**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

EDSE 512: Braille Code

September 3-December 17, 2009

Thursday 4:00 – 6:40 pm

**Instructor:**

**Name:** Kimberly Avila M.A., COMS

**Office phone:** 703.200.3388

**Office hours:** by appointment

**Email address:** kavila@gmu.edu

**Course Description:** (Co/Pre-req: EDSE 411/511: Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments)

This course provides instruction in the development, use, and application of the Braille literary code and its implications for educational/literacy programs for students with visual disabilities. Students will develop the skills to read and write contracted and uncontracted Braille, while acquiring instructional methodologies for teaching children who are blind to read and write. Sources of Braille materials for educational purposes are identified. Delivered online and through synchronous video conferencing.

**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
5. Written responses to posted discussion questions on Blackboard.
6. In-depth study and work on course requirements require outside class time.

**Learner Outcomes:**

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

* Demonstrate an understanding of the history of the development of Braille.
* Read and write uncontracted literary Braille.
* Read and write contracted literary Braille.
* Identify methods for teaching Braille reading.
* Identify methods for teaching Braille writing.
* Locate specific Braille materials for classroom use.

Class Assignments:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Points** |
| Participation | 15 |
| Article summary/presentation | 15 |
| Children’s book contracted transcription | 15 |
| Braille literacy lesson plan | 20 |
| Weekly practice assignments | 30 |
| Interim tests (2) | 20 |
| Midterm exam | 35 |
| Final exam | 50 |
| Total | 200 |

## Grading Scale:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **GradeGG** | **Points** |
| A+ | 200 |
| A | 190-199 |
| A- | 180-189 |
| B+ | 179 |
| B | 170-178 |
| B- | 160-169 |
| C | 140-159 |
| F | <140 |

### Participation Criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Point** | **Criteria** |
| 1 | Student completes in class practice braille exercises and participates in activities and discussions (verbally, in writing or online when appropriate or assigned). All communication is respectful and demonstrates progress toward professional development. |

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class. More than one absence will result in loss of the participation point for the missed session. Please consult with the instructor if you must miss more than 2 sessions, as course credit could be compromised. Students are responsible for completing and submitting exercises for missed classes as assigned in the course schedule.

**Course Schedule:** Subject to change depending on class needs

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Topic** | **Practice Drills, Assignments and Reading** |
| 9/3/09 | * Introduction and orientation to BlackBoard, PerkyDuck and WESBraille * The braille cell * Braille writers * Lesson 1: The Braille Alphabet | Read lesson 1; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 1 Exercise WESBraille |
| 9/10/09 | * Lesson 2 Capitalization, Paragraphing and Punctuation * Lesson 3: Cardinal Numbers * Begin article summary presentations * Guest Speaker: John Bailey, NFB of Fairfax: Braille Resources Available from the NFB | Read lessons 2 and 3; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 2 and Lesson 3 Exercises with WESBraille |
| 9/17/09 | * Lesson 4: One-Cell and Whole-Word Contractions * Organizations and support for braille, code, literacy, transcription and certification * Slate & Stylus | Read lesson 4; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 4 Exercise with WESBraille |
| 9/24/09 | * **Interim test** * Lesson 5: Whole Word and Part Word Contractions | Read lesson 5; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 5 Exercise with WESBraille |
| 10/1/09 | * Lesson 6: Part Word Contractions * Braille readiness and literacy assessments | Read lesson 6; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 6 Exercise with WESBraille |
| 10/8/09 | * Lesson 7: Whole and Part Word Lower Sign Contractions, Short Form Words * Review for midterm * Guest Speakers: Braille Readers Panel (tentatively scheduled) | Read lesson 7; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 7 Exercise with WESBraille |
| 10/15/09 | * **Midterm Exam** * Lesson 8: Whole Word, Part Word Contractions, More Short Form Words | Read lesson 8; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 8 Exercise with WESBraille |
| 10/2209 | * Lesson 9: Initial Letter Contractions, More Short Form Words * Designing and implementing a braille instruction curriculum for students who have visual impairments * Braille reading and writing goals | Read lesson 9; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 9 Exercise with WESBraille |
| 10/2909 | * Lesson 10: Final Letter Contractions, More Short Form Words * Techniques and technologies for pre-braille literacy | Read lesson 10; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 10 Exercises with WESBraille |
| 11/5/09 | * Lesson 11: Short Form Words, Proper Names * Techniques and technologies for braille literacy and daily braille reading/writing for students with visual impairments | Read lesson 11; drills and reading practice  **Submit:** Lesson 11 Exercise with WESBraille  **Braille Literacy Lesson Plan due** |
| 11/12/09 | * **Interim test** * Lessons 12, 13 * Reading disabilities and braille literacy: detection and intervention | Read Lessons 12, 13  **Submit:** Drills 23, 24, 25, 26 with WESBraille |
| 11/19/09 | * Lessons 14, 15, 16 * Techniques and technologies for transcribing braille on a daily basis for teachers of students with visual impairments | Read lessons 14-16  **Submit:** Exercise lesson 14 All extra credit is due |
| 11/26/09 | Thanksgiving: No Class |  |
| 12/3/09 | * Review for final * Lessons 17; overview of 18, 19, 20 | Read lessons 17-20 (18-20 are on the NLS site, not on WESBraille.)  **Children’s book transcription assignment due** |
| 12/10/09 | Final Exam |  |
| 12/17/09 | * Course conclusion * Discuss final exam | All make up work and projects due. |

