

# Shanti Astra

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*PhD Student passionate about the science of teaching and learning, endlessly curious about the human mind*

## EDUCATION

**PhD in Psychology – Cognition and Cognitive Neurosciences** August 2024 – Present  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Learning and Transfer Lab, Advisor: C. Shawn Green  
GPA: 4.000

**BS in Integrative Neuroscience (Honors), Minor in Education** May 2024  
Binghamton University, State University of New York  
GPA: 3.985

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Graduate Researcher** August 2024 – Present  
Learning and Transfer Lab, Dr. C. Shawn Green, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Honors Thesis Researcher** August 2023 – May 2024  
Learning and Representation in Cognition Lab, Dr. Kenneth Kurtz, Binghamton University

**SMART Research Assistant** June 2023 – August 2023  
Dr. Lynn Zechiedrich, Department of Molecular Virology and Microbiology  
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Baylor College of Medicine

**Research Assistant** August 2021 – May 2023  
Learning and Representation in Cognition Lab, Dr. Kenneth Kurtz, Binghamton University

**Ecological Genetics Summer Research Immersion** June 2021 – August 2021  
Dr. Christina Baer, Biology Department, Binghamton University

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Graduate Statistics TA** August 2025 – December 2025  
Psychology Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Scholars Program Instructor** January 2024 – May 2024  
Binghamton University Scholars Program, Binghamton University

**Ballroom Dance Instructor, Volunteer** August 2022 – May 2024  
Binghamton Ballroom Dance Association, Binghamton University

**Organic Chemistry TA** August 2022 – December 2022  
Chemistry Department, Dr. Rebecca Kissling, Binghamton University

**Tutor for Statistical Design and Analysis** August 2021 – December 2021  
University Tutorial Services, Binghamton University

**Student Teacher, Volunteer** August 2020 – December 2020  
BU Science Club, Binghamton University

## PUBLICATIONS

- Astra, S. A.,** & Kurtz, K. J. (2025) Assessing Novel Techniques to Promote Creative Cognition: Imaginative Recategorization and Context-dependent Property Generation. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101933>
- Kurtz, K. J., Haley, L., Longo, A., **Astra, S.,** Meltzer, H., Suwara, G., & Patterson, J. D. (2025). Relational encoding promotes creative insight for problem-solving. *Memory & Cognition*. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-025-01685-1>

## PRESENTATIONS

- Using Context Dependent Properties and Relational Encoding to Overcome Functional Fixedness, Binghamton Psychology Department Poster Fair, 2024
- Building a Better Training Set for Machine Learning Classification Tasks, Binghamton Psychology Department Poster Fair, 2024
- Globally Coherent Reorganizations of Pre-learned Categories, Psychonomic Society, 2023
- Influence of positively supercoiled DNA on fluoroquinolone antibiotic mechanism of action, Baylor College of Medicine SMART Symposium, 2023
- Overcoming Functional Fixedness Using Context-Dependent Properties, Binghamton Psychology Department Poster Fair, 2023
- Caterpillar Shelter Abundance Increases over the Summer, Binghamton Poster Fair, 2021

## HONORS AND AWARDS

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| Scholars Program, Binghamton University                        | August 2020 – Present |
| Advanced Professional Development Award, Binghamton University | November 2023         |
| SMART Elevator Pitch Finalist, Baylor College of Medicine      | July 2023             |
| Annette van Howe Award, Binghamton University                  | June 2022             |
| William and Sharon Hohouser Scholarship, Phi Beta Kappa        | April 2022            |

## SERVICE AND OUTREACH

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Committee Member, Sharon M. Guten Colloquium Series         | November 2024 - Present |
| Panelist, Knox College Prospective Badger Panel             | June 2025               |
| Exhibitor, Illusion Table, Science Expeditions              | February 2025           |
| Panelist, Graduate Paths Panel                              | November 2024           |
| Graduate Role Model, Science Expo, Madison East High School | October 2024            |
| Exhibitor, Illusion Table, Wisconsin Science Festival       | October 2024            |

## CERTIFICATIONS

- Human Social and Behavioral Research, Collaborative Institute Training Initiative (CITI)
- Best Practices for Clinical Research, Collaborative Institute Training Initiative (CITI)
- Python Programming Essentials, Rice University through Coursera
- Microsoft Word, LinkedIn Skill Assessments
- Machine Learning, LinkedIn Skill Assessments