

Fall 2026

Executive Function
Saturdays, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Starting Saturday, September 5th, 2026

An Online Group Class
Offered by Eric Anthony Comstock, M.S. Aerospace Engineering '24
Georgia Tech PhD student,
and Davidson Young Scholar alumnus

About the instructor

I have a B.S. in aerospace engineering (*magna cum laude*) with engineering honors and minors in math and chemistry from Texas A&M University in College Station. I am currently a Ph.D. student at Georgia Tech in aerospace engineering, having completed my M.S. in December 2024. I founded Comstock Educational Services LLC, and manage two employees, several undergraduate researchers, and participate in student organization leadership. I can be reached at: eric.comstock@gatech.edu

Course Overview

The modern world is full of institutions, deadlines, and complex systems of people. As such, navigating these systems is an increasingly important part of success in life, and gets more difficult and complex the farther you get in school, college, or your career. Unfortunately, many of these systems are difficult to navigate, obstructive, poorly designed, or simply require a lot of mental effort to operate within.

While solutions like time management, organization, and workflow can absolutely help, the core thing that enables navigation of these operational systems, especially unfamiliar ones, is experience. Thus, **this course is designed to create a safe and reversible environment to simulate real-world interactions and gain the experience and executive function skills you need to navigate systems and people effectively.**

Subjects will progress in ascending order of difficulty, complexity, and simulated responsibility. Students are encouraged to enter the course at the location where they feel they would get the most out of it, and exit once the subject material moves beyond what they are interested in learning.

Examples of subjects include, in ascending order of complexity: handling multi-part assignments, deadlines, deadline changes, and unclear instructions; managing email and multiple portals and messaging platforms; reaching out and

following up with superiors or instructors; collaborating to succeed; navigating institutional bureaucracy and paperwork (at multiple levels of difficulty); and managing reporting requirements, employees, and subordinates.

The class lectures will discuss academically the ways to handle these different types of situations, potential time management strategies, and key notes on how to communicate and interact with people in different positions, along with guidance on how institutions usually work. **I do not expect most classes to run the full hour, because the main part of the course is the simulation component.**

The simulation component of the course is what will be focused on in the assignments. I will run a number of different email inboxes, each of which will be a different fictitious person, and will provide scenarios for you to work through to simulate real-world conditions. As an example, I might be a bunch of professors with specific and different grading standards asking for assignments. I might be three people in an institutional bureaucracy who all try to pass you to the next person and also the manager you have to contact to actually sort out the situation. I might be the registrar at a college with obtuse registration requirements. And I might be your manager and subordinates in a simulated office. But by doing this, it allows you to practice your skills at exercising executive function in a controlled environment – my job is to help you learn, and the personas that I'd be playing would only be difficult so you can learn how to effectively navigate real situations with different people.

There is no age requirement for this class. Having grown up as an academically accelerated Davidson student, I realize that age has no bearing on intellectual merit. The course is intended for use by anyone from the age of 5 to adulthood, though different learners may find the most use from different parts of the course.

I. Topics covered

I expect to cover one to three of these topics per hourlong lecture.

1. Operations
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Deadline management
 - i. Time management solutions
 - ii. Planning
 - c. Coordination of multiple deadlines
 - d. Multi-part assignments
 - i. Nested assignments
 - ii. Referenced assignments and tasks
 - e. Managing multiple portals/messaging tools
 - f. Research and sources
 - i. Literature review

- ii. Citing
 - iii. Formatting requirements
 - g. Grading and revisions
 - i. Rubrics
 - ii. Grade revisions and navigating uncertainty
 - h. Changing deadlines
 - i. Short-term and long-term
 - ii. Planning
- 2. Institutional Navigation
 - a. Email/communications etiquette
 - i. Email
 - ii. Phone/text
 - b. Communication
 - c. Requests to superiors
 - i. Urgent requests
 - ii. Non-urgent requests
 - iii. Language and formatting
 - d. Following up
 - i. Superiors
 - ii. Coworkers
 - iii. Institutions
 - e. Points of contact
 - f. Paperwork
 - g. Bureaucracy
 - i. Departments and navigation
 - ii. Identifying responsibility
 - h. Handling difficult interactions
 - i. With superiors
 - ii. With institutions
 - iii. With bureaucracies
 - i. Scams and cybersecurity
 - i. Detecting scams and fraud
 - ii. Prevention
 - iii. Phishing
 - iv. Advance payment fraud
 - v. Cybersecurity
 - vi. Fake investments
- 3. Responsibility
 - a. Collaborating to succeed
 - i. Education context
 - ii. Professional context
 - iii. Long-term projects
 - b. Leadership
 - i. Delegation
 - ii. Trust
 - iii. Leading by example
 - iv. Responsibility and image
 - c. Organizational requirements
 - d. Reporting
 - e. Documentation
 - i. Leadership

- ii. Code
- iii. Process
- iv. Systems

The class will consist of both lectures and a simulation / takehome / homework component.

