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

Spring 2015
EDSE 744 001: Current Issues in Special Education
CRN: 10532, 3 - Credits

Instructor: Dr. Peggy King-Sears	**Meeting Dates:** 1/26/2015 - 5/11/2015
Phone: 703.993.3916	**Meeting Day(s):** Mondays
E-Mail: mkingsea@gmu.edu best way to contact	**Meeting Time(s):** 7:20 pm-10:00 pm
Office Hours: by appointment only (please schedule at least 24 hours in advance) on: --Monday 4:45 to 6:45 --Wednesday 4:45 to 6:45 Flexibility for appointments by phone or in person on other days. Please ask!	**Meeting Location:** Fairfax-Finley Bldg. #119

> **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
Learning activities include the following:
1. Participate in class discussions
2. Gather, share, read, and discuss recent research on specific topics and issues
3. Deliver presentations
4. Complete activities via Blackboard

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.

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
Additional resources, some of which will be required for assignments' completion, will be posted on Blackboard. Some resources will be determined by and shared among students in the course.

Additional Readings
Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard. Students will also need to access additional and recent (2011 or more recent) research readings relevant to their activities and assignments from peer-reviewed journals. Other documents relevant to current issues (e.g., federal statutes and regulations, court case decisions, recent reports from organizations such as http://www.projectforum.org/) will be posted on the class Blackboard site and/or otherwise assigned.

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 RESOURES 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.
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 on time. When absence from class is unavoidable, it is the student's 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). Please be sure to notify the classmate(s) in sufficient time for them to be of assistance for you.

Please 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**.

If you need to miss, for any reason, more than two class sessions, contact the Instructor immediately (within 48 hours) with notification of when your course withdrawal will be completed. If you realize after the first class session that this course's requirements are not a match for you for this semester, process your withdrawal immediately (within 48 hours) and notify the Instructor at the same time.

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

- The use of electronic devices that produce sound or otherwise interfere with the learning of others (such as cell phones, pagers, etc.) is prohibited during class. Please turn these devices off or to vibrate before the start of class.
- **Computers may be used to take notes during class, but they may not be used for internet exploration or other non-class activities during class time.**

Academic Integrity.

Students in this course are expected to exhibit academic integrity at all times. Be aware that plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. Whether the act is deliberate or unintentional is irrelevant. You must take great care to give credit to an author when you borrow either exact words or ideas. Generally, if you use 4 or more words in a row you should use quotation marks and a proper citation. Evidence of plagiarism or any other form of cheating in this class will result in a zero on that assignment and a report of the incident to the registrar. Remember that plagiarism is a very serious offense and can result in dismissal from the University. The instructor reserves the right to submit your work to turnitin or safeassign or similar plagiarism detection services, for an integrity assessment as needed.

Late Work.

To successfully complete this course, students need to adhere to the due dates for specific readings and assignments to be completed. Full earned credit for assignments turned in on time. Anticipate point deductions for late work. For example, for every 24-hour period that an assignment is late, a 5% point deduction will occur.

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

95 –100% = A+
90 – 94.9% = A
85 – 89.9% = B+
80 - 84.9% = B
70 – 79.9% = C
< 70% = F

Note that an Incomplete grade is not an option except under extreme extenuating circumstances. Contact the instructor immediately; a course withdrawal may be appropriate in some situations.

Quantity of Points Per Assignment:

Performance-Based Assessment	Possible Points
Blackboard Interactions/Discussions/Webinars (points vary)	15.5 points
Synthesis Papers (3 @ 7 points each)	21.0 points
Class Presentation on one Synthesis Topic	21.0 points
Critical Issue Paper	35.0 points
Class Participation (15 @ .5 points per class session)	7.5 points
Total	**100.0 points**

Assignments

     Performance-based Assessment (TaskStream submission required).

Critical Issue (35 points)

Identify one critical issue in special education. Briefly describe the history of the issue, then use research and other types of professional sources to describe what the controversy is about. Focus on at least two advantages/positives/pros and two disadvantages/negatives/cons of the issue. Use a minimum of six (EDSE 744) sources; more if necessary.

