

Nathaniel J. Himmel, PhD

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—	Assistant Professor , New Jersey Institute of Technology Federated Department of Biological Sciences (NJIT & Rutgers University—Newark)	2026 –
—	Postdoctoral Fellow , Université de Lausanne International Human Frontiers Science Program Long-Term Fellow Center for Integrative Genomics; PI: Richard Benton, PhD FRS	2022 – 2026
PhD	Neuroscience , Georgia State University Ruth L. Kirschstein NRSA Fellow; Honeycutt Fellow; and Brains & Behavior Fellow Neuroscience Institute; PI: Daniel Cox, PhD	2015 – 2021
—	Research Technician , Emory University Departments of Medicine & Physiology; PI: Mitsi Blount, PhD	2013 – 2015
BS	Biology , University of Florida	2011 – 2013
AA	Biological Sciences , Santa Fe College	2011

PUBLICATIONS

* authors contributed equally/co-first authors; co-corresponding authors; ¹ undergrad mentee; ² grad mentee

18. **Himmel NJ**, Moi D, and **Benton R**. Remote homolog detection places insect chemoreceptors in a cryptic protein superfamily spanning the tree of life. *Current Biology*. 2023. [10.1016/j.cub.2023.10.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2023.10.008)
17. **Benton R*** and **Himmel NJ***. Structural screens identify candidate human homologs of insect chemoreceptors and cryptic *Drosophila* gustatory receptor-like proteins. *eLife*. 2023. [10.7554/eLife.85537](https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.85537)
16. **Himmel NJ**, Sakurai A, Letcher JM, Patel AA, Bhattacharjee S, Benson MN^{1,2}, Gray TR¹, Cymbalyuk GS, and Cox DN. Chloride-dependent mechanisms of multimodal sensory discrimination and nociceptive sensitization in *Drosophila*. *eLife*. 2023. [10.7554/eLife.76863](https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.76863)
15. **Himmel NJ** and Benton R. Sweet sensors support stressed cell survival. *PLoS Biology*. 2022. [10.1371/journal.pbio.3001705](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3001705)
14. Patel AA, Sakurai A, **Himmel NJ**, and Cox DN. Modality specific roles for metabotropic GABAergic signaling and calcium induced calcium release mechanisms in regulating cold nociception. *Frontiers in Molecular Neuroscience*. 2022. [10.3389/fnmol.2022.942548](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnmol.2022.942548)
13. **Himmel NJ***, Sakurai A*, Donaldson KJ*, and Cox DN. Protocols for measuring cold-evoked neural activity and cold tolerance in *Drosophila* larvae following fictive cold acclimation. *STAR Protocols*. 2022. [10.1016/j.xpro.2022.101510](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xpro.2022.101510)
12. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Sakurai A, Benson MN^{1,2}, Gray TR¹, Donaldson KJ, and Cox DN. Identification of a neural basis for cold acclimation in *Drosophila* larvae. *iScience*. 2021. [10.1016/j.isci.2021.102657](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.isci.2021.102657)

