



VIRGINIA CONSORTIUM  
FOR TEACHER PREPARATION  
IN VISION IMPAIRMENT

**Host University: George Mason University,  
College of Education and Human Development  
Division of Special Education and disAbility Research**

Spring 2013

- EDSE 511 DL1: Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments
  - CRN: 12483, 1 - Credit
- JMU – EXED 435 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments
- RU – EDSP 650 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments
- NSU – SPE 700 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments
- ODU – SPED 432 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments

<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Christina Schoch	<b>Meeting Dates:</b> 01/28/13 - 02/25/13
<b>Phone:</b> 1-520-490-9795	<b>Meeting Day(s):</b> Mondays
<b>E-Mail:</b> cschoch@gmu.edu	<b>Meeting Times:</b> 7:20PM-10:00PM
<b>Office Hours:</b> by appt. or before or after class	<b>Meeting Location:</b> Internet

***Note:** This syllabus may change according to class needs. Students will be advised of any changes immediately through George Mason e-mail and/or through Blackboard.*

### **Course Description**

Provides an overview of the characteristics of and services to persons with visual impairments, including the impact of visual impairment on infants' and children's growth and development, child and adolescent emotional and social development, and family interaction patterns. Considers the educational, conceptual, psychosocial, and physical implications of a visual impairment.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

**Co-requisite(s):** None

### **Advising Contact Information**

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program. GMU M.Ed. and Certificate students should contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703)993-3145 for assistance. All other students should refer to their faculty advisor at their participating university. [http://kihd.gmu.edu/teacher\\_prep\\_program/contacts](http://kihd.gmu.edu/teacher_prep_program/contacts)

## **Nature of Course Delivery**

*[Instructors, please revise in accordance with your specific course format]*

Learning activities include the following:

1. Class lecture and discussion
2. Application activities
3. Small group activities and assignments
4. Video and other media supports
5. Research and presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

## **Learner Outcomes**

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

- demonstrate knowledge of the history of the education of persons with a visual impairment.
- demonstrate knowledge of the terminology used in the field of working with persons with a visual impairment.
- demonstrate basic knowledge of basic anatomy of the eye and eye diseases.
- demonstrate knowledge of the educational settings, which provide education of persons with a visual impairment.
- demonstrate knowledge of a variety of local, state, and national resources for services to persons with a visual impairment.
- demonstrate knowledge of the basic techniques for adapting and modifying instruction for a student with a visual disability.
- become familiar with the psychosocial effects of sensory impairment on the child and adult with visual impairment.
- demonstrate knowledge of the legal rights of a person with a visual impairment.
- recognize the effects of a visual impairment when it occurs in conjunction with other disabilities.
- demonstrate knowledge of the need for specialized instruction for persons with a visual impairment, to include areas of the expanded core curriculum.
- recognize the importance of considering individual, cultural, and family characteristics in intervention.

## **Required Textbooks**

Erin, J. N. & Spungin S. (2004). When you have a visually impaired student with multiple disabilities in your classroom: A guide for teachers. New York: AFB Press.

McNear, D. & Torres, I. (2002). When You Have a Visually Impaired Student s in Your Classroom: A Guide for Teachers. New York: AFB Press.

## **Recommended Textbooks**

None

## **Required Resources**

- Personal computer
- An Internet connection

- A headset with microphone
- A webcam

### **Additional Readings**

*Articles will be posted on Blackboard and students are expected to read articles as assigned.*

### **Course Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organizations**

This course is part of the Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Vision Impairment Program for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the special education areas of Special Education: Visual Impairments PK-12. This program complies with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization. The CEC Standards are listed on the following website: <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/Profession alStandards/>. The CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include Standard 1: Foundations, Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners and Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences.

### **GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:**

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- c. 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.
- d. 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/>].
- e. 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/>].
- f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

- g.** 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/>].

## **PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS**

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

## **CORE VALUES COMMITMENT**

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. [See <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>]

*For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].*

## **CONSORTIUM COURSE POLICIES**

### **HONOR CODE**

Each university has its own honor code and it is important for you to review the honor code at your university. However, all students taking this course, regardless of the university they are enrolled in, are expected to follow this honor code and also to pledge all assignments and their exam to indicate that they have followed the honor code. A pledge means that you have not cheated or plagiarized, nor have you given or received assistance that violated the description of how assignments are to be completed for this course. The shortened version may be used: “Pledged” followed by the date and your full name (typed “signatures” will be OK for assignments/tests submitted electronically).

