

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**  
**SPECIAL EDUCATION**  
**EDSE 744 and 844: Current Issues in Special Education**  
**Spring 2010**  
**Monday, 7:20 – 10:00 p.m.**  
**Innovation Hall 209**

**PROFESSOR**

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**Office location:** 2104 West (inside suite 2100) Building on GMU Fairfax Campus

**Office hours:** *By appointment only at these times or other mutually agreeable days/times:*  
*Mondays 4:30 to 6pm (West office); Tuesdays 3:00 to 4pm (Kellar)*

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** *Prerequisite: Admission to the PhD in Education program or permission of instructor.*

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 both 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.

**Required Text and Readings:**

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Additional readings will be required. Numerous supporting documents (e.g., research articles, federal statutes and regulations, case studies) will be posted on the class Blackboard site and/or otherwise assigned.

**Required Access to Course Blackboard Site:**

GMU's Blackboard CE6 will be used to post important information for this course. You should check Blackboard two or three times a week and right before class to make sure you are informed about class/GMU issues, and to complete the Blackboard discussions per your weekly assignment.

Your GMU email address will be entered in the Blackboard system.

The following is how you will access the Blackboard-CE6 Login Page:

Enter the URL <http://courses.gmu.edu> into your browser location field.

Enter your Username & Password assigned to you.

Click OK and then click on EDSE 744/844. Instructional Support can be found at <http://Itusupport/>.

## **NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

### **Learning activities include the following:**

- Discussion of material read in preparation for course sessions.
- Student participation (e.g., discussion, demonstration, inquiry) in small group and cooperative learning activities, including analysis of critical issues and readings as applied to case-based scenarios.
- Online discussions and other individual assignments
- Access and analyze materials and resources using a variety of medium, including Blackboard, web-based resources, and professional peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Instructor-student dialogue and interactions during and outside of class sessions that bring relevance and heightened skills, knowledge, and insights to the students and Instructor, with a focus on strengthening lifelong learning skills in the professional and ethical practice of special education.

## **LEARNER OUTCOMES**

This course is designed to enable students 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.

## **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 for all beginning special education administrators are located in this document. The primary CEC standard that will be addressed in this class is Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice. The standard is stated as follows:

### **Special Education Content Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice**

Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. Special educators engage in professional activities and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with ELN, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth. Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are sensitive to the many aspects of diversity of individuals with ELN and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their

professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based best practices. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.

## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

The College of Education and Human Development expects all students to abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://www.gse.gmu.edu/> for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must know and follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC\\_H12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) for the full Honor Code.
- Students are expected to use APA Guidelines for written work and provide credit when using the work of others. GMU currently subscribes to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) and the instructor may submit student work to that site for to determine originality of work.
- 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 to seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Office of Disability Service and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc> or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

***Keep Products from This Course for Future Use in Your Professional Portfolio!***  
*Retain electronic copies of all course products to document their progress through the GSE Special Education program. Products from this class can become part of your individual professional portfolio used in your portfolio classes that document your satisfactory progress through the GSE program and the CEC performance based standards. As the program moves towards electronic portfolios, it will be even more important to have artifacts (i.e., scored assignments) saved electronically.*

George Mason University Email: <http://mserver3.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 University Honor Code: <http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>

This URL defines student and faculty conduct to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community. The honor code deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. In an effort to maintain trust in the classroom as well as provide a prerequisite for deterring plagiarism, *Turnitin*, a plagiarism detection service, may be used to evaluate materials submitted by students for evaluation.

*Advising:*

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program.

*Absences:*

Understanding you are individuals with full and active lives, who have made the intellectual and financial commitment to regularly attend class, there may be an instance when you are not able to attend. If this unlikely event should occur, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain notes, handouts, and lecture details from another student (it is recommended that you have two colleagues in the course for this). Students who are absent are held responsible for the material covered and assignments due as if in attendance. Please be sure to notify the classmate(s) in sufficient time for them to be of assistance for you. Recommended, but not required, is that you notify the Instructor about absences in advance or within 24 hours after an absence. Be aware any points earned for participation in class activities, during a time of absence, will not be earned and cannot be made up. If you need to miss, for any reason, more than two class sessions, contact the Instructor immediately (within 48 hours) with notification of when your course withdrawal will be completed. If you realize after the first class session that this course's requirements are not a match for you for this semester, process your withdrawal immediately (within 48 hours) and notify the Instructor.

