



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

Fall 2016

EDSE 636 DL1: Communication, Augmentative and Alternative Communication,  
and Literacy for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

CRN: 79094, 3 - Credits

<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Grace “Frankie” Francis	<b>Meeting Dates:</b> 08/29/16 - 12/20/16
<b>Phone:</b> 703.993.6064	<b>Meeting Day(s):</b> Asynchronous
<b>E-Mail:</b> gfranci4@gmu.edu	<b>Meeting Time(s):</b> Asynchronous
<b>Office Hours:</b> By appointment.	<b>Meeting Location:</b> NET

***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**

Focuses on the characteristics of communication and the design and implementation of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Examines methods for assessment, identification of priorities and monitoring progress of communication and literacy instruction in order to improve behavior and social interactions.

**Prerequisite(s):**

**Co-requisite(s):**

**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. Class lecture and discussion
2. Application activities
3. Small group activities and assignments
4. Video and other media supports
5. Presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard, including Blackboard Collaborate

## DELIVERY METHOD:

With the exception of one required Blackboard Collaborate session, this course will be delivered online using an **asynchronous** format via the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before “@masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The online course expectations document is very important in outlining all the programs used. Additionally, there will also be **Tech Support** information under the Syllabus and Expectations tab in a document called Social Media and Open Tools summary. Tutorials to the various programs are provided in this document. Please check there first to see if your question was answered there. If you contact me directly, I will ask you what you did to try to solve the problem before contacting me.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

To participate in this course, students will need the following resources:

- High-speed Internet access with a standard up-to-date browser, either Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox. Opera and Safari are not compatible with Blackboard;
- Consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of the course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for Pcs and Macs respectively, available for free downloading by clicking on the link next to each plug-in:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>
  - Windows Media Player: <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/downloads/windows-media-player>
  - Apple QuickTime Player: [www.apple.com/quicktime/download/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)
- A headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool

## EXPECTATIONS:

- **Course Week:**
  - Because online courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will **start** at 12:00am (midnight) on Tuesday, and **finish** at 11:59 pm on Monday nights.

- **Log-in Frequency:**
  - Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, at a minimum this should be 3 times per week.
- **Participation:** Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- **Technical Competence:** Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students are expected to seek assistance if they are struggling with technical components of the course. Contact ITU (<http://itservices.gmu.edu/help.cfm>) at (703) 993-8870 or [support@gmu.edu](mailto:support@gmu.edu).
- **Technical Issues:** Students should anticipate experiencing some technical difficulties at some point in the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- **Workload:** Expect to log in to this course **at least three times a week** to read announcements, participate in the discussions, and work on course materials. Remember, this course is **not** self-paced. There are **specific deadlines** and **due dates** listed in the **CLASS SCHEDULE** section of this syllabus to which you are expected to adhere. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

**Netiquette:** Our goal is to be **collaborative**, not combative. Experience shows that even an innocent remark in the online environment can be misconstrued. I suggest that you always re-read your responses carefully before you post them to encourage others from taking them as personal attacks. **Be positive in your approach to others and diplomatic with your words.** I will do the same. Remember, you are not competing with each other but sharing information and learning from one another as well as from the instructor.

### **Learner Outcomes**

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

1. Identify characteristics of communication for individuals with ASD.
2. Describe and discuss methods for assessment, identification of priorities, and monitoring progress of individuals with ASD.
3. Discuss and evaluate the range of augmentative and alternative communication devices and systems/assistive technology/instructional technology available for individuals with ASD.

4. Implement assessment and instructional strategies to improve students' social interactions with peers and others.
5. Implement communication/AAC/AT assessment and instructional strategies to develop and implement individual educational planning and group instruction with students with ASD.
6. Understand and identify behaviors associated with communication for individuals with ASD.
7. Describe methods of building communication systems to support language and literacy in students with ASD.
8. Describe evidence-based literacy practices for students with ASD.
9. Describe language development and emergent literacy skills for individuals with ASD.
10. Describe and plan quality pre-literacy and literacy instruction for students with ASD.

### **Required Textbooks**

None.

### **Additional Readings**

Refer to Blackboard for course readings.

### **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 the Teaching Students with Autism 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 Standards are listed on the following website:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/>. The CEC standard that will be addressed in this class is Standard 5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions.

### **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 George Mason University Disability Services and inform their instructor, in writing, as soon as possible. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor. [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.*

With the exception of one scheduled Blackboard Collaborate session (see Assignments Section) all course work will be online and in an Asynchronous format.

