



**College of Education and Human Development
Division of Special Education and disAbility Research**

Fall 2014

EDSE 744 689: Current Issues in Special Education

CRN: 81449, 3 - Credits

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| Instructor: Dr. Mary Kealy | Meeting Dates: 9/2/14 – 10/28/14 |
| Phone: 571-252-1022 | Meeting Day(s): Tuesday |
| E-Mail: mary.kealy@lcps.org | Meeting Time(s): 4:30 pm-9:00 pm |
| Office Hours: After class and by appointment | Meeting Location: Off-campus: Loudoun County Public Schools Administration Building, Room 420/421 |

***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

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 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. Hours of Lecture or Seminar per week: 3Hours of Lab or Studio per week: 0

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. Mason M.Ed. and Certificate students should contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703) 993-3670 for assistance. All other students should refer to their faculty advisor.

Nature of Course Delivery

1. Discussion of material read in preparation for course sessions.
2. 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.
3. Student self-assessment of progress throughout the course.
4. Access and analyze materials and resources using a variety of medium, including Blackboard, web-based resources, and professional peer-reviewed journal articles.
5. 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

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

- Identify current issues in special education.
- Explain the historical, educational, and philosophical roots of current issues.
- Explain the multiple perspectives on the topic.
- Propose implications for policy and practice.

Required Textbooks

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

Bogdan, W.K. (2011). *Trends and issues affecting education and the provision of special education services*, GA: Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE).
(provided by instructor)

Digital Library Option

The Pearson textbook(s) for this course **may be** available as part of the **George Mason University Division of Special Education and disAbility Research Digital Library**. Please note that not all textbooks are available through this option. Visit the links below before purchasing the digital library to ensure that your course(s) text(s) are available in this format. The division and Pearson have partnered to bring you the Digital Library; a convenient, digital solution that can save you money on your course materials. The Digital Library offers you access to a complete digital library of **all Pearson textbooks** and MyEducationLabs used across the Division of Special Education and disAbility Research curriculum at a low 1-year or 3-year subscription price. Access codes are available in the school bookstore. Please visit <http://gmu.bncollege.com> and search the ISBN. To register your access code or purchase the

Digital Library, visit:

<http://www.pearsoncustom.com/va/gmu/digitallibrary/education/index.html>

- 1 year subscription \$200 ISBN-13: 9781269541411
- 3 years subscription \$525 ISBN-13: 9781269541381
- Individual e-book(s) also available at the bookstore link above or at <http://www.pearsoncustom.com/va/gmu/digitallibrary/education/index.html>

Required Resources

Due to the nature of this course, the online publications listed below will be used to provide students with the most current issues and best practices and information in the field. Students are required to sign up for each of these publications prior to the start of the course. The instructor will provide registration and access information for each publication. All will be used as a regular part of every class.

Special Ed Connection and **e-CONNECTIONS** online publications

CEC SmartBrief

CEC Policy Insider

IDEA Partnership eNews

Additional Readings

Selected articles from Crockett, J. B., Billingsley, B. S., & Boscardin, M. L. (2012). *Handbook of leadership and administration for special education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Required Access to Course Blackboard (Bb) Site: 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).

Course Relationships to Program Goals and Professional Organizations

This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education (GSE), Special Education Program for Special Education Leadership Graduate Certificate. 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 standard that will be addressed in this class is Standard 6: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. (Updated Fall 2014 to align with the revised CEC Standards)

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- 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/>]

Course Policies & Expectations

Attendance.

Attendance is required since this is a 9-week course and the content is compacted into fewer sessions than on-campus courses. Therefore, class discussions, presentations, activities, and full participation are essential to complete course requirements. Students will not be excused for any reason. Students are expected to (a) attend **all** classes during the course, (b) arrive on time, (c) stay for the duration of the class time, (d) show evidence of having read/studied material, (e) exhibit professional behavior (see Professional Disposition Criteria), and (f) complete all in-class assignments with professional quality in a timely manner to earn full points for class participation. Be aware that points will be deducted for any class absence and cannot be reclaimed.

Late Work.

Points will be deducted for work submitted late (up to 10% per day). This includes any items that are not submitted upon request due to class absence or tardiness. This includes items initiated or modified during class as well as those listed in the syllabus. Please discuss any issues with the instructor prior to due dates.