*TaskStream Electronic Portfolio Submission of Signature Assignments:*

Every student registered for any EDSE course as of the Fall 2007 semester is required to submit signature assignments to TaskStream (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 assignment to TaskStream will result in reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed, upon completion of the required submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

*Assignments and Readings and Due Dates:*

For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, be prepared for class, demonstrate professional behavior (see *Professional Disposition Criteria* at <http://www.gse.gmu.edu> for a listing of these dispositions), and complete all assignments with professional quality in a timely manner. To successfully complete this course, students need to adhere to the due dates for specific readings and assignments to be completed.

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

**Grades:**

- 95 –100% = A+
- 90 – 94.9% = A
- 85 – 89.9% = B+
- 80 - 84.9% = B
- 70 – 79.9% = C
- < 70% = F

Synthesis Papers (3 @ 5.5 points each)	16.5 points
Class Presentation	35.0 points
Controversial Issue	35.0 points
Class Participation (15 @ .5 points per class session)	7.5 points
Blackboard Interactions/Discussions (12 @ .5 points each)	6.0 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0 points</b>

**Synthesis Papers on Current Research Topics (5.5 points each)**

For each of three topics identified as a current issue in special education, select a minimum of three recent (2007 or later) research articles published in peer-reviewed journals on that topic. On no more than three pages (double-spaced, 1” margins, 12-point font), synthesize the three research studies. Each person may be choosing different articles, or if the same articles are selected, the way in which each person synthesizes can vary. *Caution: This assignment is not about summarizing, it is about synthesizing. Think in terms of analyzing the content of the studies, determine how you want to approach a synthesis, and focus on that synthesis for a maximum of three pages.* Follow this format:

1<sup>st</sup> page: Cover sheet

2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> pages: Your Synthesis (use headings as appropriate, but be judicious)

5<sup>th</sup> page: References (there should be only three references)

**Assignment’s Scoring Rubric**

Synthesis Paper # ____	Points Possible
1. Directions are followed.	/0.25
2. The synthesis of the three research articles makes it clear which areas are being synthesized. Written language is excellent.	/4.75
3. Technical APA (e.g., citations in the assignment, Reference section, headings/subheadings) is completely accurate	/0.5
<b>TOTAL points earned*</b>	<b>/5.5</b>

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

### **Class Presentation**

Select one current issue in special education on which to conduct a literature review, develop a class presentation, and lead an in-class and/or on-line 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.

At least one week (preferably two – more notice desirable) before your Class Presentation, post on the Bb site at least three recent research articles for class colleagues to read in advance of your presentation. Build into your presentation at least one way to 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.

### **Assignment's Scoring Rubric**

<b>Class Presentation</b>	<b>Points Possible</b>
1. Issue and articles' choices are appropriate. Articles posted a minimum of one week 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.	/24.5
3. Interactions with class colleagues are well-planned and high-level.	/4.0
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>TOTAL points earned</b>	<b>/35.0</b>

**Controversial Current Issue**

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 eight sources; more if necessary. Because you are identifying this as a current issue, ensure some (at least two) of your sources are current (2009, 2010). 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

**Assignment’s Scoring Rubric**

<b>Controversial Current Issue</b>	<b>Points Possible</b>
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.

**Blackboard Discussions and Interactions**

On 12 occasions across the semester, questions or points-of-view or a brief reading will be posted on Bb for you to discuss and interact about. Follow the directions for each Bb posting to earn a maximum of .5 points for participation. For example: *Each individual is responsible for posting 2 recent research articles on a current issue he/she selects before leaving class on 1/25 (this is not the same issue as for the Class Presentation). The selection of issue occurs on 1/25; the posting of both articles must be at least three weeks in advance of when the topic is discussed (refer to revised Course Schedule). Each posting counts for .5 Bb points = 1 point total.*