A complete copy of each university’s Honor System document is available through

- GMU: <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>
- Radford: <http://www.radford.edu/dos-web/honorcode.html>
- NSU: <http://www.nsu.edu/studentjudicial/>
- ODU: [http://orgs.odu.edu/hc/pages/Honor\\_Code.shtml](http://orgs.odu.edu/hc/pages/Honor_Code.shtml)
- JMU: <http://www.jmu.edu/honor/code.shtml#TheHonorCode>

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITY**

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the disability service center at their participating university and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. University specific information regarding eligibility, services and accommodations can be found at:

- GMU: <http://ods.gmu.edu/>
- Radford: <http://www.radford.edu/~dro/>
- NSU: <http://www.nsu.edu/disabilityservices/index.html>
- ODU: <http://studentaffairs.odu.edu/educationalaccessibility/>
- JMU: <http://www.jmu.edu/ods/>

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

This course has both asynchronous modules and synchronous class meetings using distance education technology. Most likely, inclement weather will not impact access to asynchronous course content. In the event that bad weather does shut down the GMU Blackboard system, the instructor may need to modify the course schedule. As for synchronous meetings, classes are cancelled at the instructor's discretion based on weather conditions and available technology services. Since students are participating in the course across regions, you are responsible for contacting the instructor as soon as possible in case of major power outages.

## **CELL PHONES AND WEAPONS**

All cell phones and beepers should be deactivated while in the classroom. Also, University rules at all participating universities prohibit the possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive. .

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

This course gives you access to PowerPoint files, class lecture notes, handouts, and copyrighted articles. For the articles (available on Blackboard), copyright laws must be followed: print only one copy per student. The PowerPoint presentations, notes, and handouts are provided on Blackboard for your convenience and to facilitate your mastery of concepts presented in this course; Outlines of PowerPoints will be available on Blackboard by noon of the class day or sooner.

## **TECHNOLOGY PROFICIENCIES**

All students participating in this course are expected to be proficient in several technology skills. Students are expected to be proficient in using the Internet and have reliable and consistent Internet access. Students are also expected to have an active email account and to check email regularly. This course requires students to use Blackboard, which is our online course management system located at <http://mymason.gmu.edu>

Key Points Blackboard. Our Blackboard server has been updated from version 8.0 to 9.1. For students this means:

- Students MUST access Blackboard through <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.
- Login

- GMU Students: Enter your Mason NetID (the first portion of your e-mail address, before the @) then enter your Password (PatriotPass credentials).
- NON-GMU Students:
  - Username: x\_firstname.lastname
  - Password: bbcommunity
- Select the “Organizations” tab to access classes.

Students are expected to login to this system frequently and be proficient in using its features. Students are expected to be proficient in using the computer, which includes downloading and saving files, typing, and word processing skills. Students participating in this course are expected to use Microsoft Word for all written assignments. Furthermore, students are expected to use Microsoft PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat Reader for class documents located on the Blackboard website.

Adobe Acrobat Reader is a free software program used to read PDF files and can be downloaded

at: <http://www.adobe.com/support/downloads/product.jsp?product=10&platform=Windows>

## **COURSE POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS**

### **Attendance.**

Students are expected to attend class. Only in emergency circumstances will one absence be excused if the student submits a 200-word summary of the required reading and topics discussed in class for the missed session. In the event more than one absence is necessary, students are asked to withdraw from the course and register for this class next semester. Significant tardiness or early departure may result in the loss of some or all weekly participation points.

### **Late Work.**

Acceptance of late assignments is at the discretion of the instructor and 5 points will be deducted for each day late.

### **TaskStream Submission**

For student evaluation, program evaluation, and accreditation purposes, all students are required to submit an NCATE assignment from selected Special Education courses to TaskStream. The NCATE assignment required for this course 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 submit NCATE 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/>. Students who do not submit the required NCATE assignment to TaskStream will receive a grade of Incomplete (IN) in the course. The Incomplete (IN) will change to a grade of (F) if the required signature assignment has not been posted to TaskStream by the incomplete work due date listed in the current semester's Schedule of Classes.