### Braille Practice Assignments

WESBraille and PerkyDuck will be used to submit assignments and exercises electronically. Braille writers and the slate & stylus should be used for practice or on certain assignments. Students are to complete the drills for self-practice and submit the required exercises listed in the course schedule. Exercises will be submitted via WESBraille. Please email your results to your own email account and then forward it to the instructor. Exercises may have no more than 3 errors to be accepted. Perfect exercises will receive a score of 2 points; each error will result in a .5 deduction.

In the event WESBraille is not available, students are to complete the exercises from the manual in PerkyDuck and submit the file electronically to the instructor. Students are asked to check their own work before submitting.

Late Braille Practice Assignments:

All assignments are due before the next class begins. Late assignments will be docked .5 points for each day late, up to 3 days, after which the assignment will be unacceptable. Error deductions are still applicable.

**Late Assignment Policy for Class Projects:**

Projects will receive a 10% deduction from the original points possible for each day it is late.

#### Class Projects

**Article Summary and Presentation**

Students will select an article about braille or literacy topics for students with visual impairments and will lead a discussion summarizing the article for the class. Articles may come from a peer-reviewed journal or other valid professional resource or students may choose a chapter of a book for teachers of students with visual impairments. Students will provide the class with notes or a slideshow presentation for peers to reference.

Students must sign up on BlackBoard for a date to present. Students must include the name of the chosen article, publication and publication date to avoid multiple students presenting on the same article.

Article summaries must:

* Discuss the relevance and importance of the article to literacy or braille learning for students with visual impairments
* Discuss article strategies or points of interest that promote best practices in teaching literacy and braille to students with visual impairments; and/or limitations present in the article
* Provide information on methods and techniques teachers can use to implement or expand upon article information

### Article Discussion Rubric: 15 points

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Exemplary**  **5 pts** | **Satisfactory**  **3-4 pts** | **Unsatisfactory**  **0-2 points** |
| **Article selection** | Student chose an ideal article, chapter or other resource from a valid source | Student chose an article, chapter or resource that is limited in substance or slightly outdated for the topic | Student chose an article, chapter or resource from an inappropriate or invalid resource |
| Presentation:   * Article relevance and importance * Strategies, points of interest, best practices and/or limitations * Implementation and expansion | Presentation thoroughly summarized the article and was well organized and prepared. Presentation was approximately 10 minutes in length | Presentation had minor limitations, but overall provided summary and organization that was adequate, but not optimal. Presentation was less than 10 minutes in length | Presentation lacked organization and/or was poorly prepared; summary lacked adequate information and key elements were excluded. Presentation was well under 10 minutes in length. |
| Notes provided | Student provided class with article notes or a slide show presentation with summary and key points; notes are organized and free from mechanical errors; student provided APA reference of article | Student provided notes or slide show presentation, but some minor limitations are present and/or contain minor mechanical errors; student provided APA reference of article | Student did not provide notes or a slide show presentation for the class; or, multiple mechanical errors are present or no APA reference to the article is present |

**Braille Literacy Lesson Plan**

Students will create a lesson plan incorporating braille and literacy for a student who is blind or has low vision of any age and reading ability. Students will select a Virginia Standard of Learning in English to create the lesson plan.

