GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM – SPECIAL EDUCATION
Syllabus for EDSE 744: Current Issues in Special Education (3 credits)
Spring 2010
Wednesday, May 5 & 12, Thursday, May 20, 27, June 3, 10, 17, 24, & July 1: 4:30-8:30 pm & Blackboard
Administration Building: Room 420/421

PROFESSOR:
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Helps students develop an understanding of the role of convergent research evidence in addressing current issues in special education practice and policy. Familiarizes students with current issues in special education and the group experimental, single subject, and qualitative research designs used to address these current issues. Students evaluate research studies both in terms of their methodological strengths and weaknesses and their part in providing convergent bodies of evidence that can be used for defining practice and policy.*

(*NOTE: Exceeds 70 work limit, but intentionally matches EDSE 843 catalog description exactly; it is expected that these courses may be cross-listed.)

Prerequisites: There are no *required* prerequisites for this course, but it is strongly recommended that students completing the Certificate in Special Education Leadership complete courses in a specific order. Please refer to your Program of Studies for the recommended sequence of courses if you are completing the Certificate in Special Education Leadership.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY
Learning activities include the following:
- Discussion of material read in preparation for course sessions.
- Student participation (e.g., discussion, demonstration, inquiry) in small group and cooperative learning activities, including analysis of critical issues and readings as applied to case-based scenarios.
- Online discussions and other individual assignments
- Student self-assessment of progress throughout the course.
- Access and analyze materials and resources using a variety of medium, including Blackboard, web-based resources, and professional peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Instructor-student dialogue and interactions during and outside of class sessions that bring relevance and heightened skills, knowledge, and insights to the students and Instructor, with a focus on strengthening lifelong learning skills in the professional and ethical practice of special education.

LEARNER OUTCOMES
This course is designed to enable students to:
1) Identify current issues in special education.
2) Explain the historical, educational, and philosophical roots of current issues.
3) Explain the multiple perspectives on the topic.
4) Propose implications for policy and practice.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
Course's Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organization
This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education (GSE), Special Education Program. This program complies with the standards for special educators established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site: http://www.cec.sped.org . Look in the second column on the left, and click on "Professional Standards." On this page, to the right, there is a red book PDF document titled "What Every Special Educator Must Know." The CEC Standards for all beginning special education administrators are located in this document. The primary CEC standard that will be addressed in this class is Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice. The standard is stated as follows:

Special Education Content Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice

Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. Special educators engage in professional activities and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with ELN, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth. Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are sensitive to the many aspects of diversity of individuals with ELN and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based best practices. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.

COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS
Required Texts:
American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual (6th ed.).* Washington, DC: Author.

Byrnes, M. A. (2009). *Taking sides: Clashing views in special education (4th ed.).* Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill Contemporary Learning Series.

Revisit Text:
Hehir, Thomas. (2006). *New directions in special education-Eliminating ableism in policy and practice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press

Inclusion and Intervention Articles: *The School Administrator,* September, 2008.

Selected Articles: *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, March, 2010

Special Ed Connection and **e-CONNECTIONS** online publications will be used as a regular part of every class. Access information will be provided.

Supplemental Readings: Additional readings on current issues will be required. Numerous supporting documents, i.e., federal regulations, state regulations, and reports will be posted on the class Blackboard site.

Required Access to Course Blackboard Site: GSE Blackboard will be used to post important information for this course. Plan to access the Bb site several times per week; announcements and resources are posted on the Bb site in between class sessions (e.g., in response to queries or information requested by students) and readings related to weekly topics will be posted and updated.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

The College of Education and Human Development expects all students to abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See http://www.gse.gmu.edu/ for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must know and follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full Honor Code.
- Students are expected to use APA Guidelines for written work and provide credit when using the work of others. GMU currently subscribes to www.turnitin.com and the instructor may submit student work to that site for to determine originality of work.
- 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 to seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Office of Disability Service and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

Keep Products from This Course for Future Use in Your Professional Portfolio!
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 document your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards. As the program moves towards electronic portfolios, it will be even more important to have artifacts (i.e., scored assignments) saved electronically.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

George Mason University Email: http://mserver3.gmu.edu/
From this link, follow the directions for activating an email account. Every student is required to establish a GMU email account. Course email correspondence and other important university emails will be sent to GMU email accounts.

