**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL EDUCATION
EDSE 434 Section 5S1
Communication and Severe Disabilities
Fall 2011 Wednesdays 4:30-7:10
Kellar Annex II Room 102**

Instructor:
Dr. Vicky G. Spencer
Office phone: 703-993-5598
Office location: Finley 208A
Office hours: By Appointment
E-mail: vspencer@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course introduces professionals to augmentative and alternative communication
(AAC) for individuals with severe speech and language impairments. This course will
address the knowledge and skills needed to assess the potential AAC user, make team
decisions, develop and implement instruction, and evaluate the effects of instruction with
focus on motivating, building, and expanding communication, choice-making, and social
interaction.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY
Learning activities in this class will include the following:
1. Class lecture, discussion, and participation
2. Software and hardware presentations
3. Group and independent class activities
4. Class presentations
5. Written papers using the American Psychological Association format (6th
    edition)

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Identify characteristics of non-symbolic and symbolic communication.
- Describe and discuss methods for assessment, identification of priorities, and
  monitoring progress of individuals with communication impairments.
- Discuss and evaluate the range of augmentative and alternative communication
  devices and systems/assistive technology available for individuals with severe
  disabilities.
- Implement assessment strategies to improve students' social interaction with peers
  and others.
- Implement communication/AAC/AT assessment strategies to develop and
  implement individual educational planning and group instruction with students
  with disabilities in an adapted curriculum across the K-12 grade levels.
- Understand and identify behaviors associated with communication.

- Describe language development and emergent literacy skills for students who use augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology.
- Identify and implement strategies and activities that foster an appreciation of a variety of literature and independent reading for students who use augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology.
- Demonstrate knowledge of best practices and strategies in reading instruction for students with severe disabilities for students who use augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology.

RELATIONSHIP OF COURSES TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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 primary CEC standard that will be addressed in this class will be Standard 6: Communication.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Bondy, A. & Frost, L. (2002). *A picture's worth: PECS and other visual communication strategies in autism*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Cafiero, J.M. (2005). *Meaningful exchanges for people with autism: An introduction to augmentative and alternative communication*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Additional readings will be assigned according to topic and will be made available by the instructor on Blackboard.

Recommended
American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Other Required Resources
Blackboard
Check Blackboard weekly for additional course materials.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Student Expectations
- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/].

- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html].

- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

Campus Resources
- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].

- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

Other Course Expectations

Attendance
Students are expected to attend **all** classes, arrive on time, remain in class for the duration of each session, demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom, and complete all assignments with professional quality and in a timely manner. **Three or more absences will result in no credit for this course.** When absence from class is unavoidable, students are responsible for getting all class information (e.g., handouts, announcements, lecture notes) from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. Each night students will participate in class activities which will contribute to the attendance /participation portion of the final grade. **Points missed due to absences during class activities will NOT be made up**.

Computers, Cell Phones, Blackberries, and Recording Devices
Computers may only be used for accessing e-books or completing a task as an in-class project. You will not need your computers to take notes since powerpoint/handouts will be shown during class and posted on Blackboard prior to class. Please keep them closed during class unless you are requested to use them. **You will need to bring a hard copy**

of the powerpoints/handouts each week. Please keep your phones off or on vibrate during the class. **Texting is prohibited during class.**

Signature Assignment
For student evaluation, program evaluation, and accreditation purposes, students will be required to submit a signature assignment from each of their Special Education courses to Taskstream. In additional students completing Midpoint and Final Portfolio courses will use Taskstream to create a full portfolio of their work based on assignments completed throughout their program. For this reason, student will need to retain electronic copies of all course products to document their program through the GSE Special Education program. In addition to the signature assignment products from this class can become part of your individual program portfolio used in your portfolio classes the documents your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards.

The **signature assignment** required for this course (**Low Tech Case Study**) must be submitted electronically to Mason's NCATE management system, TaskStream: (https://www.taskstream.com). **Note**: Every student registered for any EDSE course as of the Fall 2007 semester is required to begin submitting signature assignments to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective or part of an undergraduate minor). TaskStream information is available at http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped/. Failure to submit the assignment to TaskStream will result in reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Class Participation (10 points)**
Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in all assignments, group activities, and class discussions. **Three or more absences will result in no credit for this course**. Active participation includes the asking of questions and the presentation of one's own understanding with regard to the readings and lectures as well as interactive discussion and participation in activities with other class members. Active participation also includes listening and respectful consideration of the comments of others. This will require all students to complete the required readings, activities, and assignments for that specific class meeting. Additionally, during each class meeting there will be opportunities to earn points for successful completion of in-class activities. **If you are not in attendance and thus not able to participate when these activities occur, assigned points cannot be earned and cannot be made up.**

2. **Research Critiques (20 Points)**
Students will read and critique two intervention research studies in the area of augmentative and alternative communication for students with autism and/or intellectual disabilities. Within each critique, students will provide a summary of the study as well as a critical review of the study's importance, strengths and weaknesses, and application to the field of AAC. Each critique should be at least three pages. See assignment rubric for further details on Blackboard.