11. **Himmel NJ**, Rogers RT, Redd SK, Wang Y¹, and Blount MA. Purinergic signaling is enhanced in the absence of UT-A1 and UT-A3. *Physiological Reports*. 2021. [10.14814/phy2.14636](https://doi.org/10.14814/phy2.14636)
10. **Himmel NJ**, Gray TR¹, and **Cox DN**. Phylogenetics identifies two eumetazoan TRPM clades and an eighth TRP family, TRP Soromelastatin (TRPS). *Molecular Biology and Evolution*. 2020. [10.1093/molbev/msaa065](https://doi.org/10.1093/molbev/msaa065)
9. **Himmel NJ** and Cox DN. Transient Receptor Potential Channels: Current Perspectives on Evolution, Structure, Function, and Nomenclature. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*. 2020. [10.1098/rspb.2020.1309](https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2020.1309)
8. **Himmel NJ***, Letcher JM*, and Cox DN. Dissecting the molecular and neural circuit bases of behavior as an introduction to discovery-driven research: a report on a Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experience. *Journal of Undergraduate Neuroscience Education*. 2020. [PMc8040840](https://doi.org/10.1093/rstb.2019.0369)
7. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Sakurai A, Gray TR¹, Benson MN^{1,2}, and **Cox DN**. *Drosophila* menthol sensitivity and the Precambrian origins of TRP-dependent chemosensation. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*. 2019. [10.1098/rstb.2019.0369](https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2019.0369)
6. Lopez-Bellido R, **Himmel NJ**, Gutstein HB, Cox DN, and Galko MJ. An assay for chemical nociception in *Drosophila* larvae. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*. 2019. [10.1098/rstb.2019.0282](https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2019.0282)
5. **Himmel NJ**, Rodriguez DA¹, Wang Y¹, Sun MA¹, and Blount MA. Chronic lithium treatment induces novel patterns of pendrin localization and expression. *American Journal of Physiology – Renal Physiology*. 2018. [10.1152/ajprenal.00065.2018](https://doi.org/10.1152/ajprenal.00065.2018)
4. **Himmel NJ***, Patel AA*, and Cox DN. Invertebrate Nociception. Originally printed in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Neuroscience*, 2017. Reprinted in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Sensory Systems*, 2022. [10.1093/acrefore/9780190264086.013.166](https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264086.013.166)
3. **Himmel NJ** and Cox DN. Sensing the Cold: TRP channels in thermal nociception. *Channels*. 2017. [10.1080/19336950.2017.1336401](https://doi.org/10.1080/19336950.2017.1336401)
2. Turner HN*, Armengol K*, Patel AA, **Himmel NJ**, Sullivan L, Iyer SC, Battacharya S, Iyer EPR, Landry C, **Galko MJ**, and **Cox DN**. The TRP channels Pkd2, NompC, and Trpm mediate unique aversive behaviors to noxious cold in *Drosophila*. *Current Biology*. 2016. [10.1016/j.cub.2016.09.038](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2016.09.038)
1. Sim JH, **Himmel NJ**, Redd SK, Pulous FE, Rogers RT, Black LN, Hong SM, von Bergen TN, and Blount MA. Absence of PKC-alpha attenuates lithium-induced nephrogenic diabetes insipidus. *PLoS One*. 2014. [10.1371/journal.pone.0101753](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0101753)

FUNDING and AWARDS

Grants & Funding:

Human Frontier Science Program Long-Term Fellowship (LT-0003/2022-L) <i>International Human Frontier Science Program Organization</i> “Evolutionary, expression, and functional characterization of ancient putative chemosensors”	2022–2025
Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (F31NS117087) <i>National Institute of Neurological Disease and Stroke</i> “Functional roles of chloride homeostasis and chloride ion channels in thermosensory nociception”	2020–2022

Kenneth W. and Georganne F. Honeycutt Fellowship <i>Georgia State University, Neuroscience Institute</i>	2017–2020
Brains & Behavior Fellowship <i>Georgia State University, Brains & Behavior Program</i> Honorary Fellow, 2020-2021	2017–2020

Other Awards:

Best Poster Prize , <i>University of Lausanne, Génopode Conference</i>	2024
Writing Across the Curriculum Pedagogy Award , <i>Georgia State University</i>	2021
Neuroscience Institute Outstanding Doctoral Scholar , <i>Georgia State University</i>	2020
Neuroscience Institute Outstanding Graduate Student Mentor , <i>Georgia State University</i>	2019
Meritorious Research Award , <i>American Physiological Society</i>	2016
Meritorious Research Award , <i>American Physiological Society</i>	2015

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Course design/prep:

Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experience (PERS2002)
Co-designers: Daniel N. Cox & Jamin M. Letcher

Teaching assistantships:

Advanced Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology (BSc3)	2023, 2024, 2025
Biostatistics (BSc2)	2023
Neuroscience Laboratory (NEUR3010/4000)	2016, 2018
Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experience (PERS2002)	2017

Other teaching:

Writing Advisor - Writing Across the Curriculum Program GSU, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning	2018–2021
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Guest lectures:

GSU's Neuroscience School: <i>Presenting Data in Different Forms</i>	2019
GSU's Neuroscience School: <i>Neurological Diseases</i>	2016
Atlanta Brain Bee Prep Course: <i>Senses, Perception, and Movement</i>	2015
Emory University SUPERR Program: <i>Techniques in Renal Physiology</i>	2015

MENTORING, SERVICE, and OUTREACH

Mentees

date	name	location	career stage	current affiliation
2024	Leana Keel	UNIL	Masters	Masters, UNIL/Cambridge
2018-2021	Maggie Benson	GSU	Undergrad/Masters	MD/PhD candidate, U Kansas
2017-2020	Thomas Gray	GSU	Undergrad	PhD candidate, Brandeis
2015	Matthew Borchart	Emory U	Undergrad	Physician, U Arizona
2014-2015	Michael Sun	Emory U	Undergrad	Project Manager, GVC