Because you are identifying this as a current issue, ensure some (at least two) of your sources are current (2011 or more recent). As with the Synthesis Papers you wrote for this course, aim your focus in writing more on integrating, analyzing, and synthesizing than on identifying and describing (although you will be identifying and describing to some extent). Follow this format:
• 1st page: Cover sheet
• Body of the Paper (use these as your major headings):
o History of Issue (to include cause of controversy) [1 page*]
o Advantages (or Positives, or People in Favor of) of the Issue [3 pages*]
o Disadvantages (or Negatives, or People Opposed to) of the Issue [3* pages]
o Conclusion (to include both a summary and implications, such as for practice or policy) [2* pages]
• Last page: References

*page numbers are approximate; more important than quantity of pages is the quality of the messages

Evaluation Criteria:

Scoring Rubric for Critical Issue	Points Possible
1. History of the current issue is clearly described. Written language is excellent.	/4
2. One side of the issue is well-developed with at least two advantages, clearly written, well-supported by research or literature, and logically evolves from the available data and history of the controversy. Written language is excellent.	/10
3. The other side of the issue is well-developed with at least two disadvantages, well-supported by research or literature, clearly written, and logically evolves from the available data and history of the controversy. Written language is excellent.	/10
4. The conclusion's summary is well-developed and clearly written. Implications for practice or policy (as applicable) are logically connected to the issue and clearly written. Written language is excellent.	/8
5. Technical APA (e.g., citations in the assignment, Reference section, headings/subheadings) is completely accurate	/3
TOTAL points earned*	**/35.0**

*Full earned credit for assignments turned in on time.

TASKSTREAM RUBRIC for Critical Issues Paper

Evaluation Standards	Exceeds Expectations 3	Meets Expectations 2	Does Not Meet Expectations 1
Paper	Synthesis goes beyond the obvious. Suggestions are creative and realistic. Minimal writing errors.	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.
Face-to-Face 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.
Online Discussion	Encourages dialogue and novel thinking.	Proposes thought-provoking questions or discussion points.	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 meets expectations and generates insightful suggestions for how special needs might be better met.	The project 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.

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

Synthesis Papers (7 points per each of 3 synthesis papers = 21 points total)

For each of three topics identified as a current issue in special education, select a minimum of two to three recent (2011 or later) research articles published in peer-reviewed journals on that topic. On no more than three pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12-point font), synthesize the three research studies. Each person may be choosing different articles, or if the same articles are selected, the way in which each person synthesizes can vary. Each paper will be worth 7 points

Caution: This assignment is not about summarizing, it is about synthesizing. Think in terms of analyzing the content of the studies, determine how you want to approach a synthesis, and focus on that synthesis for a maximum of three pages.

Follow this format:
1st page: Cover sheet
2nd, 3rd, and 4th pages: Your Synthesis (use headings as appropriate, but be judicious)
5th page: References (there should be a minimum of three references)

Synthesis Assignment's Scoring Rubric Synthesis

Paper # ___	Points Possible
1. Directions are followed.	/0.25
2. The synthesis of the three research articles makes it clear which areas are being synthesized. Written language is excellent.	/6
3. Technical APA (e.g., citations in the assignment, Reference section, headings/subheadings) is completely accurate	/0.75
TOTAL points earned*	**/7.0**

Grading Rubric for Synthesis Papers
Exemplary paper (7 points): A thoughtful description of a significant issue in special education and why this issue is relevant for meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. In addition, the students should consider implications of this issue throughout the life of the person with a disability. Appropriate references are used and information presented is accurately synthesized (rather than only summarized). Any conclusions that are drawn include appropriate support (rather than solely based on student opinion).

Adequate paper (5.5 points): Good overall paper, lacking in one of the criteria for an exemplary paper.

Marginal paper (4 points): Overall, acceptable but with one or more significant problems. Contains some useful information, but may have substantial problems with evaluation, writing style, or literature selected.

Inadequate paper (<4 points): Paper with substantial problems in important areas such as writing, synthesis, overall thoughtfulness. Contains little or no information of value to special education practice**.**

Unacceptable/no paper (0 points): No paper turned in or paper was not approved for this assignment.

Feedback on Assignment Using APA Numeric Codes

Throughout your assignment, there are numbers that correspond to the feedback below.

This # on your paper	…corresponds to this section of the APA Manual Sixth Edition. Please review your paper in light of the APA writing style. Contact the Instructor if you have questions.
1	Chapter 3 on writing style (3.01 to 3.11)
2	Chapter 3 on guidelines to reduce bias in language (pp. 70-76, particularly 3.15)
3	Chapter 3 on grammar (3.18 to 3.23)
4	Chapter 4 on punctuation, spelling, capitalization, italics, abbreviations, numbers (4.01 to 4.38)
5	Chapter 6 on plagiarism and quotations (6.01 to 6.10) *For all assignments in this course, do not quote. **Always paraphrase**.*
6	Chapter 6 on reference citations in text (6.11 to 6.21)
7	Chapter 6 on Reference list (6.22 to 6.32) Chapter 7 for Reference Examples: All of Chapter 7 provides Reference Examples. You will likely use 7.01 the most for articles from peer-reviewed journals (periodicals) and 7.02 for books and book chapters.
An arrow or phrase (e.g., "CHECK THROUGHOUT") indicate that a pattern of this type of feedback has evolved, and the writer needs to self- check the remaining portions of paper for that error type. The reader is no longer noting every instance of that feedback from that point on, but will mark some content intermittently. The writer should focus on reducing this type of error in subsequent papers in order to enhance meaning and clarity for communicating in writing using excellent written language per APA style as well as accurate technical APA style (e.g., citations).	

