



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

Spring 2019  
EDUC 203 001: Disability in American Culture  
CRN: 13969, 3 – Credits

<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Kristen O'Brien	<b>Meeting Dates:</b> 1/22/2019 – 5/15/2019
<b>Phone:</b> 703-993-3917 (Office phone)	<b>Meeting Day(s):</b> Tuesday; Thursday
<b>E-Mail:</b> kmerril2@gmu.edu	<b>Meeting Time(s):</b> 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm
<b>Office Hours:</b> By appointment	<b>Meeting Location:</b> Fairfax; W 1007
<b>Office Location:</b> Finley 208-B	<b>Other Phone:</b> N/A

**\*\*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.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

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

### **Course Description**

Examines disability, past and present, in American culture through changes in historical, political, legal and societal responses to people with disabilities. Analyzes the disability experience through social and behavioral science perspectives, including diversity, bioethical and human rights conceptualizations/constructs of disability. Offered by [Graduate School of Education](#). May not be repeated for credit.

### **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, students will be able to:

1. Explain how individuals, groups, and institutions are affected by disability.
2. Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs relative to disability.
3. Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles and theories in the analysis of disability, both past and present.
4. Apply a disabilities empowerment framework to future environments and consider/identify future engagement in disability-related fields.
5. Identify and promote inclusive behavior in social, workplace, and higher education settings.

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

This course is offered by George Mason University's Division of Special Education and disAbility Research. The goal of our special education programs is to improve the lives, productivity, and education of persons with disabilities. Courses within our programs align with the standards established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major international special education professional organization. This course provides content to enhance awareness of disability in the context of American culture so as to introduce participants to the opportunities that exist to positively impact persons with disabilities. This course also meets university requirements for the undergraduate core in the area of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

### **Required Textbooks**

Nielsen, K. E. (2012). *A Disability History of the United States*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Haller, B. A. (2010). *Representing Disability in an Ableist World: Essays on Mass Media*. Louisville, KY: Avocado Press, Inc.

### **Recommended Textbooks**

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

### **Required Resources**

Computer with access to GMU Blackboard

### **Additional Readings**

As assigned

### **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**

There is no required performance-based assessment for this course.

### **Assignments and/or Examinations**

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

N/A

#### **College Wide Common Assessment (TK20 submission required)**

N/A

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

1. **Raising Awareness Project (\*Designated Performance-Based Assessment; 30 points):** As a culminating activity (and the designated performance-based assessment), this project offers an opportunity for students to draw upon the resources encountered in this course to advocate for disability awareness and inclusive actions for people with disabilities. This project will address key issues discussed throughout this course, such as: What are the important conversations and controversies that need to be addressed? How do we approach and discuss disability? What do people need to know to reduce barriers and increase opportunities for people with disabilities to experience inclusion?

Examples of ideas might include:

- A public service announcement that explores or explains an aspect of disability awareness and etiquette to a specific audience (e.g., college students, faculty/administration, community leaders, employers)
- An information guide that addresses a specific disability or innovation that promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities
- A multi-media presentation on a famous person, invention/innovation, or event that impacted attitudes and/or lives of people with disabilities
- An exploration of campus resources/supports for students/faculty with disabilities

Students will submit a proposal for the project to obtain prior approval. Students will submit their project to the instructor on the due date listed and deliver a presentation during an assigned class session to their peers and the instructor about their Raising Awareness Project. An assignment description and grading rubric will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

2. **Personal Experience Paper (25 points):** For this assignment, students will be expected to either (a) visit a program that serves children or adults with disabilities OR (b) interview a person with a disability or a family member of a person with a disability. Students will then write a paper that explains the setting/interview, synthesizes and describes the experience and connects it to course content, and describes a personal reaction. An assignment description and grading rubric will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

3. **Media Analysis Paper (25 points):** Students will write an analysis of the portrayal/representation of disability in film, TV, print media, literature, or web-content. After watching or reading the selected content, students will write a paper to describe the content, analyze its portrayal of disability, synthesize the information with course content, and react to the media content. The analysis must link explicitly to class resources (especially the Haller text), readings, and/or speakers. Students must obtain prior approval from the instructor for the plan of analysis (Note: I am happy to help guide your decisions and make recommendations). An assignment description and grading rubric will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