2014-2015	Daniel Rodriguez	Emory U	Undergrad	Equities Trader, Citadel Securities
2014-2015	Yirong Wang	Emory U	Undergrad	Scientific Designer, Promega
2014	John Ward	Emory U	Postbacc	Physician
2013-2015	Nikki A. Mehran	Emory U	Undergrad	Physician, Icahn SOM
2013-2015	Grace Swaim	Emory U	Undergrad	PhD candidate, Yale

Participation in organized research mentorship:

University of Lausanne, First-step Research Project	2024
GSU, Initiative for Maximizing Student Development (IMSD)	2017–2020
Emory, Summer Undergrad Program in Emory Renal Research (SUPERR)	2015
Emory/American Physiological Society, Frontiers in Physiology	2014
Emory, Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE)	2013–2015

Peer review & editorial experience:

Preprint Editorial Team Leader (Physio. & Neuro.), <i>Proceedings of the Royal Society B</i>	2019–2023
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Ad hoc peer review: *The Biological Bulletin*; *Genome Biology and Evolution*; *Current Opinion in Insect Science*; *eLife*; *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*; *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*; *Genes, Brain and Behavior*; *Journal of Economic Entomology*; *Science*; *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications*; *Fish Physiology and Biochemistry*; *American Journal of Physiology- Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology*; and *BMC Genomics*

Ad hoc grant review: Agence Nationale de la Recherche (France)

Media coverage:

Weiner S. “Do insects enjoy sex?” *Gizmodo*. June 2017. Web: <https://gizmodo.com/doinsects-enjoy-sex-1796376553>.

PRESENTATIONS, POSTERS, and ABSTRACTS

Invited seminars & symposia:

6. University of Fribourg, Department of Biology. Invited seminar. Fribourg, Switzerland. 2024.
5. Georgia State University, Neuroscience Institute. Invited seminar. Virtual. 2022.
4. North Carolina State University, College of Veterinary Medicine, Fungal Systems Biology Laboratory. Invited seminar. Raleigh, NC, USA. 2021.
3. Monthly Maggot Meeting. Invited seminar. Virtual. 2021.
2. Theo Murphy International Scientific Meeting on the evolution of mechanisms and behaviour important for pain, hosted by The Royal Society. Invited participant. Chicheley, Buckinghamshire, UK. 2019
1. NIDDK/KUH Researcher Panel, Summer Student Symposium. Invited panelist. Atlanta, GA, USA. 2015.

Conference talks:

5. **Himmel NJ**, Keel L, Fournes F, Collier J, and Benton R. Twilight zone homologs of insect Odorant receptors are evolutionarily constrained, sperm-expressed proteins conserved in humans, flies, and

beyond. July 2024. *3rd Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology, Montreal, QC, Canada.*

4. **Himmel NJ** and Benton R. Evolutionary, expression, and functional analyses of a cryptic Or/Gr homolog conserved in flies, humans, and beyond. June 2024. *19th International Symposium on Olfaction and Taste, Reykjavík, Iceland.*
3. **Himmel NJ**, Moi D, Benton R. The enigmatic origins of insect Gustatory and Odorant receptors: a homologous protein superfamily spanning eukaryotes, archaea, and bacteria. June 2023. *Symposium on the emergence of order across biological scales, Lausanne, Switzerland.*
2. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Sakurai A, Gray TR, Benson MN, Cox DN. Menthol elicits *Trpm*- and *TrpA1*-dependent rolling in *Drosophila* larvae, suggesting Precambrian origins for TRP-dependent menthol sensing. October 2019. *Neurobiology of Drosophila, Cold Spring Harbor, NY, USA.*
1. **Himmel NJ**, Rodriguez DA, Blount MA. Chronic lithium treatment induces β -intercalated cell expression in the renal inner medulla. March 2015. *Experimental Biology, Boston, MA, USA.*

Posters (only first-authored) & published abstracts:

