

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
SPECIAL EDUCATION

EDSE 401/501, Section 5S1: Introduction to Special Education

Class days: Mondays (NO CLASS 9/5 OR 10/10 – CLASS ON TUESDAY 10/11)

Class time: 4:30-7:10PM

Location: Irving Middle School, Room 153

Instructor: Heidi J. Graff

Phone: 703-938-5559 (home)

Email: hgraff@gmu.edu (best contact)

Office hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course provides a survey of current knowledge on individuals with disabilities within the context of human growth and development across the life span. Content includes historical factors, legislation, etiology, characteristics, needs, educational strategies, including existing and emerging technologies, assessment, and support services of/for individuals with disabilities ranging from mild, moderated to severe levels of varying disabilities. The course will study the impact of disabilities on academic and social/emotional performances. Field experience is required. Prerequisites: none.

Student Outcomes

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

- Describe how educators and other professionals determine the difference between “normal” and “atypical” behaviors.
- Describe the legal and historical development of the field of special education.
- Describe various theoretical models and perspectives in the field of special education.
- Describe research in etiological factors associated with all disability area.
- Describe social, cognitive, intellectual, and academic characteristics associated with all disability areas.
- Describe historical points of view and contribution of culturally diverse groups to the field of special education.
- Describe the role of families in the educational process.
- Describe past, present, and future models of assessment and intervention, including technological advances.
- Discuss issues and trends in special education, including legislation and litigation, and use of innovative technology.

Relationship of Courses to Program Goals and Professional Organizations

EDSE 501 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 area of special education. 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 disabilities from preschool through grade 12.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site:

http://www.cec.sped.org/ps/perf_based_stds/common_core_4-21-01.html

CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include 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 of 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 guest speakers.
2. Videotapes and other relevant media presentations.
3. Study and independent library research.
4. Participation via response boards, pairs and small groups.
5. Online resources and applications with relevant hardware and software.
6. Application activities, including in-class evaluation of intervention research and materials.
7. Written case study and observation reports using the American Psychological Association format.

Most course information, lectures, and readings will be posted on Blackboard at <http://blackboard.gmu.edu>

Required Text and Materials

Heward, W.L. (2006). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education (8th edition)*. Pearson: Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Dry Erase Board (8X11) and dry erase markers

Course Expectations for Students

- For full point credit on participation, students must make meaningful contributions to class through discussion and all activities.
- Students are expected to a) attend all class sessions during the course, b) arrive on time, and c) stay for the duration of the class time. Absences will result in missed in-class assignments and decreased class participation points.
- All out-of class assignments are to be completed prior to the beginning of class on the date that they are due. If you are absent, the due date does not change and students are responsible to make sure that all assignments are handed in on time. Late assignments will result in a reduction in points.
- In-depth reading and study are required outside class time. Students are expected to allot approximately three hours for class study and preparation for each credit hour weekly.

Graduate School of Education Statements of Expectations

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

- Students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior and dispositions. See www.gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these professional 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

Course Assignments

Article Reviews:

Two article reviews will be required on research articles that are relevant to one of the topics discussed in class. The 1-2 page review should provide a short summary of the major points of the article and your reaction to the article. **The article must be chosen from a professional research journal in special education.** See provided list.

In order to receive full credit:

The article reviewed must be from a professional research journal (.5 point)

Your review must include APA citation of the article (.5 point)

A brief summary of the purpose (1 point)
Conclusions of the article (1 point)
Your personal reflection (1 point)
The reviews should be concise and well written (1 point)

Blackboard Activities:

Students will be required to participate in 10 class blackboard discussions (.5 point each) for topics throughout the course. Specific expectations for each topic will be discussed during class prior to due dates.

**Midterm & Final Exams:*

Exams will be based on lectures and required readings for topics covered prior to each exam. The exam may consist of multiple-choice, matching, short answer and an essay question.