**GENERAL RUBRIC for all Assignments  
(when applicable; use these as a guide to accompany the point rubric)**

<b>Evaluation Standards</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations 3</b>	<b>Meets Expectations 2</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations 1</b>
Paper	Synthesis goes beyond the obvious. Suggestions are creative and realistic. Minimal writing errors.	Includes background information on the issue, explanation of the controversy, summary of pros/cons, and suggestions for policy/practice. Writes in an organized style using APA.	Fails to meet all elements of the stated expectations. Writing is mechanically unsound.
Presentation	Articulates novel implications for practitioners.	Presents a broad, interesting background. Summarizes and analyzes differing views. Presents in an organized style.	Presentation is disorganized or lacking key information.
Face-to-Face Discussion	Encourages dialogue and novel thinking.	Proposes thought-provoking questions or discussion points. Clearly communicates key ideas.	Minimal efforts to engage the audience are made.
Online Discussion	Encourages dialogue and novel thinking.	Proposes thought-provoking questions or discussion points.	Minimal efforts to engage the audience are made.
Link to CEC Standard 9	Clear reflection of professional and ethical desire to embrace ongoing learning and evidence-based practices.	Efforts to engage in an active learning community. Offers reflective ideas showing a desire to learn.	Minimal efforts to engage in learning demonstrated.
Overall Critical Issues Project	The project meets expectations and generates insightful suggestions for how special needs might be better met.	The project clearly identifies a significant issue AND provides clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.	This project fails to clearly identify a significant issue OR fails to provide clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.



**Course Schedule**

Date	Topic	Readings and Assignment Due
Class #1 1/25	Introductions Overview of Course Content of Syllabus Identification of Current Issues and Controversies	
Class #2 2/1	Issue # 1 Historical Perspectives (PKS assigns readings)	Readings on Bb throughout the course
Class #3 2/8 <b>SNOW</b>	Issue # 2 Inclusion (PKS assigns readings)	
Class #4 2/15	Issue # 3 IAEP (Brittany Hott) Issue # 4 Collaboration (Nancy Emanuel)	<b>Synthesis # 1 due no later than 7:20pm Class 5</b>
Class #5 2/22	Class Presentation from Ernest Solar on Parents Issue # 5 Discrepancy of Minorities in Special Education (Jennifer Walker)	
Class #6 3/1	Class Presentation from Anne Eichorn on Homework Issue # 6 Parents (Maren Pearson) Issue # 7 RtI (Maryam Salahshoor)	
<b>No Class on March 8 – Spring Break!</b>		
Class #7 3/15	Class Presentation from Nancy Emanuel on Accommodations/Modifications  Class Presentation from Brittany Hott on High Stakes Testing Students with High-Incidence Disabilities  Issue # 8 Writing for students with disabilities (Pat Leins)	<b>Synthesis # 2 due</b>
Class #8 3/22	Class Presentation from Maryam Salahshoor on Teacher Education  Class Presentation from Pat Leins on Reading for High School Students with Disabilities  Issue # 9 Teacher Education (Anne Eichorn)	
Class #9 3/29	Class Presentation from Jennifer Walker on Discipline and Students with Emotional Disabilities  Class Presentation from Maren Person on Alternative Assessments  Issue # 10 Collaboration (Ernest Solar)	

Class #10 4/5	Class Presentation from Aqila Waheed on CoTeaching  Class Presentation from Ann Swain on Assessments  Issue # 11 Accessing General Education Curriculum – <i>WHO?</i>	
Class #11 4/12	Class Presentation from Hanaa Soltan on Administration  Issue # 12 Administration (Hanaa Soltan)  Issue # 13 Highly-Qualified Teachers (Christine McElwee)	
Class #12 4/19	Class Presentation from Christine McElwee on Teacher Preparation  Issue # 14 Placement/Services – Ann Swain	<i>Synthesis # 3 due</i>
Class #13 4/26	The Past, The Present, and The Future of Issues in Special Education (PKS)	
Class #14 5/3	Course Conclusion Course Summary Course Evaluations	
Class #15 5/10	Final exam day for Monday courses that have final exams  May 10 by 10pm is the latest date/time to submit <i>Controversial Issues</i> assignment	