

# VIRGINIA CONSORTIUM FOR TEACHER PREPARATION IN VISION IMPAIRMENT

## Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments Summer 2012

Thursdays, 4:30 pm-7:10 pm

Dates: 5/21-6/25 (only meets for 5 weeks; no class on Memorial Day 5/28)

### UNDERGRADUATE SYLLABUS

#### Host University

George Mason University  
**Instructor:** Holly Lawson  
**Office phone:** 703-993-5625  
**Office hours:** by email or  
phone call  
**Email address:**  
Hlawson2@gmu.edu

#### Participating Universities

- GMU – EDSE 411 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments Sections XS1 and 6V1
- JMU – EXED 435 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments
- RU – EDSP 650 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments
- NSU – SPE 700 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments
- ODU – SPED 432 Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** (1:1:0) No prerequisites

Provides an overview of the characteristics of and services to persons with visual impairments; including the impact of visual impairment on infants' and children's growth and development, child and adolescent emotional and social development, and family interaction patterns. Considers the educational, conceptual, psychosocial, and physical implications of a visual impairment.

#### **NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY:**

Learning activities in this class will include the following:

1. Class lecture, discussion, and participation via synchronous face to face, web-conferences or videoconferences
2. Video and other relevant interactive media presentations
3. Study and independent research
4. Application activities, including regular assignments

#### **LEARNER OUTCOMES:**

Upon successful completion of this course, the participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the history of the education of persons with a visual impairment.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the terminology used in the field of working with persons with a visual disability.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the current trends in education of persons with a visual impairment.

- Demonstrate knowledge of the educational settings, which provide education of persons with a visual impairment.
- Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of local, state, and national resources for services to persons with a visual impairment.
- Demonstrate basic knowledge of basic anatomy of the eye and eye diseases.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of a visual impairment on a person's physical, conceptual, academic, vocational and social development.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the legal rights of a person with a visual impairment.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the basic techniques for adapting and modifying instruction for a student with a visual disability.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the need for specialized instruction for certain persons with a visual disability, to include orientation and mobility, low vision aids, and technology.

### **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:**

#### ***Course's Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organization***

This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education (GSE), Special Education Program. This program complies with the standards for special educators established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization.

The CEC Standards are listed on the following web site: <http://www.cec.sped.org> In the second column on the left, access link for "Professional Standards." On this page, to the right, there is a red book pdf document titled "What Every Special Educator Must Know." The CEC Standards are located in this document. The primary CEC standard that will be addressed in this class will be Standard 2 on Characteristics of Learners.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Erin, J. N. & Spungin S. (2004). When you have a visually impaired student with multiple disabilities in your classroom: A guide for teachers. New York: AFB Press.

McNear, D. & Torres, I. (2002). When You Have a Visually Impaired Student s in Your Classroom: A Guide for Teachers. New York: AFB Press.

*Articles will be posted on Blackboard and students are expected to read articles as assigne*

### **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY:**

- Personal computer
- An Internet connection
- A headset with microphone
- A webcam

**PROPOSED SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading and Assignments</b>
Week of May 21 <sup>st</sup> RECORDED/ ONLINE DISCUSSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Review syllabus</li> <li>• Terminology &amp; History</li> <li>▪ Professional Roles</li> </ul>	*McNear & Torres, Ch. 1 Hong, Rosenblum, Petrevay & Erin
Memorial Day Week NO CLASS!		
June 4 <sup>th</sup> LIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Structure &amp; Function of the Eye, Common Diseases</li> <li>▪ Implications of Visual Impairment</li> <li>▪ Families and Multicultural Issues</li> </ul>	Bishop; Barton; Topor <b>Simulation Activity Paper Due</b>
June 11 <sup>th</sup> LIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Literacy &amp; Technology</li> <li>▪ Modifying Instruction &amp; the Learning Environment</li> <li>▪ Expanded Core Curriculum</li> </ul>	*McNear & Torres, Ch. 2-6; Cox & Dykes
June 18 <sup>th</sup> RECORDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legal Rights</li> <li>▪ Placement Options</li> </ul>	Barclay; Correa-Torres
June 25 <sup>th</sup> LIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multiple Disabilities &amp; Deafblindness</li> <li>▪ Psychosocial Issues</li> </ul>	*Erin & Spungin; Tomasik; Griffin-Shirley & Matlock; MacFarland; Griffin, Davis & Williams <b>“Eyes of Me” Reflection Paper Due</b>

