



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

Spring 2017

EDSE 744 619: Current Issues in Special Education

CRN: 21149, 3 – Credits

<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Irene Meier	<b>Meeting Dates:</b> 03/16/17 – 05/18/17 No class 04/13/17
<b>Phone:</b> 571-423-4100	<b>Meeting Day(s):</b> Thursday
<b>E-Mail:</b> imeier@gmu.edu	<b>Meeting Time(s):</b> 4:30 pm - 9:00 pm
<b>Office Hours:</b> Before and after class or by appointment	<b>Meeting Location:</b> 8270 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive, Fairfax Va. Room 1002B
<b>Office Location:</b> 8270 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive, Fairfax, Va	<b>Other Phone:</b> N/A

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

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**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.

Schedule Type: LEC

Hours of Lecture or Seminar per week: 3

Hours 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 teacher candidates/students should contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703) 993-3670 for assistance. All other teacher candidates/students should refer to their faculty advisor.

## **Course Delivery Method**

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, teacher candidates/students will be able to:

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

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

This course is part of the George Mason University, College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), Graduate School of Education, Special Education Leadership Graduate Certificate and Education Leadership, M.Ed Concentration in Special Education Leadership. These programs comply with university and program standards.

## **Required Textbooks**

No textbook required

## **Recommended Textbooks**

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

## **Additional Readings**

Will be posted on Blackboard

## **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

## **Tk20 Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement**

It is critical for the special education program to collect data on how our students are meeting accreditation standards. Every teacher candidate/student registered for an EDSE course with a required Performance-based Assessment (PBA) is required to upload the PBA to Tk20 (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one-time course or part of an undergraduate minor). A PBA is a specific assignment, presentation, or project that best demonstrates one or more CEC, InTASC or other standard connected to the course. A PBA is evaluated in two ways. The first is for a grade, based on the instructor's grading rubric. The second is for program accreditation purposes. Your instructor will provide directions as to how to upload the PBA to Tk20.

For EDSE 744, the required PBA Critical Issues Assignment. Failure to submit the assignment to Tk20 will result in reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Teacher candidates/students have until five days prior to the University-stated grade change deadline to upload the required PBA in order to change the course grade. When the PBA is uploaded, the teacher candidate/student is required to notify the instructor so that the "IN" can be changed to a grade. If the required PBA is not uploaded five days prior to the University-stated grade change deadline and, therefore, the grade not changed, it will become an F. Please check to verify your ability to upload items to Tk20 before the PBA due date.

## **Assignments**

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

#### Critical Issues Assignment

#### **Controversial Current Issue**

### **Performance-Based Assignment**

Identify one controversial 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 sources; more if necessary.

Because you are identifying this as a current issue, ensure some (at least two) of your sources are current (2015, 2016, 2017). 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:

- 1<sup>st</sup> page: Cover sheet
- Body of the Paper (use these as your major headings):
  - History of Issue (to include cause of controversy) [1 page\*]
  - Advantages (or Positives, or People in Favor of) of the Issue [3 pages\*]
  - Disadvantages (or Negatives, or People Opposed to) of the Issue [3\* pages]

- 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

EDSE 744 graduate students select SIX recent research articles.

## Class Presentation

### Performance-Based Assignment

Select one current issue in special education on which to conduct a literature review, develop a class presentation, and lead an in-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 one week before your Class Presentation, submit **two** recent research articles that all will read prior to your Class Presentation to the instructor (to ensure criteria for articles have been followed). The instructor will post your articles on the Bb site at least two recent research articles for class colleagues to read in advance of your presentation. Build into your presentation at least one way to *briefly* (two minutes maximum) 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.

### **College Wide Common Assessment (Tk20 submission required)**

Not required

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

Not required

### **Other Assignments**

#### **Assigned Readings**

During the course there will be assigned readings from a variety of sources. Complete assigned readings before the start of class so that you may meaningfully participate in class discussions.

#### **Synthesis Research Papers**

**Three** synthesis research papers will be due throughout this course. You are required to submit these to Blackboard by the dates listed in the Course Calendar to receive full credit. The papers should reflect a synthesis of current research from **three** research articles on a relevant topic in special education. The paper should be limited to 3-5 pages using APA style. A reference page should be included. The synthesis paper should

include a description of the topic, current research, challenges or concerns, implications for teaching practice and suggested future research.

### **Supplemental Reading Discussions**

Students will read supplemental material posted on Blackboard and discuss this material online in discussion format for a total of **two** supplemental reading discussions.