Lesson examples:

* VA SOL 1.5: Student will apply knowledge of how print is organized and read
  + Student who is visually impaired will create a book with brailled sentences and tactile images. Student will position and order pages, put in correct direction and take part in binding the book for reading.
* VA SOL 1.10(a): Use knowledge of alphabetical order by first letter
  + Alphabetizing brailled name note cards of classmates: also incorporates phonetic awareness: SOL 1.6(a).
* VA SOL 1.12(e) Capitalization and ending punctuation
  + Creating capitalized words in braille for learning the use of dot 6 in the braille cell

Lessons must:

* Contain a Virginia English Standard of Learning
* Incorporate braille
* Provide a list of uncotracted or contracted braille and print transcription to be used in the lesson
* Provide a list of materials and adaptive technologies used (ex. slate & stylus, braille writer, transcription software to transcribe a reading, tactile elements, etc.)
* Include accommodations for students with multiple disabilities and limited English language proficiency
* Include the age or functioning level of student, necessary pre-requisite skills, goals, lesson procedures and evaluation
* Provide a list of any resource curriculum, books or additional instructional materials used, with APA references when appropriate.

**Braille Literacy Lesson Plan Rubric: 20 Points**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | **Exemplary**  **5 points** | **Average**  **3-4 points** | **Unsatisfactory**  **0-2 points** |
| **Relevance:**  **-Age or functioning level**  **-VA SOL**  **-Pre-requisite skills**  **-Goal(s)** | Components are ideally defined and optimal for lesson plan. Virginia SOL is ideally incorporated. | Components are adequately defined and appropriate for lesson plan. Virginia SOL is adequately incorporated. | Components are partially or completely inadequate for lesson plan. Virginia SOL is omitted or inappropriate for lesson plan. |
| **Materials, accommodations (for multiple disabilities and limited English proficiency), braille and evaluation** | Ideal and optimal materials and accommodations are detailed and defined. Student made excellent and accurate use of braille and relevant braille teaching materials. Evaluation thoroughly provides assessment of progress toward goal. | Adequate materials and accommodations are defined. Student used accurate braille and adequately made use of braille teaching materials.  Evaluation provides reasonable assessment of progress toward goal. | Partially or completely inadequate materials and accommodations are listed. Student did not incorporate use of braille or did so inappropriately. Braille teaching materials were inappropriate or inadequate. Evaluation provides limited assessment of progress toward goal. |
| **Procedure and Structure** | Procedures and structure are clearly defined; sequence is optimal for activity.  Student uses optimal practices for braille and literacy instruction. | Procedures and structure are listed; sequence is adequate for activity. Student uses adequate practices for braille and literacy instruction. | Procedures and structure are missing components or steps; sequence is illogical. Student uses inappropriate or inadequate practice for braille or literacy instruction. |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mechanics | Lesson is free from mechanical errors. Lesson is easy to follow and interpret. | Lesson has some mechanical errors. Lesson can be followed and interpreted. | Lesson contains several mechanical errors. Lesson is difficult to follow and interpret. |

**Transcription of Children’s Book into Contracted Braille**

Students will select a children’s book with tactile images to braille in contracted braille. Books selected must have at least 30 words, or a group of books must have at least 30 words. Book example: *10 Little Lady Bugs* by Melanie Gerth

Students will braille the book in PerkyDuck, type the print in a word processor and submit them electronically to the instructor. Extra credit option: students may braille the book with a Perkins Brailler or a slate & stylus onto clear plastic braille-on labels and affix transcription to the book. Students may either take pictures of the book with braille and submit them electronically, or bring it to class to show the instructor through the camera system or in person. Electronic copies of the print/braille are still necessary.

**Children’s Book Transcription Rubric: 15 Points**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Exemplary** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Book Selection**  **2 points** | Student chose a book or set of books with at least 30 words (2 points) | | Student chose book with fewer than 30 words (0-1 points) |
| **Electronic submission**  **3 points** | Student submitted both print and brailled formats of the book electronically (3 points) | | Student did not submit print or braille copy of book electronically  (0-1.5 points) |
| **Transcription**  **10 points** | Student made no errors in braille transcription  (10 points) | Student made minor errors in transcription  (7-9 points) | Student made numerous transcription errors (0-6 points) |
| **Extra Credit:**  **Braille labels**  **3 points** | Student brailled on book labels, affixed them to the book appropriately and submitted pictures or provided book for instructor to examine in class (in person or via camera system) (3 points) | Student placed labels in an un-suitable or less-than ideal place on book. Formatting had limitations or errors.  (0-2 points) | |