George Mason Blackboard: http://blackboard.gmu.edu GSE Blackboard will be used to post important information for this course (and others) and in completing some course assignments. Materials, resources, dialogues, notes, and other types of information will be housed on this course's Blackboard web site.

George Mason Patriot Web: https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/
This is a self-service website for students, faculty, and staff of George Mason University. There is a wealth of useful links, information, and online forms on this website including program of studies details, application for graduation, request for transfer of credit, and internship application.

George Mason University Honor Code: http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html
This URL defines student and faculty conduct to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community. The honor code deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. In an effort to maintain trust in the classroom as well as provide a prerequisite for deterring plagiarism, *Turnitin,* a plagiarism detection service, may be used to evaluate materials submitted by students for evaluation.

Advising:
Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program. You may wish to contact Amie Fulcher, GMU Special Education Advisor, at afulcher@gmu.edu or 703.993.2387. Please be prepared with your G number when you contact her.

Writing Resources and Support:
APA Formatting Guidelines are also available at http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm This website is offered as a companion to the APA style manual. *However, it should not be considered a substitute for directly consulting the APA manual, 6th edition for standard of procedures for applying APA style.* Additional APA help URLs are available on the GSE library URL and may be available on the course Blackboard site. Caution with using web sites or resources other than the APA manual because some may have erroneous information on them.

Another type of writing support during this course is available via the George Mason University Writing Center for support in writing (support needs will vary among students). The web site for the Writing Center is: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/. Many resources are available both on site and on the web, and students can now conveniently register online for appointments.

Absences:
Understanding you are individuals with full and active lives, who have made the intellectual and financial commitment to regularly attend class, there may be an instance when you are not able to attend. If this unlikely event should occur, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain notes, handouts, and lecture details from another student (it is recommended that you have two colleagues in the course for this). Students who are absent are held responsible for the material covered and assignments due as if in attendance. Please be sure to notify the classmate(s) in sufficient time for them to be of assistance for you. Recommended, but not required, is that you notify the Instructor about absences in advance or within 24 hours after an absence. Be aware any points earned for participation in class activities, during a time of absence, will not be earned and cannot be made up.

Assignments and Readings and Due Dates:
For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, be prepared for class, demonstrate professional behavior (see *Professional Disposition Criteria* at http://www.gse.gmu.edu for a listing of these dispositions), and complete all assignments with professional quality in a timely manner. To successfully complete this course, students need to adhere to the due dates for specific readings and assignments to be completed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Grades: A=94-100 A-=90-93 B+=86-89 B=80-85 C=79-70 F=<70

Current issues topic from Special Ed Connection OR attendance at a conference	20 points
Participate professionally in class and on Blackboard	30 points
Class presentation of critical issue, discussion & Blackboard	20 points
10-page paper on critical issue	30 points
Total	100 points

- **Critical Issues Assignment (50% total**): Select one current issue in special education on which to conduct a literature review, develop a class presentation, and lead an in-class and on-line discussion. (MAJOR REQUIRED ASSIGNMENT—SEE RUBRIC)
    - o Identify one primary article or chapter and a reference list of at least three other articles, books or chapters posted on Blackboard.
    - o Write a ten-page paper (30%) summarizing the literature regarding the topic, identifying the audiences of interest, explaining reasons for controversy, summarizing the pros and cons of the issue, and suggesting implications for practice and policy.
    - o Develop a 20 minute presentation (20%) with follow up discussion questions for class presentation.

- **Current Issue Focus Paper**: Search the **Special Ed Connection** for a current issue and report on the topics selected in a 3-5 page paper. Focus of report should be on impact to students, schools and/or district OR attend a VCASE conference, audio conference, live chat (www.edweek.org) or webinar on current issues and produce a 2-page document to share with classmates on the highlights of session(s) with a focus on content and impact (20%).

- **Participation (30%):**
    - o Before each class, read the assigned readings posted on the Blackboard site.
    - o Read the online **e-CONNECTIONS** updates or the CEC SmartBrief (cec@cecsmartbrief.com) and be prepared to start each class with a discussion of a current issue and a reflection.
    - o Post at least 1 reflection and comment a week in response to another's reflection on the Blackboard discussion board.
    - o Read the **Special Ed Connection** at least weekly and participate in the Friday Videocast when possible. The *Education Week* (www.edweek.org) weekly live chat may be used as an alternate. Both online publications will be used for weekly discussions on current issues.
    - o Respond to any discussion questions posed on Blackboard, as assigned.

