

George Mason University
Graduate School of Education
Program: Special Education

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Office Hours: By Appointment

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Place: Fairfax High School; Wednesdays, 4:30 – 7:10 PM

Course: EDSE 540 Characteristics of Students with Emotional Disturbances and Learning Disabilities

Course Description

This class covers theories and specific conditions in learning disabilities and emotional disorders. The course will study the impact of these learning and behavioral differences on academic and social/emotional performances. Diversity within student populations is addressed throughout the course. Experiential, observational, and interactive strategies, including use of technological advances are used to facilitate fulfillment of the outcomes established for the course. Field experience is optional. Prerequisites: none.

Student Outcomes

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

- Define “learning disability: and “emotional disturbance.”
- Describe how educators and other professionals determine the difference between “normal” and “atypical” behaviors.
- Describe the learning disabilities field from its origins to policies and practices of today.
- Compare the history of education for students with emotional and behavioral disorders with the education for students identified as having a “learning disability.”
- Compare at least three conceptual models of behavioral deficits with three conceptual models that explain learning disabilities.
- Discuss the various etiologies in relation to biological, family, cultural, and school perspectives.
- Describe informal assessment procedures for determining knowledge and skills of children with various learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral problems.
- Based on informal assessment procedures, design appropriate clinical teaching strategies for children with various learning disabilities and/or behavior problems.
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- Describe what an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is and how it is developed.

- Identify various procedures and practices that motivate reluctant learners to complete classwork and develop skills that build self-understanding and confidence in themselves as learners.
- Describe characteristics of young children and adolescents with learning disabilities and/or emotional disturbances.
- Describe at least one theory of how children develop language.
- Describe what is meant by the following as if you were describing each to a parent and suggest possible interventions for home and school: a) information processing; b) constructivism; c) metacognition; d) learning styles; e) psychological needs of five learning systems; f) neuropsychology; h) attention deficit disorder; I) developmental/maturational stages; j) stages of moral development; k) perceptual deficits; l) auditory processing disorder; m) visual processing disorder; n) visual-motor disability; o) non-verbal learning disability; p) attachment disorder; q) underachieving reluctant learning; r) finger agnosia; and s) soft signs of brain injury.
- Describe and discuss each of the following conditions for a parent and suggest possible interventions for home and school: a) attention disorder; b) overt aggression; c) covert antisocial behavior; d) delinquency; e) substance abuse; f) anxiety; g) obsessive-compulsive disorders; h) posttraumatic stress disorder; l) movement disorders; j) eating disorders; k) elimination disorders; l) sexual problems; m) social isolation and ineptitude; n) depression; o) suicidal behavior; p) schizophrenia; q) autism; r) Asperger's syndrome; and s) communication disorder.

Relationship of Course to Program Goals and Professional Organizations

EDSE 540 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 areas of Emotional Disturbance and Learning Disabilities. The program aligns with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), 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 learning disabilities in kindergarten through grade 12.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site:

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

CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include some of the ED and LD disability-specific standards (Standard 1: Foundations; Standard 2: Development and characteristics of learners; Standard 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 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 the 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 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 learner's 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. Application activities, including in-class evaluation of intervention research and materials.
5. Class presentations of mini projects.
6. All papers are to be written using the American Psychological Association format, unless otherwise directed.

Required Texts

Hallahan, D. P., Kauffman, J. M. , & Lloyd, J. W. (1999). Introduction to Learning Disabilities (2nd Ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Kauffman, James M. (2001). Characteristics of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders of Children and Youth, 7th Ed. Columbus, OH: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

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 advise instructor as soon as possible.**

Evaluation

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

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 ED/LD program. Products from this class can become part of your individual professional portfolio used in your portfolio classes that document your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards.

Grading Criteria:

95 – 100 = A
90 – 94 = A-
85 – 89 = B
84 – 80 = B-
70 – 79 = C
<70 = F

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

(Choose either case study or research paper)

Case Study

Write a comprehensive case study on a student with emotional or learning disabilities. This case study must contain 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 (compare the 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 and answers.

Research Paper

Select a topic and prepare a 10-15 page well-referenced paper on a topic related to learning disabilities or emotional disturbance. Paper must adhere to APA guidelines. Be prepared to share your research with the class.

Three Article Reviews (required)

To remain current in the field of special education, students will be required to complete three article reviews. The reviews will include a summary of the article and the student's opinion of the article. The review should be two pages, typed (double spaced), using APA format. First page should contain title of article and the full citation. Review will be graded based on grammar, content, depth and breadth of your opinion.

Mini-Projects – Choose 2

#1 Learning Disabilities and Exceptionalities in the Popular Media

Select an area of interest in learning disabilities or emotional disorders and view at least two films on that topic. A list of films will be provided and you may have others to suggest. Write a two to three page reaction paper to what you observed. An evaluation rubric is attached with more details.

#2 Interviews

Make a questionnaire of ten to fifteen questions about learning disabilities today. (Sample Questions – What do you think is the biggest challenge to inclusion?; Do you feel that you are prepared to teach student with special needs? Why?) Interview 5 teachers using your questionnaire. Prepare a summary of what you learned from the teachers and provide your questionnaire.

3# Internet

Go to <http://www.dldcec.org>. Browse the website. Look at some of the discussions about recent concerns in learning disabilities. Enter one of the on-line discussions. Write a summary of the website and tell what discussions you entered and why.

#4 Interventions

Write a summary of five interventions that you think would be good to use with a student with learning and/or behavior problems. Include in your paper what you are trying to do and how you will evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

#5 Book Reports

Read a book that deals with emotional disturbance or learning disabilities and write a summary (at least 5 pages) that summarizes the main theme. Compare and contrast the interventions/treatment approaches to those presented in the texts.

If the above activities do not meet your professional needs, contact instructor to arrange for more appropriate alternatives.

There will be two exams, a mid-term and a final. These will be take home exams.

All assignments are to be word-processed. Please make sure that you have an email address that you check daily. Let instructor know if there is another you prefer to use beside the GMU address. You may email or fax your work to instructor.

Tentative Class Agenda

Jan. 21	Introductions, Review syllabus, KWL, Begin discussion of IDEA
Jan. 28	“How Difficult Can This Be?” Video on LD. Discuss chapters 1 and 2 in LD text.
Feb. 4	“Broken Child” – HBO film. Discuss chapters 1, 2 and 3 in Kauffman text.
Feb. 11	Discuss chapter 4 in Kauffman text and chapter 3 in LD text.
Feb. 18	Discuss Chapter 4 & 5 in LD text and Chapter 5 & 6 in Kauffman.
Feb. 25	First mini project due. Oral presentations in class.
Mar. 3	Chapters 6, 7 & 8 in LD text; chapters 7-10 in Kauffman text.
Mar. 10	Spring Break
Mar. 17	Mid –Term Exam Due; Complete discussion from Mar. 3
Mar. 24	Second mini project due. Oral presentations in class.
Mar. 31	Chapters 9-10 in LD text; chapters 11-12 in Kauffman text.
April 7	Chapters 11-12 in Kauffman text; chapters 9-10 in LD text
April 14	Chapters 11-12 in LD text; chapters 13-14 in Kauffman text.
April 21	Chapters 13-14 in LD text; chapters 15 – 16 in Kauffman text.
April 28	Chapters 16-18 in Kauffman text.
May 5	Wrap-up; course evaluation; hand in final exam.