31. **Himmel NJ**, Keel L, Fournes F, Collier J, and Benton R. A testis-expressed homolog of insect Gustatory and Odorant receptors. September 2024. *Annual Génepode Retreat, Leysin, Switzerland.*
30. **Himmel NJ**, Keel L, Fournes F, Collier J, and Benton R. A testis-expressed homolog of insect Gustatory and Odorant receptors, July 2024. *Swiss Scientific Advisory Committee meeting, Lausanne, Switzerland.*
29. **Himmel NJ**, Keel L, Fournes F, Collier J, and Benton R. A testis-expressed homolog of insect Gustatory and Odorant receptors. June 2024. *Annual Swiss Drosophila Meeting, Lausanne, Switzerland.*
28. **Himmel NJ** and Benton R. Evolutionary, expression, and functional analyses of a cryptic Or/Gr homolog conserved in flies, humans, and beyond. in press, *Chemical Senses*, June 2024.
27. **Himmel NJ**, Moi D, and Benton R. The mysterious origins of insect Odorant receptors; a case study for remote homolog detection in the protein folding age. December 2023. *22nd Annual Human Frontier Science Program Awardees Meeting, Cape Town, South Africa.*
26. **Himmel NJ**, Moi D, and Benton R. The enigmatic origins of *Drosophila* Gustatory and Odorant receptors. June 2023. *Annual Génepode Retreat, Leysin, Switzerland.*
25. **Himmel NJ**, Moi D, and Benton R. The enigmatic origins of *Drosophila* Gustatory and Odorant receptors. June 2023. *Annual Swiss Drosophila Meeting, Fribourg, Switzerland.*
24. **Himmel NJ** and Benton R. Ancient putative chemosensors in the zoospore fungus *Spizellomyces punctatus*. June 2022. *Annual Génepode Retreat, Les Diablerets, Switzerland.*
23. **Himmel NJ** and Benton R. Ancient putative chemosensors in the zoospore fungus *Spizellomyces punctatus*. June 2022. *Symposium on interactions in biology, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland.*
22. **Himmel NJ**, Sakurai A, Letcher JM, Patel AA, Benson MN, Bhattacharjee S, Gray TR, Cymbalyuk GS, and Cox DN. Chloride-dependent mechanisms of multimodal sensory discrimination: roles for *subdued*, *koozie*, and excitatory chloride physiology in *Drosophila* cold nociception. October 2021. *Neurobiology of*

21. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Sakurai A, Benson MN, Gray TR, Donaldson KJ, and Cox DN. How The Fly Youth Chill. March 2021. *Annual GSU Brains & Behavior Retreat, virtual.*
20. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Sakurai A, Benson MN, Gray TR, Donaldson KJ, and Cox DN. How The Fly Youth Chill: The evolution of cold nociception in drosophilid larvae and identification of a neural basis for cold acclimation. March 2021. *Animal Behavior Conference, hosted by Indiana University—Bloomington, virtual.*
19. **Himmel NJ**, Sakurai A, Letcher JM, Benson MA, Gray TR, and Cox DN. Excitatory chloride physiology discriminately encodes noxious cold in a multimodal sensory neuron. January 2021. *Annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, virtual.*
18. Maksymchuk N, Sakurai A, Patel AA, **Himmel NJ**, Cox DN, Cymbalyuk G. Mechanisms of cold temperatures rate coding by *Drosophila* CIII neurons. October 2019. *Annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, San Diego, CA, USA.* [Abstract online.](#)
17. Letcher JM, **Himmel NJ**, Sakurai A, Holgiun-Lopez M, Cox DN. TrpA1 mediates cold nociception in *Drosophila melanogaster* larvae. October 2019. *Neurobiology of Drosophila Meeting, Cold Spring Harbor Lab, Cold Spring Harbor, NY, USA.*
16. Maksymchuk N, Sakurai A, Patel AA, **Himmel NJ**, Cox DN, Cymbalyuk G. Role of TRP channels in temperature rate coding by *Drosophila* noxious cold sensitive neurons. *BMC Neuroscience*, 20:56, July 2019. doi: [10.1186/s12868-019-0538-0](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12868-019-0538-0)
15. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Gray TR, Benson MN, Cox DN. TRP-dependent chemical sensing: the Precambrian hypothesis. May 2019. *Annual GSU Brains & Behavior Retreat, Atlanta, GA, USA.*
14. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Gray TR, Benson MN, Cox DN. Menthol elicits a *Trpm*- and *TrpA1*-dependent nocifensive response in *Drosophila melanogaster* larvae. February 2019. *Theo Murphy International Scientific Meeting on the evolution of mechanisms and behaviour important for pain, hosted by The Royal Society, Chicheley, Buckinghamshire, UK.*
13. Patel AA, **Himmel NJ**, Cox DN. Calcium induced calcium release mechanisms in cold nociception. February 2019. *Theo Murphy International Scientific Meeting on the evolution of mechanisms and behaviour important for pain, hosted by The Royal Society, Chicheley, Buckinghamshire, UK.*
12. Patel AA, **Himmel NJ**, Yang JJ, Cox DN. Cellular and behavioral requirements for calcium release mechanisms in cold nociception. October 2018. *Annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, San Diego, CA, USA.* [Abstract online.](#)
11. Maksymchuk N, Patel AA, **Himmel NJ**, Cox DN, Cymbalyuk G. Modeling of TRP channel mediated noxious cold sensation in *Drosophila* sensory neurons. *BMC Neuroscience*, 19(Suppl 2):64, July 2018. doi: [10.1186/s12868-018-0452-x](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12868-018-0452-x)
10. **Himmel NJ**, Letcher JM, Gray TR, Cox DN. The evolution of cold nociception in drosophilid larvae. May 2018. *Annual GSU Brains & Behavior Retreat, Atlanta, GA, USA.*
9. **Himmel NJ**, Gray TR, Cox DN. Anoctamins are required for cold nociception in *Drosophila*. April 2018. *Annual Georgia Collegiate Neuroscience Symposium, Athens, GA, USA.*
8. **Himmel NJ**, Gray TR, Cox DN. Calcium-activated chloride channels are required for distinguishing between noxious and innocuous stimuli in multimodal sensory neurons. April 2018. *Annual meeting of the Genetics Society of America, Philadelphia, PA, USA.* [Abstract online.](#)

