

Students Introduced to "Brain and Behavior"

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Examining the physiology of a hiccup is one simple way to introduce students to the collaboration between the brain and nervous system. Beth Wee, a neuroscience professor of practice at Tulane, says that by using such accessible examples, she is able to engage a broad range of students in science and research.



Beth Wee, Tulane professor of practice in neuroscience, delivers a lecture to students in her popular "Brain and Behavior" course this summer. (Photo by Paula Burch Celentano)

While "Brain and Behavior," a perennially popular summer course taught by Wee, is a requirement for [neuroscience](#) majors, she says the course consistently attracts students from all academic disciplines.

“This summer I had two finance majors, a history major, a marketing major, and I could be leaving someone out,” says Wee. “I even have students who have graduated and are just coming back to take this class.”

This summer, for the first time, Wee offered an optional [service-learning](#) component that allows students to gain hands-on experience at Touro Infirmary in New Orleans. They assisted physical and occupational therapists who work with patients suffering from brain damage and spinal cord injury.

“Typically, the patients in the hospital are victims of strokes or car accidents and other types of trauma,” says Wee. “In class I teach students how the nervous system works normally, and then at the hospital they get to see how it works when it's in a diseased or damaged state.”

At the start of the semester, students learn the basics of neuroanatomy. Wee then develops topics based on the students' interests. For example, one of her summer students is considering a career in viniculture, the production of grapes as it relates to winemaking, so Wee developed a discussion around the sense of taste. “My goal is to teach students to like science even if they don't want to go into it,” she says.

[Wee](#) is co-director of undergraduate and master's programs in neuroscience.