    In case an emergency prevents you from attending class, please call or email the instructor in advance. Students are expected to attend all class sessions on time for the entire session.

Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topics	
Week 1 May 5	Introduction, Discussion of Syllabus, Topic Discussion Overview: National Issues USDOE, OSEP Positions and Priorities ESEA & IDEA Reauthorization Recommendations	Course handouts; begin weekly assignments and participation preparation Blackboard Discussion Questions: Byrnes Unit 1, Issue 2 Byrnes Unit 2, Issue 8
Week 2 May 12	Access and Accountability Response to Intervention Guest Speaker: Elaine Layman, Principal Tolbert Elementary School VDOE RTI Pilot Site	Byrnes Unit 2, Issue 7 Hehir, Chapters 5 & 6 Blackboard articles/Blackboard Resources: RTI websites/articles *School Administrator* articles
Week 3 May 20	Inclusive Schools and School Reform Early Intervention Disproportionality	Byrnes Unit 1, Issue 3 Byrnes Unit 2, Issues 13 & 14 Hehir, Chapter 3 Blackboard articles *School Administraton* articles
Week 4 May 27	VCASE Conference: State and National Topics Trends/Issues Legal Update VDOE Presentations	Discussion Board
Week 5 June 3	Evidence Based Practices	Byrnes Unit 2, Issue 10
	Personnel Development and Leadership Teacher Quality Issues	Byrnes Unit 2, Issue 9 Blackboard articles/JSEL articles
Week 6 June 10	Transition to Post School Environments	Blackboard articles
	Technology in Special Education Universal Design for Learning Guest Speakers: Dr. Melissa Hartman, Special Ed Supervisor Mark Nichols, Technology Coordinator	Hehir, Chapter 4 Blackboard articles **Current Issue/Conference Paper due**
Week 7 June 17	Autism: Increasing Incidence and Service Delivery Issues Services Continuum and Competencies Guest Speaker: Rosy McGuinness, Autism Specialist	Byrnes Unit 3, Issue 18 Blackboard articles
Week 8 June 24	Behavioral Interventions Positive Behavior Supports	Byrnes Unit 1, Issue 4 Hehir, Chapter 5 Blackboard articles and PBS articles and websites
	Guest Speaker: Dr. Terrance Scott Distinguished University Professor University of Louisville, KY	Byrnes Unit 3, Issue 16 Blackboard articles and websites **Presentations**
Week 9 July 1	The Changing IEP Common Core Standards	**Presentations**
	Wrap Up	**Critical Issues Paper due** **Evaluation**

RUBRIC FOR THE MAJOR REQUIRED ASSIGNMENT
Critical Issues Assignment (50 points)
Class presentation of critical issue, discussion, 10-page paper

Evaluation Standards	Exceeds Expectations 9-10	Meets Expectations 7-8	Does Not Meet Expectations 0-6
Paper	Synthesis goes beyond the obvious. Suggestions are creative and realistic. Minimal writing errors. Fully adheres to APA.	Includes background information on the issue, explanation of the controversy, summary of pros/cons, and suggestions for policy/practice. Writes in an organized style using APA.	Fails to meet all elements of the stated expectations. Writing is mechanically unsound.
Presentation	Articulates novel implications for practitioners.	Presents a broad, interesting background. Summarizes and analyzes differing views. Presents in an organized style.	Presentation is disorganized or lacking key information.
Discussion	Encourages dialogue and novel thinking.	Proposes thought-provoking questions or discussion points. Clearly communicates key ideas.	Minimal efforts to engage the audience are made.
Link to CEC Standard 9	Clear reflection of professional and ethical desire to embrace ongoing learning and evidence-based practices.	Efforts to engage in an active learning community. Offers reflective ideas showing a desire to learn.	Minimal efforts to engage in learning demonstrated.
Overall Critical Issues Project	The project exceeds expectations and generates insightful suggestions for how special needs might be better met.	The project meets expectations, clearly identifies a significant issue AND provides clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.	This project fails to clearly identify a significant issue OR fails to provide clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.