**Quiz*

Students will review the online child abuse recognition training module at http://www.vcu.edu/vissta/training/va_teachers/ and be tested on the definitions and indicators of child abuse and neglect, how to respond to signs of abuse and to report abuse, the legal requirements of Virginia teachers to report abuse, state support services, and the actions that follow reports of abuse. **THIS IS A MANDATORY REQUIREMENT AND YOU WILL NOT PASS THE CLASS WITHOUT COMPLETING THIS ASSIGNMENT.**

**Field Observation & Case Study Report*

An observation of students with disabilities in school settings will be completed, followed by a comprehensive case study on a student with disabilities. **THIS IS A MANDATORY REQUIREMENT AND YOU WILL NOT PASS THE CLASS WITHOUT COMPLETING THIS ASSIGNMENT.**

The case study will include the following components:

- Student's demographic data. (1 point)
- Description of school and neighborhood. (1 point)
- Educational history (schools attended, reason for referral, placement). (1 point)
- IEP goals and objectives, classroom accommodations. (2 points)
- Observational information. (2 points)
- Teacher interview. (2 points)
- Additional recommendations, educational accommodations, and/or modifications-your thoughts. (3 points)
- Summary and synthesis – a comparison of student's characteristic 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. (3 points)
- Appendices such as student work samples, teacher interview questions/answers. (1 point)

- The report should use the writing guidelines as described in the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (Fifth Edition). Each product should be well written, clear and concise. (4 points)

Evaluation

1. Class attendance, participation, in-class activities: 30 points (2 per class)
2. Article reviews (2): 10 points (5 points each)
3. Blackboard activities: 5 points
4. *Quiz on child abuse: 5 points
5. *Mid-term exam: 15 points
6. *Field observation & case study report: 20 points
7. *Final exam: 15 points

Points will be deducted for work submitted late.

*It is recommended that students retain **ELECTRONIC** copies of all course products to document their progress through the GSE special education 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.*

*These assignments are probable entries for the student portfolio

Grading criteria

- 90-100 points = A
- 80-89 points = B
- 70-79 points = C
- <70 points = F

Class Topics and Due Dates

Date	Class Topic	Reading Assignments & Due Dates
Monday, August 29	1. Introduction, CEC, & Praxis	
Monday, September 12	2. The Purpose & Promise of Special Education	- Read chapter 1 - First Article review due - Quiz
Monday, September 19	3. Special Education Services Planning & Providing	- Read chapter 2 - Blackboard1
Monday, September 26	4. Emotional & Behavioral Disorders	- Read chapter 6 - Blackboard2

Monday, October 3	5. Mental Retardation	- Read chapter 4 - Blackboard3
NO CLASS Tuesday, October 11	MONDAY OCTOBER 10 6. Autism Spectrum Disorders	- Read chapter 7 - Drop Dead Date to Declare Site for Field Observation and Case Study - Blackboard4
Monday, October 17	7. Communication Disorders	- Read chapter 8 - Blackboard5
Monday, October 24	8. Physical Disabilities, Health Impairments, & ADHD	- Read chapter 11 - Mid-term exam - Blackboard6
Monday, October 31	9. Collaborating with Parents & Families Transition	- Read chapter 3 - Read chapter 15 - Second Article review due
Monday, November 7	10. Deafness & Hearing Loss	- Read chapter 9 - Blackboard7 - Must have completed Field Observation
Monday, November 14	11. Blindness & Low Vision Meet at AT Lab on GMU Campus	- Read chapter 10 - Blackboard8 - Draft of Field Observation and Case Study
Monday, November 21	12. Low Incidence Disabilities Gifted & Talented	-Read chapter 12 -Read chapter 13 - Blackboard9
Monday, November 28	13. Learning Disabilities	- Read chapter 5 - Blackboard10
Monday, December 5	14. Early Childhood Special Education	- Read chapter 14 - Field Observation & Case Study report due
Monday, December 12	15.	- Final exam