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS, PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Total Points Possible</b>	<b>% of grade</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Class Attendance & Participation	50	=16%	10 points per class
Simulation Activity	125	=42%	6/4/2012
Eyes of Me Reflection Paper	125	=42%	6/25/2012
Total	300		

**UNDERGRADUATE GRADING SCALE:**

<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Grade</b>
95-100%	A
90-94%	A-
87-89%	B+

84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
60-69%	D
<60%	F

**CLASS AND GRADING POLICIES:**

As indicated above, each requirement has a point value allocated toward the final grade. All requirements must be completed and received by the instructor by the date (see class schedule). At the end of the semester, you will be given a grade based on the total number of points you have accumulated.

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all formal written work must be word-processed. All assignments must be typed and free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- 2. Late assignments will not be accepted.**
3. Please allow time after submitting your assignment, for grades and comments to be posted. Most grades will be posted a week after submission; however, sometimes commitments to other class or duties interfere with grading time.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Students are expected to attend class during live sessions. Only in emergency circumstances will one absence be excused if the student submits a 200-word summary of the required reading and topics discussed in class for the missed session. In the event more than one absence is necessary, students are asked to withdraw from the course and register for this class next semester. Significant tardiness or early departure may result in the loss of some or all weekly participation points.

## **SIMULATION PAPER RUBRIC (125 points)**

**Assignment:** Spend at least 2 hours in conditions simulating a visual impairment (very low vision or blindness). Prior to the simulation you should show the person who will be with you how to act as a human guide. This person should be instructed to monitor for your safety and provide information when requested, but to allow you to do things for yourself. You can borrow a sleepshade or low vision simulator from the instructor; you can purchase your own sleepshade; or you can create a blindfold from fabric.

Select a 2 hour **continuous period of time** when you will be in your home or apartment. Arrange for the human guide to be with you for the entire 2 hours. Part of the time should be spent in your home doing typical activities (e.g., laundry, preparing and eating a meal, cleaning). Part of the time should be spent in your home doing an activity that is not as familiar to you (e.g., preparing a meal you've never made before, planting plants in your garden you've never planted before, trying a new craft project, playing a new card game with someone).

Directions: Following your simulation, write a 4 to 6 page paper describing the experience emphasizing the following: (a) adaptations you used, (b) feelings you experienced, (c) interactions with others including your guide, and (d) what knowledge you gained about visual impairment and how you will apply this to your own career. Discuss things the guide did to help you, things that the guide did that made you uncomfortable, and things you learned from working with your guide.

**Grading Rubric:** I will assign points to your paper using the following rubric.

# Points	Item
____/10	Paper is double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, 4-6 pages in length.
____/10	Introductory paragraph provides an accurate overview of the content of the paper.
____/20	Adaptations used by the writer are described.
____/20	Feelings experienced by the writer are described.
____/25	Social interactions, including those with the human guide, are described.
____/20	Knowledge the writer gained about visual impairment and how the writer will apply this in the future are described.
____/10	Closing paragraph provides a summary of key points the writer made in the paper.
____/10	Grammar – Writer may use the word “I” in this paper. The writer uses consistent verb tenses, accurate spelling, no run on sentences, etc.

## **RESPONSE AND REFLECTION PAPER ON STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

### **DOCUMENTARY FILM “THE EYES OF ME” (NCATE ASSIGNMENT) (125 points)**

Watch the film, *The Eyes of Me*, which features four high school students, with visual impairment. All four students attend the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI).

