

**George Mason University
Graduate School of Education
Program: Special Education**

EDSE 542: Characteristics of Students with Mental Retardation

Tuesdays 7:20 – 10:00 PM

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Course Text: Beirne-Smith, M. ; Patton, m J.R. & Kim, S.H. (2006). Mental Retardation (7th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ; Prentice Hall.

Course Description

This class covers theories and specific conditions in mental retardation and provides advanced study of persons with mental retardation, ranging in age from preschool to adult. Topics include: historical development of the field of mental retardation; theoretical models of mental retardation; etiological factors; characteristics; models of assessment and intervention, including technological advances; issues and trends, including legislation and litigation. The course will study the impact of mental retardation on academic and social/emotional performances. Field experience is required. Prerequisites: none.

Student Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define “mental retardation.”
- Describe how educators and other professionals determine the difference between “normal” and “atypical” behaviors.
- Describe the historical development of the field of mental retardation.
- Describe various theoretical models and perspectives in the field of mental retardation.
- Describe research in etiological factors associated with mental retardation.

- Describe social, cognitive, intellectual, and academic characteristics associated with mental retardation.
- Describe past, present, and future models of assessment and intervention, including technological advances.
- Discuss issues and trends in the field of mental retardation, including legislation and litigation, and use of innovative technology.

Relationship of Courses to Program Goals and Professional Organizations

EDSE 542 is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education, and Special Education Program for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the special education area of Mental Retardation. The program aligns with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children, the major special education professional organization in the United States. As such the curriculum for the course includes competencies for teaching students with emotional disturbances and mental retardation in kindergarten through grade 12.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site:

http://www.cec.sped.org/ps/perf_based_std/comm_core_4-21-01.html

CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include some of the Mental Retardation disability-specific standards (Standard 1: Foundations; Standard 2: Development and characteristics of learners; Standards 3: Individual learning differences) and some of the following CEC Core standards:

Standard 1 - Foundations

Knowledge:

- Models, theories, and philosophies that form the basis for special education practice.
- Laws, policies, and ethical principles regarding behavior management planning and implementation.
- Relationship of special education to the organization and function educational agencies.
- Rights and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers, and other professionals, and schools related to exceptional learning needs.
- Issues in definition and identification of individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Issues, assurances and due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement within a continuum of services.
- Family systems and the role of families in the educational process.
- Historical points of view and contribution of culturally diverse groups.
- Impact of the dominant culture on shaping schools and the individuals who study and work in them.
- Potential impact of differences in values, languages, and customs that can exist between the home and school.

Skill:

- Articulate personal philosophy of special education.

Standard 2 - Development and Characteristics of Learners

Knowledge:

- Typical and atypical human growth and development.
- Educational implications of characteristics of various exceptionalities.
- Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the individual with exceptional learning needs and the family.
- Family systems and the role of families in supporting development.
- Similarities and differences of individuals with and without exceptional learning needs.
- Similarities and differences among individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- Effects of various medications on individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Standard 3 - Individual Learning Differences

Knowledge:

- Effects an exceptional condition(s) can have on an individual's life.
- Impact of learners' academic and social abilities, attitudes, interests, and values on instruction and career development.
- Variations in beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures and their effects on relationships among individuals with exceptional learning needs, family, and schooling.
- Cultural perspectives influencing the relationships among families, schools, and communities as related to instruction.
- Differing ways of learning of individuals with exceptional learning needs including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and strategies for addressing these differences.

Nature of Course Delivery

Learning activities include the following:

1. Class lecture, discussion, and participation.
2. Videotapes and other relevant media presentations.
3. Study and independent library research.
4. Applications with relevant hardware and software.
5. Application activities, including in class evaluation of intervention research and materials.
6. Class presentations of case studies papers.
7. Written case study and observation reports using the American Psychological Association format.

Other readings from original research assigned by instructor.

NOTE:

This syllabus may change according to class needs.

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or if you have emergency medical information to share with instructor or need special arrangements, **please call and/or make an appointment with instructor as soon as possible.**

Attendance:

This class is designed to be interactive and rigorous. This is so your learning is optimized. Your attendance in class is important and *required*. If you are absent, your class activity grade for that date will be 0. **In class Activities may NOT be made up.** Please contact the instructor if you know ahead of time that you will not be in class on a particular day due to illness or an emergency. At the end of a semester, students missing more than 1 in-class assignment may be given the option of an alternative assignment to make up for one missed in-class assignment.

Class Schedule:

A class schedule of reading assignments and assignment due dates will be handed out the first night of class.

Inclement Weather:

We will follow the FCPS inclement weather decisions. If you are unsure about whether or not after hour activities at schools are cancelled, you may check channel 21 or the Fairfax County Public Schools Homepage at <http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/> .

GSE Syllabus Statements of Expectations

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these dispositions.

Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full honor code.

Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.

Evaluation

1. Class attendance and participation
2. Field observation report
3. Case study
4. Case study presentation
5. Exam

2 points will be deducted for each day that work is submitted late.

It is recommended that students retain copies of all course products to document their progress through the GSE MR program. Products from this class can become part of your individual professional portfolio used in your portfolio classes that documents your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards.

Grading criteria

95 –100% = A
 90 – 94% = A-
 80 – 89% = B
 70 – 79% = C
 < 70% = F

REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

In-class Assignments:

There will be 6 in class assignments consisting of activities or writings for which you will be awarded points. There will be a total of 6 in class assignments, but only 5 will count toward your final grade. The lowest grade will be dropped. Each of the 5 counted assignments will be worth 20 points and, combined will count as one grade toward your final grade.

***Field Observations and Report:**

Observations of students with mental retardation in school settings will be completed. Observation reports containing information including the following: (a) student-teacher and student-student interactions in classrooms or other organized settings that serve students with mental retardation; (b) identification of teaching methods and strategies that appear to be beneficial to students with mental retardation as well as those you consider inappropriate; and (c) how the observation and interactions reflect views articulated by readings from class.

***Case Study:**

A comprehensive case study on a student with mental retardation will be completed. This case study will include the following components: (a) student’s demographic data; (b) description of school and neighborhood; (c) educational history (schools attended, reason for referral, placement); (d) IEP goals and objectives, classroom accommodations; (e) observational information; (f) teacher interviews; (g) additional recommendations, educational accommodations, and/or modifications; (h) summary and synthesis (Comparison of student’s characteristics with those described in the textbook, i.e., Which characteristics were identified in your student? Integrate sources from the literature with what you observed in your case study.); and (i) appendices such as student work samples, teacher interview questions/answers.

***Exam:**

Exam covering course content will be administered.

*These assignments are probable entries for the student portfolio