## **Course Policies and Expectations**

### **Attendance/Participation**

Students are expected to attend **all** classes, remain engaged for the duration of each session, and demonstrate professional behavior. 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 next class meeting. Handouts and all power point slides will be on Blackboard for each class session. In all classes, 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 **CANNOT be made up**. Participation points can only be earned if the student is in attendance.

### **Late Work**

*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 **in hand or 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.

**Due dates below are subject to change based on needs of the class**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
Attendance/Participation in Class (9 @ 10 points each)	Throughout course	90
Synthesis Papers (3 @ 25 points each)	3/30, 4/13, 4/27	75
Supplementary Reading Discussions (2 @ 15)	4/6, 4/20	30
Critical Issues Project (submitted to Blackboard & Tk20)	5/11	35
Presentations	Throughout course	35
<b>Total Points</b>		<b>265</b>

## Grading Scale

93-100% = A  
90-92% = A-  
83-89% = B  
80-82% = B-  
70-79% = C  
<69% = F

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Note: The George Mason University Honor Code will be strictly enforced. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the Code. “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.**” Work submitted must be your own or with proper citations (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).

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## Professional Dispositions

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

## Core Values Commitment

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

## GMU Policies and Resources for Students

### Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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 with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the

time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).

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

## **Campus Resources**

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/api/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.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/>).
- 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 Office of Student Support staff helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate campus and off-campus resources. Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone (703-993-5376). Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to <http://studentsupport.gmu.edu/>, and the OSS staff will follow up with the student.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/>.

## Class Schedule

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Session	Date	Topic/Lecture	Readings Readings should be completed by class date listed.	Assignments Due Posted on BB by 11:00 pm
1	3/16	<p>Introductions Overview of Course Content of Syllabus Assignment Review Group Suggestions for Current Issues and Controversies</p> <p>Individual students target their (a) Issue Topic and (b) Class Presentation Topic. For each, students gather recent research for all to read.</p> <p><i>Perusing peer-reviewed journals Using the GMU online library</i></p>		
2	3/23	<p>Historical Perspectives Overview of Research Design and Analysis Summarizing vs. Synthesizing Practice Exercises on Synthesizing</p>	BB Readings	
3	3/30	Current Policies and Impact on Education	BB Readings	<b>Synthesis #1</b>
4	4/6	Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions	BB Readings	<b>Discussion Forum #1</b>
5	4/13	<b>NO CLASS – Spring Break</b>	BB Readings	<b>Synthesis #2</b>
6	4/20	Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions	BB Readings	<b>Discussion Forum #2</b>
7	4/27	Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions	BB Readings	<b>Synthesis Paper #3</b>
8	5/4	Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions	BB Readings	
9	5/11	Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions Course Evaluations	BB Readings	<b>*PBA Submitted to Tk20 on BB</b>
10	5/18	Future Trends in Special Education	BB Readings	



## Assessment Rubric(s)

Scoring Rubric for Controversial Current 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
<b>TOTAL points earned*</b>	<b>/35.0</b>

\*Full earned credit for assignments turned in on time.

Scoring Rubric for Class Presentation	Points Possible
1. Issue and articles' choices are appropriate. Articles submitted to instructor at least two weeks in advance of individual's presentation.	/2.0
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.	/25.5
3. Interactions with class colleagues are well-planned, high-level, and stay within the time limit.	/3.0
4. The individual's presentation style and interactions with the audience are professional.	/4.0
5. Reference page and all use of APA (technical and written language) is excellent / completely accurate.	/0.5
<b>Questions:</b> Did the presenter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep within the time limits?</li> <li>• Reflect poise, clarity, knowledge, and interest in the content being presented?</li> <li>• Make effective use of visuals (i.e., PPT)?</li> <li>• Describe, and stay focused on, the research as it relates to the topic being presented?</li> <li>• Keep the audience's attention?</li> </ul>	<b>/35.0</b>
<b>TOTAL points earned</b>	
<b>Comments from instructor:</b>	

### Scoring Rubric for Synthesis Papers

Paper # ____	Points possible
1. Directions are followed	/5
2. The synthesis of the three research articles makes it clear which areas are being synthesized. Written language is excellent.	/15
3. Technical APA (e.g., citations in the assignment, Reference section, headings/subheadings) is completely accurate	/5
<b>TOTAL points earned</b>	<b>/25</b>