## Grading Scale

A = 95-100%

A- = 90-94%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

F = 70% and below

## Assignments

Assignment	350 Total Points Possible	% of grade	Due Date
Class Attendance & Participation	50	=10%	10 points per class Discussion Board requirement for 2 recorded classes
Simulation Activity	100	=30%	<b>2/11/2013</b>
MENU Item	100	=30%	<b>2/18/2013</b>
"Eyes of Me" Reflection Paper (Signature Assignment)	100	=30%	<b>2/25/2013</b>
Total	350		

## NCATE/TaskStream Assignments.

The **NCATE assignment(s)** for this class is: **RESPONSE AND REFLECTION PAPER ON STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

**Note: Please submit these items together as ONE pdf file into Taskstream.**

**Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading and Assignments</b>
January 28 LIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Review syllabus</li> <li>• Terminology &amp; History</li> <li>▪ Professional Roles</li> </ul>	*McNear & Torres, Ch. 1 Hong, Rosenblum, Petrevay & Erin
February 4 RECORDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Structure &amp; Function of the Eye, Common Diseases</li> <li>▪ Implications of Visual Impairment</li> <li>▪ Families and Multicultural Issues</li> </ul>	Bishop; Barton; Topor
February 11 LIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Literacy &amp; Technology</li> <li>▪ Modifying Instruction &amp; the Learning Environment</li> <li>▪ Expanded Core Curriculum</li> </ul>	*McNear & Torres, Ch. 2-6; Cox & Dykes <b>Simulation paper Due</b>
February 18 RECORDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legal Rights</li> <li>▪ Psychosocial Issues</li> </ul>	Barclay; Correa-Torres <b>Menu Item Due</b>
February 25 LIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multiple Disabilities &amp; Deafblindness</li> <li>▪ Placement Options</li> </ul>	*Erin & Spungin; Tomasik; Griffin-Shirley & Matlock; MacFarland; Griffin, Davis & Williams <b>“Eyes of Me” Reflection Paper Due</b>

**SIMULATION PAPER RUBRIC**

**Assignment:** Spend at least 2 hours in conditions simulating a visual impairment (very low vision or blindness). Prior to the simulation you should show the person who will be with you how to act as a human guide. This person should be instructed to monitor for your safety and provide information when requested, but to allow you to do things for yourself. You can borrow a sleepshade or low vision simulator from the instructor; you can purchase your own sleepshade; or you can create a blindfold from fabric.

Select a 2 hour **continuous period of time** when you will be in your home or apartment. Arrange for the human guide to be with you for the entire 2 hours. Part of the time should be spent in your home doing typical activities (e.g., laundry, preparing and eating a meal, cleaning). Part of the time should be spent in your home doing an



activity that is not as familiar to you (e.g., preparing a meal you've never made before, planting plants in your garden you've never planted before, trying a new craft project, playing a new card game with someone).

Directions: Following your simulation, write a 4 to 6 page paper describing the experience emphasizing the following: (a) adaptations you used, (b) feelings you experienced, (c) interactions with others including your guide, and (d) what knowledge you gained about visual impairment and how you will apply this to your own career. Discuss things the guide did to help you, things that the guide did that made you uncomfortable, and things you learned from working with your guide.

**Grading Rubric:** I will assign points to your paper using the following rubric.

# Points	Item
____/5	Paper is double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, 4-6 pages in length.
____/5	Introductory paragraph provides an accurate overview of the content of the paper.
____/20	Adaptations used by the writer are described.
____/20	Feelings experienced by the writer are described.
____/15	Social interactions, including those with the human guide, are described.
____/20	Knowledge the writer gained about visual impairment and how the writer will apply this in the future are described.
____/5	Closing paragraph provides a summary of key points the writer made in the paper.
____/10	Grammar – Writer may use the word “I” in this paper. The writer uses consistent verb tenses, accurate spelling, no run on sentences, etc.