#### *Late Work.*

Work is considered on time if it is submitted by 11:59pm on the date that it is due. *Ten percent of the available points* for the assignment will be deducted each day for late submissions during the first week after the due date. **After one week from the due date, assignments will not be accepted.** Thus an assignment that is three days late is able to obtain only 70% of the points for the assignment regardless of the quality of the work. After one week, the assignment will no longer be accepted and a score of zero will be entered into the grade book for that assignment.

The date that the assignment was received by the instructor **via email or Blackboard** will be

considered the date submitted. Submitting an assignment late does not alter the due dates of the other assignments and prevents timely feedback to students regarding their work that may be of value in later assignments. Strive to keep up with the assignment schedule so that you will be able to have appropriate formative evaluation and feedback from your instructor across the semester.

*Evaluation.*

Assignments are evaluated according to rubrics posted on Blackboard. I will grade assignments and post scores and comments to the Grade Center. You can read my comments by clicking on the grade. If you have any questions, please contact me. If you have difficulty with an assignment, either in understanding it or completing it, please contact me immediately.

*Communication.*

The best way to contact me is through email. There is a Send Email icon on the left navigation bar in the course. My email (as well as the emails of your classmates) is located here. I will check email at least once a day on weekdays. I will respond to emails within 24 hours, if not sooner, on weekdays. On the weekends, I will check email on Sunday evening only.

**Tk20 Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement**

Every student registered for any Special Education course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit the Literary Unit with Low Tech AAC System to Tk20 through Blackboard (regardless of whether the student is taking the course as an elective, a onetime course or as part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Tk20 through Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Tk20 (through Blackboard) will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Tk20 submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

**Grading Scale**

Students are expected to complete all assignments and, consistent with university policy, will be graded according to the following scale:

Grade	Percentile
A	100.-90.
B+	89.99-88.
B	87.99-80.
C	79.99-70.
F	69.99 and below

All assignments are assigned points, based on an instructor-developed rubric. Course grades are calculated by summing the points earned on assignments and participation. A letter grade of “C” (79.99-70.) and below is considered “failing” in graduate level courses. As a result, students who earn a “C” or below for the final grade will have to retake the course.

**Assignments**

**Performance-based Assessment (Tk20 submission required).**

Assignment	Description	Points	Due date
Literary Unit with Low Tech AAC System	Literary unit including 3 lesson plans, adaptations, extension activities, and a low tech communication board	160	Dec 19 11:59pm

**Performance-based Common Assignments (No Tk20 submission required).**

Assignment	Description	Points	Due date
Discussion board #1	Introduction activity	20	Sept 5 11:59pm
Discussion board #2	Book and SMART goal for literary unit	15	Oct 10 11:59pm
Discussion board #3	Three unit extension activities	15	Nov 21 11:59pm
Discussion board #4	Unit presentation	40	Dec 12 11:59pm
AAC exploration	Explore AAC devices and features	15	Sept 19 11:59pm

**Other Assignments.**

Assignment	Description	Points	Due date
Description of case study learner	Description of focus learner for literary unit	5	Sept 26 11:59pm
Description of unit communication board	Description or photo of communication board for literary unit	5	Oct 17 11:59pm
Description of unit adaptations	Minimum of three adaptations for book and a rationale for each	5	Nov 7 11:59pm
Blackboard Collaborate session	Select <b>one</b> Blackboard Collaborate session to ask questions, clarify content, and brainstorm ideas	20	Week of Nov 7 <b>or</b> Week of Nov 21

**Total: 300**

## Schedule

Module opens	Topics Covered <sup>1</sup>	Module Assignments
1: Aug 29	Introduction and characteristics of ASD	Discussion board #1
2: Sept 5	Language development Early literacy	
3: Sept 12	Forms of communication Range of devices	AAC exploration
4: Sept 19	Tool matching	Description of unit case study learner
5: Sept 26	Evidence-based literacy practices	
6: Oct 3	Writing communication and literacy goals	Discussion board #2
7: Oct 10	Teaching with AAC	Description of unit communication board
8: Oct 17	AAC and social skills instruction	
9: Oct 24	AAC and behavior	
10: Oct 31	Writing and ASD	Description of unit adaptations
11: Nov 7	Blackboard Collaborate <i>option #1</i>	Blackboard Collaborate <i>option #1</i>
12: Nov 14	Putting it all together	Discussion board #3
13: Nov 21	Blackboard Collaborate <i>option #2</i>	Blackboard Collaborate <i>option #2</i>
14: Nov 28	AAC, family partnerships, and transition	
15: Dec 5	Unit presentations	Discussion board #4
16: Dec 12	Final project	Literary Unit with Low Tech AAC System

<sup>1</sup>All course materials (including required readings) are included in each Module folder on Blackboard