**Optional Extra Credit**

Students may earn extra credit by completing one option listed below:

1. Students may braille a children’s book in uncontracted braille. The book,

or set of books, must have a minimum of 30 words. Students must follow criteria for children’s book in contracted braille assignment. **Up to 8 points**

1. Students may complete a second article presentation assigned above. **Up to 10 points**
2. Students may select a related topic listed on the syllabus and prepare a 30-minute presentation for the class the evening it is tentatively scheduled for discussion. (Ex. Techniques and technologies for pre-braille reading, student may demonstrate Intellitools and discuss using this technology to enhance braille reading skills.) Students may choose one or more peers to co-present; extra credit points will be equally divided among the group members. Please consult with instructor to obtain further criteria and grading rubric. Students must inform the instructor of intent to present on the topic at least 2 weeks in advance and inquire if another student has already signed up to present on the topic. **Up to** **25 points**
3. Students may read and review a book for braille instruction or literacy for students with visual impairments and give a 15-minute presentation to the class on the book. A slide show presentation or notes in a word processor must be provided for the class to reference. Books must be at least 150 pages; or a book and booklet may be reviewed to add up to 150 or more pages. Please consult with instructor to obtain further criteria and grading rubric and to sign up for a presentation date. **Up to 15 points**

All extra credit projects are due by November 19.

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| ***Keep Products from This Course for Future Use in Your Professional Portfolio! TaskStream and Signature Assignments:***  For student evaluation, program evaluation, and accreditation purposes, students will be required to submit a signature assignment from each of their Special Education courses to Taskstream, an electronic portfolio system. In addition, students completing Midpoint and Final Portfolio courses will use Taskstream to create a full portfolio of their work based on assignments completed throughout their program. For this reason, students will need to retain electronic copies of all course products to document their progress through the GSE Special Education program.  In addition to the signature assignment, products from this class can become part of your individual program portfolio used in your portfolio classes that documents your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards. Grades will not be submitted at the end of the semester unless TaskStream requirement has been fulfilled. |

Required Texts and Materials:

* Computer access to the internet and corresponding technology.
* Access to peer reviewed journal source, article database and books/resources for teachers of students with visual impairments.
* Ability to access www.wesbraille.org

**Perky Duck Software:** Free download from Duxbury [http://www.duxburysystems.com/product2.asp?product=Perky%20Duck&level=free&action=pur](http://www.duxburysystems.com/product2.asp?product=Perky%20Duck&level=free&action=pur%20) . Note that braille translation software cannot be used for assignments in this course.

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| --- |
| Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. (2000). *Drills reproduced in Braille: Supplement to the instructional manual for braille transcribing* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. Available at <http://www.loc.gov/nls/bds/manual/drills.pdf>. |
| Risjord, C., Wilkinson, J., & Stark, M. L. (2000). *Instruction manual for Braille transcribing* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Available at [www.loc.gov/nls/bds/manual/index.html](http://www.loc.gov/nls/bds/manual/index.html). |

**Other Supplies:**

* 300 3x5 blank note cards to make braille flashcards and a container to hold note cards
* Student Starter Kit from APH: contains braille paper, slate & stylus and Cramer abacus. www.aph.org
* Braille on labels: Available from APH
* Children's book with tactile images. Example: 10 Little Ladybugs, Buzz-, Busy Bees,  or Touch and Feel Farm Animals,  Touch and Feel Puppies, Touch and Feel Kittens, etc (Students may get 2 books if extra credit project will be completed.)
* Blindfold
* Braille cell, either a 1/2 dozen muffin pan with tennis balls or 1/2 dozen egg carton with plastic eggs.

**Recommended Reference Materials:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. | Braille Authority of North America (2002). *English Braille American edition* (rev’d)*.* Louisville, KY: American Printing House for the Blind. Available at <http://www.loc.gov/n;ls/bds/bana/index.html>. |
| 2. | Burns, M. F. (1992). *Burns braille transcription dictionary*. New York: AFB Press. |
| 3. | Koenig, A. J., & Holbrook, C. M. (2001). *The Braille enthusiast’s dictionary*. Germantown, TN: Scalars Publishing. |

**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> Look in the second column on the left, and click on “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:

**Special Education Content Standard #4: Instructional Strategies**

Special educators posses a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for individuals with ELN. Special educators select, adapt, and use these instructional strategies to promote positive learning results in general and special curricula3/ and to appropriately modify learning environments for individuals with ELN. They enhance the learning of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills of individuals with ELN, and increase their self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem. Moreover, special educators emphasize the development, maintenance, and generalization of knowledge and skills across environments, settings, and the lifespan.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

**CEC Performance-Based Standard #4 for Visual Impairment:**

VI4K1 *Knowledge:* Strategies for teaching Braille reading and writing.