II. Homework and Grading

While grading is a necessary part of performance evaluation to understand how to improve in the future, I also want to minimize the potential stress involved in the class. As such, grading is optional on the final certificate of completion – while all students will have individual assignments graded, and a final grade calculated, one may opt-out of having the grade printed on the certificate if needed (effectively taking the class pass/fail instead of letter-grade).

Homework will be present in approximately half to two thirds of the weeks, and will be assigned one class and generally due at 11:59 PM ET on Mondays, 9 days after the class occurs, though assignments may also be due on specific days before or after. Homework will vary significantly based on the week of the class, and are operationally based, not tests on class material. Every week that the homework is late will deduct from the student's grade, as follows:

0 to 1 days late	-3% reduction
1 day to 1 week late	-15% reduction
1 week to 2 weeks late	-30% reduction
2 weeks to 3 weeks late	-45% reduction
Greater than 3 weeks late	-60% reduction

Homework that is incomplete may be submitted, and questions that are answered later will have their grades deducted individually based on the above rubric. That being said, I am very willing to provide accommodation for students in special circumstances. While the rubric is somewhat complex, it also helps students learn about the kinds of rubrics that are used in real classrooms and workplaces. The optionality of the letter-grade is intended to remove the potential stress of grading and clarify that this class is a learning and simulation-based environment.

My fundamental goal is helping these students learn and not punishing them for turning in homework late. While some standards are necessary for any learning environment, I want my learning environment to be sensitive to the needs of learners and a safe space for learning about navigating real-world systems.

Students are also encouraged to come to office hours to ask questions about the homework – I will be happy to help them with steps or with the techniques learned in class to help with problems. Extra credit will be available

on some homework, but its inclusion is up to my discretion, and will be based on more complex assignments.

The student's total grade will be determined as follows:

Homework weighted average	90%
Attendance	10%

III. Prerequisites

As a class that focuses on operation and simulation of various environments you might encounter in real life, the only prerequisites are reading and typing skills, and an interest in learning how to navigate various systems in life.

IV. Schedule

Classes will be held on Saturday afternoons from 2:00 - 3:00 PM ET, beginning Saturday, September 5th according to the schedule below. My office hours will be on weekday evenings (TBD – updates on my website's mentoring page) for questions related to the homework, a resource which students are strongly encouraged to use, and I can also be reached over email.

How fast the class goes depends upon how well the class goes. If most students are having trouble then I will likely slow down so that they are better able to understand the material. And, if the class is doing well, then I will likely speed up to present more of a challenge. For these reasons, I do not have a specific end date, but I expect the class to last on the order of a school semester.

<i>Preliminary Schedule (First three blocks)</i>	
<i>Date</i>	<i>Class number</i>
First Block: \$80	
September 5 th	1
(skip September 12 th) *	
September 19 th	2
Second Block: \$200	
September 26 th	3
October 3 rd	4
October 10 th	5
October 17 th	6
October 24 th	7
Third Block: \$200	
October 31 st	8
November 7 th	9
November 14 th	10
November 21 st	11

November 28 th	12
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* The instructor has a previous engagement on September 12, so there is no class that day.

Blocks are how tuition is billed. Please see the tuition section below for more information. Note that additional blocks may happen in the Spring if all material is not covered in the Fall, but certificates for the portions of the class that were completed will be provided upon request or upon exit.

V. Tuition

Tuition will be \$40 per class. Two weeks tuition will be due up front to secure your spot in the class with no ongoing obligation. Upon payment receipt, a link will be sent to join the online class.

Tuition may be paid via Zelle to
Eric Comstock, eric.comstock@gatech.edu.

After the first two weeks, if you decide to continue in the class, five weeks tuition will be due by 11:59 pm the day before the third class. An updated link for the third through eighth classes will be sent out the day of class upon tuition receipt. Since it is not yet known how many classes we will have, tuition payment will be managed in this manner until the end of the course.

That is, if we begin Saturday, September 5th, 2026

\$80 is due immediately to secure your spot in the class

\$200 due by 11:59 pm on September 25th, 2026 (just prior to the third class)

\$200 due by 11:59 pm on October 30th, 2026 (just prior to the eighth class) – this would take us through the class on November 28th, 2026.

Additional blocks may happen in the Spring if all material is not covered in the Fall, but certificates for the portions of the class that were completed will be provided upon request or upon exit.

VI. Textbook

There will be no textbook. Lectures will be based on my lecture notes which will be provided.

VII. Online meeting platform

We will be using an application that I have access to that does not require any software for the student. It is very easy to use. All the student needs is an

internet connection, a browser, microphone and camera. The student will merely click on a link sent via email and allow access to their microphone and camera, then they will join the meeting. Most browsers work with this platform.

VIII. General Expectations

Given that this class is open to all ages, I must emphasize that students must behave in a manner that is appropriate to all ages during the class. That is, older students must refrain from speaking about any topics that are inappropriate for younger students. This rule will be strictly enforced.

I will not wait for tardy students, and will always start exactly on time. Please try to come to class on time.

I do take attendance, and while it is not a large component of your grade, it can make the difference between an A and a B. I will deduct points if you are not in class and do not have an excuse. Please let me know beforehand if you cannot make class.