- **Chas** is an African American student who has a genetic eye condition that runs in his family and has dreams of being a rap singer.
- **Denise** is a freshman who struggled with social integration at her local school but embraced opportunities to make friends at TSBVI.
- **Meagan** is a senior whose goal is to get a degree in social work.
- **Isaac** is from a rural area of Texas and is a freshman who lost his vision suddenly after an accident.

After watching the film, write a 4-5 page paper about the film. Provide a 1-2 paragraph overview of the film and use the rest of the paper to discuss the topics outlined below. You do not have to write about every student for each topic. You may choose to focus on one or two students per topic depending on how relevant the topic is for a particular student(s).

#### **A. Student Background Information**

Each student has a unique medical history, family, economic and cultural background. In addition, each teen has his/her unique abilities and values that shape his/her educational experiences and attitude about having a vision impairment.

- Describe information about learners’ visual conditions and the effects of the learners’ visual impairment on development.
  - a. Describe medical information (e.g. diagnoses, typical and atypical human growth and development)
  - b. Describe functional implications (e.g impact on student learning). Include terminology you learned in class related to the function of the human visual system (e.g. eye anatomy, function of eye parts).
- Describe the impact of the learners’ academic and social abilities, attitude, interests, and values on instruction.
- Describe the psychosocial aspects of vision impairment and identity.

#### **B. Description of Typical and Compensatory Strategies**

The students in the film use a variety of tools and receive individually designed instruction to meet their unique educational needs as students with visual impairments.

- Draw on your knowledge of visual impairment to provide a rationale for the continuum of instructional options and access to specialized equipment for these students, highlighting policies under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*.
- Describe the effects of the learners’ visual impairments on receptive and expressive literacy and communication (as applicable).

- Describe instructional techniques or adaptations used by students with a visual impairment to complete tasks (e.g., cooking, traveling) and engage in literacy activities (e.g. writing, reading).

### **C. Description of Family Systems and Supports**

In the film, students are seen with their families in their communities and it is clear that the families help shape the educational experiences of the students in the film.

- Discuss family perspectives and how they affect educational processes (e.g. placement decisions).
- Discuss the impact of the family's dominant culture and any differences in values, languages, and customs that exist between the home and school on the learners' educational development.
- Discuss family attitudes and how they support development (e.g. educational, social, career, etc.).

### **D. Attitudes Reflection**

The characters in the film are teenagers in high school. Think about your own experiences in high school to address the following:

- Reflect on the similarities and differences of teens with and without visual impairments in relation to development (e.g. social aspects, cultural).
- Describe the ways persons with visual impairments are negatively stereotyped and treated and how this film changed any negative attitudes you may have had before viewing it.

### **E. Placement Reflection**

Chas and Meagan are seniors who are in a dual enrollment program at a local public school. Denise is fairly new to the school for the school for the blind. Isaac started attending TSBVI after a sudden and profound vision loss. Based on the film, readings and class discussions, what is your professional philosophy on instruction for those with visual impairment?

- Describe your instructional philosophy that responds to the specific implications of visual impairment within the general curriculum.
- Articulate your professional philosophy that draws on your understanding of the unique needs of students with visual impairments on placement options for students with visual impairments and the pros and cons of a residential school versus a mainstream setting.

**Grading Rubric:** The grading rubric will be posted on Blackboard.

## CONSORTIUM COURSE POLICIES

### HONOR CODE

Each university has its own honor code and it is important for you to review the honor code at your university. However, all students taking this course, regardless of the university they are enrolled in, are expected to follow this honor code and also to pledge all assignments and their exam to indicate that they have followed the honor code. A pledge means that you have not cheated or plagiarized, nor have you given or received assistance that violated the description of how assignments are to be completed for this course. The shortened version may be used: "Pledged" followed by the date and your full name (typed "signatures" will be OK for assignments/tests submitted electronically).