Presentation of Synthesis Paper (10 points)

Select one current issue in special education that you researched for your synthesis paper, develop a class presentation, and lead a class discussion.

Develop a 20-minute presentation that synthesizes the most current research and/or policies (as appropriate) related to the topic. Prepare a handout that goes with your presentation, and include a Reference page with all sources cited accurately in APA style.

At least three weeks before your Class Presentation, post one recent research article that you would like everyone in the class to read prior to your Class Presentation (see rubric note that instructor must approve the article four weeks in advance). Build into your presentation at least one way to *briefly* engage class colleagues in a discussion related to these articles during your presentation. Additionally, *at the conclusion* of your presentation, identify an open-ended question or thought that leads to a brief class discussion, and elicit / answer questions regarding the issue so that colleagues are sharing content from the research article they have read in preparation for this presentation. Facilitate the discussion so that the focus stays on the research article related to the issue and so that each colleague actively participates.

Evaluation of Presentation

Scoring Rubric for Class Presentation	Points Possible
1. Issue and article's choice are appropriate. Article approved by instructor at least **four** weeks in advance of individual's presentation.	/1.5
2. Quality of presentation content is excellent, including handout. The clarity of information presented (on the PPT) and its importance to the field of special education is excellent.	/15
3. Interactions with class colleagues are well-planned, high-level, and stay within the time limit. Presentation's conclusion is specific to the research article read by colleagues, facilitation of the ensuring discussion is excellent, and each colleague actively participates. The individual's presentation style and interactions with the audience are professional.	/3.5
4. Reference page and all use of APA (technical and written language) is excellent / completely accurate.	/1
Questions: Did the presenter: • Keep within the time limits? • Reflect poise, clarity, knowledge, and interest in the content being presented? • Make effective use of visuals (i.e., PPT)? • Describe, and stay focused on, the research as it relates to the topic being presented? • Keep the audience's attention?	
TOTAL points earned	**/21.0**
Comments from instructor:	

TaskStream Rubric Components with the Presentation Assignment:

Evaluation Standards	Exceeds Expectations 3	Meets Expectations 2	Does Not Meet Expectations 1
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.

Other Assignments.

Blackboard Discussions, Interactions, and Webinars (15.5 points)

On about six occasions across the semester, questions or points-of-view or a brief reading or a webinar will be posted on Bb for you to view, react to, integrate with research, align with your experiences, and/or otherwise discuss. Specific directions for what you need to do will be posted on Bb. Follow the directions for each Bb posting to earn the maximum points available for that Bb assignment. On some occasions, webinars may be posted for viewing.

For example: Students will locate and post to Blackboard one peer-reviewed article or policy document from a reliable source (e.g., CEC) related to your self-selected topic and one of the areas that we are discussing for classes indicated on the syllabus:

- *Eligibility & Labelling*
- *Free & Appropriate Education (FAPE)*
- *Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)*
- *Continuum of Placement*

Evaluation Criteria:
The timeliness and quality of your postings (i.e., avoid general comments like "good idea" or "neat") will be assessed along with their regularity. Quality criteria will include your contributions of new and meaningful ideas, coherence of your messages, and the relevance of your replies to other messages as they build on other messages to elaborate, contradict, modify, or explain ideas.

Schedule

Session	Date	Topic/Lecture	Readings and **Assignments Due**
1	1/26	Introductions Overview of Course Content of Syllabus Group Suggestions for Current Issue Topics *Perusing peer-reviewed journals* *Using the GMU online library* ***Monday January 26th at 4:30 in Finley 119, the Instructor will demonstrate using the GMU library and how to access the most relevant information in the APA Manual.***	
2	2/2	Historical Perspectives (PKS assigns readings)	Historical readings – these will be available via Bb
3	2/9	Synthesis Papers, Current Issues in Special Education sign-up, Presentation sign-up	Readings designated by PKS (look on Bb)
4	2/16	***A new Course Schedule will be submitted for Class 4 to 13.***	**Synthesis Paper # 1**
5	2/23		
6	3/2		
7	3/16		**Synthesis Paper # 2**
8	3/23		
9	3/30		
10	4/6		
11	4/13		**Synthesis Paper # 3**
12	4/20		
13	4/27		
14	5/4	Course Summary and Conclusion Course Evaluations	
15	5/11		**Critical Issue Paper (early submissions accepted)**

Appendix *There is no appendix for this syllabus.*