## MENU ITEMS

***Graduate Students must complete one menu item.***

- a. Observe in an educational or rehabilitation setting and write a 3 to 5 page paper detailing your observation. **Do not use real names!** Describe the setting, activities that were occurring, information about the visual abilities of the individuals, materials that were used, social interactions between the individuals with visual impairments and others, and any other relevant information that ties to the expanded core curriculum. You may not observe in a setting in which you have worked or volunteered in the past. This needs to be a new experience. **Please speak with Dr. Schoch by February 4th if you'd like to do this assignment and she will help you locate an observation site.**

b. Spend three days without the use of your personal car and write a 3 to 5 page paper describing the impact this had on your activities during the time period you were car-free. Discuss your feelings related to independence/dependence, asking for assistance, the methods you used for travel and why you selected them, and how you will apply the information you learned to your future work. Do not provide a time diary; rather synthesize the experience when writing your paper. (You may do this only if you regularly drive your own car in Virginia). The assignment must be completed during the fall semester.)

c. Develop a 2 hour in-service about visual impairment or deafblindness for a school or adult agency in which a child or adult is to be included. Include a brief description of the child/adult including visual condition, functioning level, and classes/work the student is involved with at the setting. Your in-service should include an outline of the key points you will make, a description of any activities you will have participants do, samples of unique handouts (not simply a Xerox of things off of the course web site or what the instructor has provided in class), a list of references, an agenda etc. Creativity and thoroughness will be considered in the assignment of a grade for this project.

d. Interview an individual with a visual impairment OR the parent of a person with a visual impairment. This individual should not be someone whose history you know in regards to his/her visual impairment or child's visual impairment. Gather information about ways in which his/her life is affected by blindness/low vision and about how others respond to the visual impairment. Write a 3 to 5 page paper summarizing the interview. Your paper should be a reflective summary, not a transcript of the interview! It is fine to use quotes in the paper, however, it is important to organize the information and weave together a story about the person interviewed. Please speak with Dr. Schoch by September 3, 2012 if you'd like to do this assignment and she will help you locate someone to interview.

e. Read an **adult level** autobiography or a biography of an individual with a visual impairment. Write a 3 to 5 page paper about the experiences of the person as they relate to the visual impairment, the reactions of others to the visual impairment, the adaptations the individual uses, etc. Do not spend more than 1 page telling the story of the book! Your paper should focus on the **character's visual impairment and his/her experiences** as an individual with visual impairment. *See Blackboard link for ASSIGNMENTS partial list of books*

f. Review 3 children's books that have characters with visual impairment or dual sensory impairment. Write a review of each book you read. Your reviews should focus on the **character's visual impairment or dual sensory loss**, do not spend more than 1-2 paragraphs retelling the story. Read at least one of the books to a child. For the one(s) you read to a child, tell about the child's reaction to the book and any material presented. You may substitute an adolescent level

book (grades 6 and up) for 2 children's books thus only reading 2 books instead of 3. See course lecture notes for a link to a list of books. See Blackboard link for **ASSIGNMENTS partial list of books**

g. Pick a topic covered in the course. Design a public relations promotional project (e.g., a Power Point, a collage, a role play script, a brochure, a video) that educates the general public about the positive abilities of visually impaired children and/or adults in this area. This project will be graded based on your creativity, clarity with which information is conveyed, and the message given about people with visual impairment. Provide a paragraph of information explaining the purpose or goals of the project as well as characteristics of the intended audience.

h. Pick one of the 3 scenarios below. For the individual in the scenario locate 10 web sites that would assist the individual in getting information specific to his/her needs at this time. For each web site provide the (a) name of the company or organization, (b) the address (URL) and (c) 1-2 paragraphs describing what you found at the site that would **specifically** be of value to the individual in the scenario. Give at least one example of something on the site and how it applies to the individual in the scenario. Your opinion of the site and a description in your own words is what is being sought here – please do not “cut and paste” the site’s description into your paper! **You will lose points if you “cut and paste” directly from the site or if you don’t give examples of what specifically on the site would be relevant to the individual in the scenario.**

(1) Lyle was born with a syndrome called CHARGE. Mrs. Hines is going to be Lyle’s 3rd grade teacher this year. She has been told that Lyle cannot see and has a severe hearing loss. Lyle will have an intervener working with him. Mrs. Hines has never had a child who is deafblind in her classroom. She wants to learn more about CHARGE, how deafblind people communicate, what exactly an intervener does, what materials and equipment Lyle might use in her classroom, and what she can do to assist the 24 other 3rd graders to get to know and accept Lyle as their peer.