7. Maksymchuk N, Patel AA, **Himmel NJ**, Cox DN, Cymbalyuk G. Modeling cellular noxious cold sensation in *Drosophila* sensory neurons. October 2017 *Annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, Washington DC, USA*. [Abstract online](#).
6. Kronk TA, **Himmel NJ**, Mehran NA, Blount MA. Lithium administration can attenuate the progression of polycystic kidney disease. *The FASEB Journal*, 31(Suppl 1):1032.4, April 2017. doi: [10.1096/fasebj.31.1_supplement.1032.4](https://doi.org/10.1096/fasebj.31.1_supplement.1032.4)
5. Patel AA, Moon D, **Himmel NJ**, Cox DN. Cellular and molecular dissection of noxious cold nociception in *Drosophila*. March 2017. *58th Annual Drosophila Research Conference, San Diego, CA, USA*. [Abstract](#).
4. Patel AA, Turner HN, Armengol K, **Himmel NJ**, Galko MJ, Cox DN. Cellular and molecular dissection of noxious cold nociception in *Drosophila*. July 2016. *The Allied Genetics Conference, Orlando, FL, USA*. [Abstract online](#).
3. **Himmel NJ**, Rodriguez DA, Wang Y, Sun MA, Blount MA. Chronic lithium treatment induces novel patterns of pendrin localization and expression in the kidney. *The FASEB Journal*, 30(Suppl1):968.14, April 2016. doi: [10.1096/fasebj.30.1_supplement.968.14](https://doi.org/10.1096/fasebj.30.1_supplement.968.14)
2. **Himmel NJ**, Rogers RT, Redd SK, Blount MA. Purinergic signaling is enhanced in the absence of UT-A1 and UT-A3. October 2014. *Emory Department of Medicine Research Day, Atlanta, GA, USA*.
1. Rogers RT, **Himmel NJ**, Redd SK, Blount MA. Purinergic signaling is enhanced in the absence of UT-A1 and UT-A3. *The FASEB Journal*, 38(Suppl 1): 969.17, April 2014. doi: [10.1096/fasebj.28.1_supplement.1137.10](https://doi.org/10.1096/fasebj.28.1_supplement.1137.10)

Institutional oral presentations:

6. Chasing cryptic protein homologues through the twilight zone of molecular evolution. March 2023. *Center for Integrative Genomics Progress Report Seminar, Lausanne, Switzerland*.
5. How The Fly Youth Chill: The protective role of cold nociception in *Drosophila* larvae. June 2021. *Neuroscience Institute Breakfast and Lecture Series, Atlanta, GA, USA*.
4. Insects and vertebrates are the odd ones out: unexpected findings in the evolution of TRP channels. September 2019. *Neuroscience Institute Breakfast and Lecture Series, Atlanta, GA, USA*.
3. Multimodality in *Drosophila melanogaster* sensory neurons. February 2018. *Neurogenomics Forum, Atlanta, GA, USA*.
2. Calcium-activated chloride channels play a role in the function of multimodal sensory neurons. August 2017. *Neuroscience Institute Breakfast and Lecture Series, Atlanta, GA, USA*.
1. Chronic lithium treatment induces renal β -intercalated cell expression in the inner medulla. October 2014. *Emory Transport Signaling Workers Union Seminar, Atlanta, GA, USA*.