George Mason University
Graduate School of Education
Program: Special Education

EDSE 401/501: Introduction to Special Education

Class time: Mondays, 4:30 to 7:10
Location: Innovation Hall, room 223

Instructor: Cynthia Feist
Phone: Work: (703) 993-3670, Home: (703) 777-5095
Email: cfeist@gmu.edu (best contact)

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, moderate 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 areas.
• 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 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 participation.
2. Videotapes and other relevant media presentations.
3. Study and independent library research.
4. Group collaboration.
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


Other readings assigned by instructor.

Course Expectations for Students

1. Students are expected to attend class sessions on time and actively participate in group discussions and activities. Excessive absences will result in missed in-class assignments and decreased class participation points.
2. 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.
3. During class time, cell phones should be turned off. Computers and printers are to be used only for work related to the class.

Graduate School of Education Statements of Expectations

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students abide by the following:
1. Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See http://gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these dispositions.
2. Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full honor code.
3. 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.
4. 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.

Evaluation (Total = 100 points)

1. Class attendance and participation: 15 points (1 point per class session)
2. Blackboard Discussions: 10 points (1 point per discussion)
3. Field observation report: 10 points
4. Case study: 18 points
5. In-Class Assignments: 27 points (3 points per assignment)
6. Group Presentation on Disability Area: 20 points

Points will be deducted for work submitted late.

It is recommended that students retain 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.
Grading criteria

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

ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to providing the instructor a hard copy of each assignment, each assignment must also be submitted to the Blackboard Digital Drop Box by the start of class on the due date. This does not apply to Blackboard discussions.

Blackboard Discussions

Objective: Students will be able to increase collaboration and sharing of information with fellow students on discussion topics.

Activity: Respond to questions posted by the instructor in the Blackboard Discussion Board (in the Communication section) that are designed to encourage reflection on course readings, lectures, and activities. In addition to posting a reflective response to the instructor's question, also post a response to at least one of the comments made by another student to promote further discussions. Ideally, your initial response should be posted early in the week, giving students time to read the postings, and respond with the second posting later in the week. Both postings must be done prior to the following class.

In-Class Assignments

Objective: Students will gain further information on disability areas that is not covered in the textbook, including technology, with links to Internet resources to help students become more aware of and increase use of online resources.

Activity: These assignments will be posted on Blackboard in the Assignments section.

• IEP Process
• Media Challenge
• TrackStar (Web Challenge)
• Collaboration Development: Power of 2
• ADHD
• EBD
• Autism
• Assistive Technology
• Family

Field Observation and Report

Objective: Students will complete an observation report and be able to contribute meaningful information to class discussions, based on personal experience and observation.

Activity: Observations of a student with a disability in a school setting, in an area other that the one in which you currently teach, will be completed. Each observation must be at least 30 minutes in length. Complete and submit the reports based on the Field Observation Form. Observation reports will include the following information:

(a) Student-teacher and student-student interactions in classrooms or other organized settings that serve students with disabilities
Identification of teaching methods and strategies that appear to be beneficial to students with disabilities, as well as those you consider inappropriate.

How the observation and interactions reflect views articulated by readings from class.

**Case Study**

Objective: Students will be able to integrate sources in the literature with observations made during the case study in order to present a complete picture of a student with a disability.

Activity: A comprehensive case study on a student with disabilities will be completed. This case study will include the following components:

- Student's demographic data
- Description of school and neighborhood
- Educational history (schools attended, reason for referral, placement, services, etc.)
- IEP goals and objectives, classroom accommodations and/or modifications
- Observational information
- Teacher interviews
- Parent and/or student interviews
- Additional recommendations, educational accommodations, and/or modifications
- 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.)
- Appendices such as student work samples, interview questions/answers, etc.

**Group Project: Disability Area Presentation**

Objective: You and your group members will be able to describe the major characteristics associated with a disability area. In a PowerPoint presentation, discuss the issues regarding assessment, identification, educational interventions, and strategies in the disability area that you have selected.

Disability Options: Mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments (including ADHD), or specific learning disabilities.

Activity: Working with your group, prepare a PowerPoint presentation on a specific disability area. Each member of the group will participate in developing this presentation. There will be evidence of cooperative learning and research extending beyond the information presented in the textbook. The presentation should address the following:

- Historical information regarding the disability
- Characteristics of persons with the disability including cognitive/academic, processing deficits or issues, social, communicative, and behavioral aspects. How does their growth and development differ from their typically developing peers?
- Present, and possible future, models of assessment and identification, including any technological advances
- Current thinking of intervention models and strategies
- Current trends and issues surrounding the education of students with the disability
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Assignments and Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 24</td>
<td>Foundations of Special Education: Legislative Basics and Issues</td>
<td>Create your student homepage on Blackboard at <a href="http://blackboard.gmu.edu">http://blackboard.gmu.edu</a></td>
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<td>Jan. 31</td>
<td>Multicultural and Bilingual Aspects of Special Education; The Individualized Education Plan (IEP)</td>
<td>IEP Process assignment</td>
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<td>Feb. 7</td>
<td>Learners with Mental Retardation</td>
<td>Media Challenge assignment</td>
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<td>Feb. 14</td>
<td>Learners with Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>Collaboration Development assignment</td>
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<td>Feb. 21</td>
<td>Learners with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
<td>ADHD assignment</td>
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<td>Feb. 28*</td>
<td>Learners with Emotional or Behavioral disorders</td>
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<td>March 7</td>
<td>Learners with Communication Disorders</td>
<td>TrackStar Web Challenge assignment</td>
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<td>March 14</td>
<td>Spring Break – No class</td>
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<td>March 21</td>
<td>Learners with Hearing or Visual Impairments</td>
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<td>March 28</td>
<td>Learners with Low Incidence Disabilities</td>
<td>Field Observation and Report assignment</td>
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<td>April 4</td>
<td>Learners with Physical Disabilities</td>
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<td>April 11</td>
<td>Learners with Special Gifts and Talents</td>
<td>Case Study assignment</td>
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<td>April 18</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
<td>Autism assignment</td>
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<td>April 25</td>
<td>Families of Individuals with Disabilities</td>
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<td>May 2</td>
<td>Work on Group Project</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
<td>To Be Determined</td>
<td>Group Project: Disability Area assignment</td>
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