(2) Shawn is the father of a 10 month old daughter, Ashley, who has been diagnosed with cortical visual impairment and appears to have delays cognitively. Ashley is not yet sitting by herself and rarely reaches out for things. Shawn has an older son (age 7) and an older daughter (age 5). His wife is taking on the primary responsibility for Ashley’s care and is the one who is home when the teacher of the visually impaired comes each week. Shawn wants to know more about his daughter’s visual impairment. He wants to know what equipment and materials she’ll need at school as she gets older. He’s also interested in knowing what resources are out there for siblings of children who have disabilities such

as Ashley's. He'd like to learn about how people who have disabilities and can't read and write communicate.

(3) Marla is 16 and has just been diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). She has failed the eye exam to get her driver's license because her visual fields are so restricted. She is really having a lot of trouble seeing the white board and overheads in school. When walking she often has branches hit her in the head because she does not see them. She is unable to see at night and therefore won't go out of the house unless she is with a family member or close friend. Marla would like to find out what resources are available to her if she goes to college, she'd like to know about tools that may help her at night, she is very anxious to talk to other's with the same condition, and most importantly she wants to see if there is a way she can drive.

i. Go to the public library and find out what services are available for patrons with visual impairments. Develop a handout for families of children with visual impairments to familiarize them with the services available for their child who has a visual impairment. Make your handout attractive, informative, and jargon free. This should be your own work, not a handout from the library. In developing your handout consider how to present material about the services to parents of children with low vision and to parents of children who are blind. Also give consideration to the age of the child and the presence of additional disabilities.

j. Develop an individual project to increase your knowledge or understanding of visual impairment or deafblindness. Submit a one-paragraph description of your proposed project to the instructor via e-mail by **February 4th** approval. Examples of projects might include a public opinion survey, development of a videotape, or creation of instructional materials. **If you don't get your project approved ahead of time it may not be accepted by the instructor, resulting in a grade of zero points.**

DOCUMENTARY FILM "THE EYES OF ME" REFLECTION PAPER  
**(SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT) (100 points)**

Watch the film, *The Eyes of Me*, that features four high school students, Chas, Denise, Isaac, and Meagan, with a visual impairment. After watching the film, write a 4 to 5 page paper in which you discuss the unique learning needs of students with visual impairments. Provide a *1-2 paragraph overview* of the film and use the rest of the paper to discuss in-depth the individual with visual impairment. Topics to discuss in the paper include:

- a) knowledge you gained about students with visual impairment;
- b) techniques used by the students with a visual impairment to complete tasks (e.g., cooking, traveling);
- c) how the experiences of persons with visual impairment impact family and social interactions;
- d) how the unique background of the individual (e.g. race, culture, and/or economic status) plays a role in student experiences;
- e) how the film changed any stereotypes you may have had about persons with visual impairment, and;
- f) how you will apply information gained from this film to your own work to respond to individual needs of those with students with visual impairments.

**Grading Rubric:** I will assign points to your paper using the following rubric.

# Points	Item
____/5	Paper is double spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 4 to 5 pages in length.
____/5	Introductory paragraph provides an accurate overview of the content of the paper.
____/10	Description of knowledge you gained about the student's visual impairment, both medical and functional implications. ( <b>Understanding of exceptional conditions</b> )
____/10	Techniques (both "typical" and compensatory) used by the student with a visual impairment to complete tasks (e.g. cooking, traveling).
____/10	Description of how the experiences of person with visual impairment impact family and social interactions.
____/10	Description of how the unique background of a person is a factor in individual learning and experiences.
____/20	Description of how the film has changed any stereotypes you had about persons with visual impairments and how you developed more <b>respect</b> for individuals with this disability as unique human beings.
____/20	Description of how you will apply information gained from this film to your own work <b>to respond to individual needs</b> of those with students with visual impairments.
____/5	Closing paragraph provides a summary of key points the writer made in the paper.
____/5	Grammar – Writer may use the word "I" in this paper. The writer uses consistent verb tenses, accurate spelling, no run on sentences, etc.