### **Other Assignments**

4. **Blackboard Discussion Boards (20 points):** Throughout the semester, there will be four Blackboard discussion boards. Students will provide a comprehensive response to the prompts and to at least 2 classmates' postings. Each discussion board will be worth 5 points, for a total of 20 possible points. To earn full credit, you must submit your postings by the due date and time (9 am of the due date), and no late submissions will be accepted. Your response should address the discussion board topic AND include a thoughtful reaction to at least 2 of your classmates' postings. An assignment description and grading rubric will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.
5. **Professionalism (20 points):** Attendance, punctuality, and active participation during each class session and assigned activity are expected. For each session, students will earn up to 2 Professionalism checks for the following expectations:
  1. **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, and remain in class for the duration of each session. Refer to the Attendance Policy below for detailed expectations.
  2. **Participation & Professional Behavior:** Throughout all classes, students are expected to demonstrate professional and ethical behavior in the classroom, and complete all assignments (including those completed in class, out of class, or on Blackboard) with professional quality, integrity, and in a timely manner. Students are expected to read all assigned readings prior to class and to actively participate in discussions and activities during class sessions.

At the end of the course, the total Professionalism checks earned will be summed and divided by all possible checks (i.e., 2 checks for each class session held). This proportion will be multiplied by 20 (the total possible Professionalism points) and used to calculate the student's course grade.

### **Course Policies and Expectations**

#### **Attendance/Participation**

Class attendance and professional participation at all sessions is very important because many of the activities in class are planned in such a way that they cannot necessarily be recreated outside of the class session. Students are expected to (a)

attend all classes during the course, (b) arrive on time, (c) remain in class for the duration of each session, (d) actively participate and demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom, and (e) complete all assignments with professional quality and on time. All assigned readings should be completed prior to class (Note: assigned readings may be added or removed as the semester progresses).

Students earn attendance and participation points each class (i.e., Professionalism described in the Assignments section above); these points can only be earned if the student is in attendance and actively participates in class activities. Please notify me in advance by email or phone if you will not be able to attend class. In the rare event of an emergency or severe sickness, each student is given 1 “grace” absence without a point penalty, as long as the instructor is notified before the class session. When absence from class is unavoidable, it is the student’s responsibility to make arrangements to obtain notes, handouts, and/or lecture details from another student prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. *Professionalism points missed for more than one absence or any absence without instructor contact before class cannot be made up.*

Students must follow the university policy 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 interfere with the learning of others (e.g., cell phones) is prohibited during class. Please turn these devices off or to silent mode before the start of class. Do not read or send texts during class time. Computers may be used to take notes during class, but they may not be used for internet exploration, to send or receive emails, or other non-class activities during class time. Please be *fully* present in class ☺

### **Late Work**

To successfully complete this course, students need to adhere to all due dates for readings and assignments. All assignments should be submitted *on or before* the assigned due date. To be considered on time, assignments must be submitted by the start of class on the due date, unless otherwise noted by the instructor. (Note that all Discussion Board assignments are due by 9 am on the due date.) On all assignments, full credit is available for those submitted on time. **For every 24-hour period that an assignment is late, a 5% point deduction will occur.** After one week from the due date (or until the last class session on 5/2/18, whichever comes first), assignments will not be accepted. Please contact the instructor *in advance* if there is a problem with submitting your work on time.

### **Communication**

Your GMU email address and the instructor’s GMU email address are the only email addresses that will be used for communication in this course. Student email is accessed at <http://masonlive.gmu.edu>. All communications are sent to students

via their Mason email accounts, and students are held responsible for this information.

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	% of Points
A	95-100%
A-	90-94%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D	60-69%
F	<60%

Course grades are calculated by summing the points earned on assignments and dividing by the total possible points. You can use the following self-monitoring chart to track your performance throughout the semester.

<b>EDUC 203 Self-Monitoring Course Performance</b> <i>Use this self-monitoring tool to track your performance throughout the semester</i>		
Assignment	Points Earned by Student	Total Points Possible
A. Professionalism		20
B. Blackboard Discussion Boards (4 discussions, 5 points each)		20
C. Personal Experience Paper		25
D. Media Analysis Paper		25
E. Raising Awareness Project		30
<b>Total</b>	<b>Total points earned _____</b>	<b>120</b>
	$\frac{\text{_____}}{\text{Total points earned}} / \frac{120}{\text{Total points possible}} = \text{_____} \% = \text{Grade}$	

**\*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 <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).

### Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>.