3. **Topic Board Development, Rationale, and Reflection (20 points)** Using the strategies and procedures reviewed in class, students will create a topic board for their own use in a specific situation. Students will actually use the topic board for conversation for a minimum of one hour (in an identified setting) and will then write a reflection on his or her experiences and impressions. See assignment rubric for further details.

4. **Case Study and Low Tech AAC System Development (20 points)* Students will be given a case individual for whom they are expected to develop a low tech communication system. A rationale for why such a system was created is expected. Students will present their low tech systems and explain their relevance in class. See assignment rubric for further details on Blackboard.   **(*signature assignment**)

5. **Literacy Unit Plan (30 points)** Students will choose and design a unit on a specific topic of their choice. The unit must be centered around a piece of literature, whether a published children's book or personally authored story. Students will adapt the story for students with significant disabilities using communication/literacy tools and strategies discussed in class. Furthermore, students will develop at least 1 additional supplemental resources related to the story that also incorporate communication theory and strategies discussed in class. These resources could include songboards, worksheets, games, crafts, etc. Students will also design a communication board for use during the unit. Students will present their rationale for the unit development and physically show the 3 curriculum materials during a class presentation. Students will submit a 3-4 page rationale describing the topic and target population for the unit plan, description of the 3 developed resources, and discussion of the communication/literacy theory, tools and strategies considered in the unit plan development. Unit development must incorporate at least two research-based AAC interventions/strategies. Students will also submit electronic copies of the 3 curriculum materials to Blackboard. See assignment rubric for further details on Blackboard.
** This project has been adapted from the graduate course requirements to reflect undergraduate requirements.

Evaluation
1. Class attendance and participation (10 points)
2. Research Critiques (20 points)
3. Topic Board Development, Rationale, and Reflection (20 points)
4. *Case Study and Low Tech AAC System Development (20 points)
5. Literacy Unit Plan (30 points)

Two points will be deducted each day beyond the due date for work submitted late.

Grading criteria
94 –100% = A
90 – 93% = A-
87 – 89% = B+
80 – 86% = B
70 – 79% = C

<70   = F

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Class Topics	Readings and Assignments Due
8/31	Course Overview	
9/7	Communication & Behavior	Bondy & Frost, Ch. 1-4
9/14	Introduction to AAC AAC Tools & Strategies Teach Boardmaker	Cafiero, Ch. 1-3 Bondy & Frost, Ch. 5 Students choose case study
9/21	AAC Assessments Discuss & Teach Topic Board assignment	Cafiero, Ch. 4
9/28	Dynovox Presentation: *Courtney Moss, Dynovox Representative*	Additional reading provided by instructor.
10/5	AAC and Literacy Visual Supports *Guest speaker, Lauren Bonnet*	Article: Light & Drager (2007) Article: Olgletree (2007) Bondy & Frost Chapter 8 **Research Critique #1 DUE**
10/12	AAC Interventions • PECS • Pivotal Response • Functional Communication Training	Bondy & Frost Chapters 6-7 Additional readings provided by instructor PECS video **Topic Board Assignment DUE**
10/19	AAC user: *Guest speaker, Yoosun Chang* AAC in the family and in the home	Article: Mirenda et al (2002)
10/26	AAC issues in the schools: *Guest speaker, Estela Landeros*	Readings to be provided on Blackboard **Presentations of Cases and Low Tech Solutions**
11/2	TEACCH Approach *Guest speaker, Kris Ganley*	Readings to be provided
11/9	At Home Boardmaker Plus	**Boardmaker Activity due by Friday,**

		Nov. 11 via Blackboard by midnight
11/16	ABA approach *Guest speaker, ABA consultant*	**Research Article #2 DUE**
11/23		Thanksgiving Holiday
11/30	• Legal Issues and AAC	Cafiero, Ch. 5 **Unit Plan Presentations**
12/7		**Unit Plan Presentations**
12/14		Reflection & Analysis

Note: Syllabus is subject to change as needed. Common sense and instructor discretion will be the governing forces in dealing with any circumstances that may arise that are not explicitly addressed in this syllabus. Inclement weather cancellations will shift content to online delivery format and do not excuse students from completion of requirements.