TaskStream Submission

Every student registered for any Special Education course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit this assessment, *Critical Issues Assignment* to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in TaskStream. Failure to submit the assessment to TaskStream will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete(IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required TaskStream submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

If you have never used TaskStream before, you **MUST** use the login and password information that has been created for you. This information is distributed to students through GMU email, so it is very important that you set up your GMU email. For more TaskStream information, go to <http://cehd.gmu.edu/api/taskstream>.

Grading Scale

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

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|--|------------|
| Participate professionally in class | 15 points |
| Trends & Issues Book Chapter Presentation – Group Presentation and Discussion | 15 points |
| Current issues topic from Special Ed Connection or CEC Policy Insider OR attendance at VCASE conference | 20 points |
| 10-page paper on critical issue | 30 points |
| Class presentation of critical issue and discussion | 20 points |
| Total | 100 points |

Assignments

Performance-based Assessment (TaskStream submission required).

- **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)
 - Identify one primary article or chapter and a reference list of at least three other articles, books or chapters posted on Blackboard.
 - 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.
 - Develop a 20 minute presentation (20%) with follow up discussion questions for class presentation.

Performance-based Common Assignments (No TaskStream submission required).

- **Current Issue Focus Paper:** Search the **Special Ed Connection** or **CEC Policy Insider** for a current issue and report on the topic selected in a 3-5 page paper. Focus of report should be on impact to students, schools and/or district **OR** attend the 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 (15%):**
 - Before each class, read the assigned readings posted on the Blackboard site.
 - 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. The **CEC Policy Insider** and **IDEA Partnership eNews** may also be used.
 - Read the **CEC Policy Insider** and **Special Ed Connection** at least weekly. The *Education Week* (www.edweek.org) live chat may be used as an alternate, if

available. The online publications will be used for weekly discussions on current issues.

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.

Other Assignments.

- **Trends and Issues Chapters: Group Presentations and Discussion (15%):** Groups will be assigned to read selected chapters in Trends and Issues Affecting Special Education and the Provision of Special Education Services (Bogdan) at the first class meeting. Each group will read assigned chapters and develop a presentation for the class based on the chapter topic, updated information and any supplemental information related to the topic gained from websites listed on the Blackboard site and other resources recommended for the course to provide a rich content for the class discussion. The use of technology, such as PowerPoint or Prezi, for the class presentation as an engaging tool for the group to facilitate class discussion, is expected for this assignment.

Schedule

Tentative Class Schedule Fall 2014

| Date | Topics | Assignments (for next class) |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Week 1 Sept. 2 | Introduction, Discussion of Syllabus, Topic Discussion Overview: National Issues USDOE, OSEP Positions and Priorities | Course handouts; begin weekly assignments and participation preparation |
| Week 2 Sept. 9 | National Issues Perspective Policy and Legislative Issues ESEA & IDEA Reauthorization Recommendations | Blackboard articles Chapter 1: Group Presentation |
| Week 3 Sept. 16 | Effective parent Advocacy & Communication Models SEAC Meeting Leadership for Creating & Sustaining Inclusive Schools | Blackboard articles Chapters 2 & 3: Group Presentation |
| Week 4 Sept. 23 | Positive School Discipline: Research & Practice Disproportionality Discipline of Special Education Students | Blackboard articles and websites Chapter 4: Group Presentation |
| Week 5 Sept. 30 | Academic & Behavioral Frameworks: Continuous School Improvement Process Evidence Based Practices Response to Intervention Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports | Blackboard articles/Blackboard Resources: RTI websites/articles Chapter 5: Group Presentation |
| Week 6 Oct. 6 * | VCASE Policy Institute Evidence Based Literacy: Instructional Implications | Blackboard articles |
| Week 7 Oct. 14 | Autism: Increasing Incidence and Service Delivery Issues Services Continuum and Competencies Teacher Quality Issues /Teacher Evaluation Personnel Development & Leadership | Blackboard articles Critical Issue Presentations |
| Week 8 Oct. 21 | Online Learning for Students with Disabilities Technology in Special Education: Universal Design for Learning | Critical Issues Paper due Critical Issues Presentations |
| Week 9 Oct. 28 | Reflections Wrap-Up Evaluation | Class Presentations |

* **Note Date**

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. |