A complete copy of each university's Honor System document is available through

- GMU: <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>
- Radford: <http://www.radford.edu/dos-web/honorcode.html>
- NSU: <http://www.nsu.edu/studentjudicial/>
- ODU: [http://orgs.odu.edu/hc/pages/Honor\\_Code.shtml](http://orgs.odu.edu/hc/pages/Honor_Code.shtml)
- JMU: <http://www.jmu.edu/honor/code.shtml#TheHonorCode>

### ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITY

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the disability service center at their participating university and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. University specific information regarding eligibility, services and accommodations can be found at:

- GMU: <http://ods.gmu.edu/>
- Radford: <http://www.radford.edu/~dro/>
- NSU: <http://www.nsu.edu/disabilityservices/index.html>
- ODU: <http://studentaffairs.odu.edu/educationalaccessibility/>
- JMU: <http://www.jmu.edu/ods/>

### INCLEMENT WEATHER

If classes are cancelled at George Mason University, a message will be posted on the class Blackboard site and all class members will receive an email. Because such cancellations are often at the last minute, it may be difficult to get this message prior to leaving for class. Please note that the cancellation of classes due to inclement weather is determined by the decision of the instructing university only. If the instructing university is open and operational then you are expected to attend class.

### CELL PHONES AND WEAPONS

All cell phones and beepers should be deactivated while in the classroom. Also, University rules at all participating universities prohibit the possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive.

### COURSE MATERIALS

This course gives you access to PowerPoint files, class lecture notes, handouts, and copyrighted articles. For the articles (available on Blackboard), copyright laws must be followed: print only one copy per student. The PowerPoint presentations, notes, and



handouts are provided on Blackboard for your convenience and to facilitate your mastery of concepts presented in this course; Outlines of PowerPoints will be available on Blackboard by noon of the class day or sooner.

## **TECHNOLOGY PROFICIENCIES**

All students participating in this course are expected to be proficient in several technology skills. Students are expected to be proficient in using the Internet and have reliable and consistent Internet access. Students are also expected to have an active email account and to check email regularly. This course requires students to use Blackboard, which is our online course management system located at <http://mymason.gmu.edu>

Key Points Blackboard. Our Blackboard server has been updated from version 8.0 to 9.1. For students this means:

- Students MUST access Blackboard through <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.
- Login
  - GMU Students: Enter your Mason NetID (the first portion of your e-mail address, before the @) then enter your Password (PatriotPass credentials).
  - NON-GMU Students:
    - Username: x\_firstname.lastname
    - Password: bbcommunity
- Select the “Organizations” tab to access classes.

Students are expected to login to this system frequently and be proficient in using its features. Students are expected to be proficient in using the computer, which includes downloading and saving files, typing, and word processing skills. Students participating in this course are expected to use Microsoft Word for all written assignments.

Furthermore, students are expected to use Microsoft PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat Reader for class documents located on the Blackboard website.

Adobe Acrobat Reader is a free software program used to read PDF files and can be downloaded

at: <http://www.adobe.com/support/downloads/product.jsp?product=10&platform=Windows>

## **TASKSTREAM SUBMISSION**

TaskStream ([www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)) is an electronic portfolio and assessment management tool that the VI Consortium is utilizing in part to meet accreditation requirements for the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Note: EVERY student taking this course at EVERY university IS REQUIRED to upload and submit the signature assignment for this course to TaskStream for evaluation by the end of the semester (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one time course or part of an undergraduate minor). TaskStream information is available at <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped/>. Failure to submit the assessment to TaskStream will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless

this grade is changed upon completion of the required TaskStream submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

The **NCATE assignment(s)** for this class is: ***RESPONSE AND REFLECTION PAPER ON STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS***

**Note: Please submit these items together as ONE pdf file into Taskstream.**

**GMU STUDENTS ONLY:  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Student Expectations**

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- 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/>].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- 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.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

**Campus Resources**

- 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 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/>].

**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. <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>