VI4S2 *Skills :* Prepare adapted or modified materials in Braille . . . .

VI4S3 *Skills* Transcribe, proofread, and interline materials in Braille . . . .

VI4S4 *Skills*  Use braillewriter, slate and stylus, and computer technology to produce Braille materials.

VI4S5 *Skills* Prepare individuals with visual impairments to access information and services from the community.

This course provides instruction in a fundamental literacy mode (Braille) that provides students with visual impairments access to the general education curriculum. An introduction to methodology for teaching Braille reading and writing of school-aged students as well as for special populations such as non-literary readers is included.

College of Education and Human Development Statement of Expectations:

**All students must abide by the following:**

* Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See http://[www.gse.gmu.edu](http://www.gse.gmu.edu) for a listing of these dispositions.
* Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12> for the full honor code.
* Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
* Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Office of Disability Services or participating consortium university disability accommodations office and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. Visit [http://ods.gmu.edu/](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc)  or call 703.993.2474 to access the DRC.

**Course Expectations:**

*George Mason University Email****:*** <http://mail.gmu.edu/>

From this link, follow the directions for activating an email account. Every student is required to establish a GMU email account. Course email correspondence and other important university emails will be sent to GMU email accounts.

*George Mason Blackboard:* [*http://gmucommunity.blackboard.com*](http://gmucommunity.blackboard.com)GSE Blackboard will be used to post important information for this course (and others) and in completing some course assignments. Materials, resources, dialogues, notes, and other types of information will be housed on this course’s Blackboard web site.

*George Mason Patriot Web*: <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/>

This is a self-service website for students, faculty, and staff of George Mason University. There is a wealth of useful links, information, and online forms on this website including program of studies details, application for graduation, request for transfer of credit, and internship application.

*Recommended Websites to Explore:*

NOTE: Internet and web resources are not the same as peer-reviewed professional journal articles. Web sites will be posted on the course Bb that contain information that your Instructor recommends out of the millions of websites on reading on the internet! Be sure that you distinguish, however, between peer-reviewed professional journals and web resources. More about this distinction (as well as distinguishing professional journals from magazines) will be discussed in class.

*Writing Resources and Support:*

One type of writing support during this course is your use of relevant parts of the APA manual. As you’re completing writing assignments, you may find it helpful to review parts of the APA manual, such as: For example:

* Chapter 2 on writing style (2.01 to 2.05)
* Chapter 2 on grammar (2.06 to 2.12)
* Chapter 2 on guidelines to reduce bias in language (focus on 2.16)
* Chapter 3 on punctuation, spelling, capitalization, italics, or abbreviations (3.01 to 3.29)
* Chapter 3 on quotations (3.34 to 3.41) Paraphrase, please (refer to other information on plagiarism in the APA manual as well as other resources and notes in this syllabus)
* Chapter 3 on reference citations in text (3.94 to 3.103)
* Chapter 4 on Reference list (4.01 to 4.16)

APA Formatting Guidelines are also available at [http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm](http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm#http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm )

This website is offered as a companion to the APA style manual. *However, it should not be considered a substitute for directly consulting the APA manual, 5th edition for standard of procedures for applying APA style.* Additional APA help URLs are available on the GSE library URL and may be available on the course Blackboard site. Caution with using web sites or resources other than the APA manual because some may have erroneous information on them.

*Plagiarism:*

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting.

*Advising:*

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your

status and progress through your program. You may wish to contact Jancy

Templeton, GMU Special Education Advisor, at [jtemple1@gmu.edu](mailto:jtemple1@gmu.edu) or 703

993-2387. Please be prepared with your G number when you contact her.

###### Cell Phones

All cell phones and beepers should be silenced during class.

###### Weapons

All universities participating in the consortium prohibit the possession firearms, any weapon, or explosive. Please consult the student handbook and your university for specific information concerning this policy at your location.