/assignments with the instructor.
- Read the chapter before coming to class.
- Limit distractions in class including side conversations, phone use, and computer/tablet use.
- Seek help if you are struggling.

**Class communication:** The instructor reserves the right to make any changes in the course he determines academically advisable. Changes will be announced in class and by *email solely through the students Mason account*. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with any changed policies.

**Mandatory Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class on time and participate in all discussions and activities for the whole duration of each lecture. **There will be no make-up quizzes/exams.** Any chapter quiz not taken by the deadline will receive a grade of zero. Because the lowest grade will be dropped, chapter quizzes cannot be made up under any circumstances. Because the lowest exam can be replaced with the optional exam, make-ups are not allowed. Class participation points cannot be made up outside of the classroom. Permission to postpone work will only be given for very acute and important reasons, with documentation and at my discretion with a penalty.

**Writing Center:** George Mason University provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) for supporting students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. See [writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

**Academic Integrity:** George Mason has an honor code with clear guidelines for academic integrity. Honesty expectation and requirement are taken very seriously, and breaches of this trust are treated gravely. Students must be responsible for their own work. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification. Cheating of any form is not tolerated. Students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations.

**Professional disposition:** Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior at all times.

**Disability Accommodations:** If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; [ods.gmu.edu](https://ods.gmu.edu)) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs. (Please talk to the [Disability Services](#) office first; they will meet with you and help you with your individual needs. We can only activate your accommodation after you talk with Disability Services. Then talk to the instructor.)

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** George Mason University has a staff of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops, and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. See [caps.gmu.edu](https://caps.gmu.edu)

**COVID Policies:** All students, instructors, and TAs are required to follow the university's public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage (<https://www2.gmu.edu/safe-return-campus>). Similarly, all students, instructors, and TAs in face-to-face and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check daily, seven days a week. The COVID Health Check system uses a color code system and students will receive either a Green, Yellow, or Red email response. Only students, instructors, and TAs who receive a "green" notification are permitted to attend courses with a face-to-face component. If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, please quarantine or get testing. Faculty are allowed to ask you to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.