### Class Schedule

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

Week	Date	Topics	Readings Due	Assignments Due
1	T 1/22 R 1/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Overview &amp; Syllabus Review</li> <li>• Introduction to Disability Awareness</li> <li>• Constructs &amp; Definitions of Disability</li> </ul>	Ensure successful Blackboard access for this course  Nielsen Chapters 1-2	Email Dr. O’Brien a Picture of You ☺
2	T 1/29 R 1/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical Perspective: Disability as a rhetorical, legal, and social category</li> <li>• Disability Etiquette &amp; Person First Language</li> <li>• Microaggressions</li> </ul>	Nielsen Chapters 3-4 PFL Handouts	<b>Discussion Board 1</b> due by 9 am on R 1/31
3	T 2/5 R 2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical Perspective: Laying the groundwork for disability activism &amp; civil rights</li> <li>• Ableism &amp; <i>Without Pity</i></li> <li>• Disability Rights as Civil Rights</li> </ul>	Nielsen Chapters 5-6	<b>Discussion Board 2</b> due by 9 am on R 2/7  Plan for Personal Experience Paper due by R 2/7
4	T 2/12 R 2/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ADA: A new era of Civil Rights for Disability</li> <li>• Introduction to inclusion</li> <li>• <i>Including Samuel</i></li> </ul>	Nielsen Chapters 7-8	<b>Discussion Board 3</b> due by 9 am on R 2/14
5	T 2/19 R 2/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion &amp; <i>Including Samuel</i> (cont.)</li> <li>• Intersectionality: Disability, Race, Class, and Culture</li> <li>• APA tutorial</li> </ul>	Haller Chapters 1-2	<b>Discussion Board 4</b> due by 9 am on R 2/21

Week	Date	Topics	Readings Due	Assignments Due
6	T 2/26 R 2/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Educating Peter</i></li> <li>• Models of Disability Cognitive, psychological, and other “Invisible” disabilities across the lifespan</li> </ul>	Haller Chapters 3-4	Plan for Media Analysis Paper due by R 2/28
7	T 3/5 R 3/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Models of Disability: Physical, sensory, and other “Visible” disabilities across the lifespan</li> <li>• Reflection on Personal Experience project</li> <li>• Midterm feedback</li> </ul>	Haller Chapters 5-6	<b>Personal Experience Paper Due R 3/7</b>
8	T 3/12 R 3/14	Spring Break! No class *GMU Midterm Grading		
9	T 3/19 R 3/21	• Disability in Media: Portrayals over time	Haller Chapters 7-8	
10	T 3/26 R 3/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IDEA, School Services, &amp; Transition</li> <li>• Guest speaker 3/28: Christopher Nace</li> </ul>	Haller Chapters 9-10	Proposal for Raising Awareness Project Due R 3/28
11	T 4/2 R 4/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistive Technology, UDL, &amp; Accessibility</li> <li>• Guest Speaker 4/4: Veronica Lewis</li> </ul>	Readings TBD (see Blackboard)	
12	T 4/9 R 4/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent living &amp; self- determination</li> <li>• Guest Speaker: TBD</li> </ul>	Readings TBD (see Blackboard)	<b>Media Analysis Paper Due T 4/9</b>
13	T 4/16 R 4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guest Speaker: TBD</li> <li>• Course reflections &amp; wrap-up</li> </ul>	Readings TBD (see Blackboard)	
14	T 4/23 R 4/25	• Presentations of Raising Awareness Projects		<b>Raising Awareness Project Due T 4/21</b>  <b>Raising Awareness Presentations</b>
15	T 4/30 R 5/2	• Presentations of Raising Awareness Projects		<b>Raising Awareness Presentations</b>

### 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



<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/> ).

- 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 silence all sound emitting devices 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/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

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

### Appendix

#### Assessment Rubric(s)

Below is the grading rubric for the Raising Awareness Project. Please note that detailed directions for the assignment and the rubric will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

#### Grading Rubric: Raising Awareness Project

Criteria	Earned Points	Possible Points
Project		
Proposal (with succinct, clear plan) submitted on time		1
Project appropriately advocates for disability awareness and inclusion for people with disabilities:		

• Project is of relevance to intended audience		2
• Project promotes positive and culturally responsive language and attitudes		4
• Project includes accurate information with an adequate level of detail		4
• Project makes adequate use of appropriate resources (i.e., at least 3 resources used and cited per APA) and a reference list (following APA style) is provided. Note: If your project cannot have citations (e.g., a movie), insert a bullet below each reference on the list to briefly tell how it was used in your project.		3
Project is visually appealing and appropriate for print and/or web publication		2
<b>Presentation</b>		
Presenter does the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly describes the project and identifies the intended audience,</li> <li>• explains how the project advocates for disability awareness and inclusion for people with disabilities, and</li> <li>• provides context for need for presentation (i.e., What are current gaps between the ideal and reality? Why is this project needed?)</li> </ul>		6
Presentation includes perspectives of people with disabilities		2
Presenter is able to adequately and appropriately answer questions from audience about the topic		2
Presentation is informative and well-organized		2
<b>APA Style</b>		
Citations and reference list are in APA format		2
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>