

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments EDSE 511**

Tuesdays 4:00pm-6:40pm 1/26/2010-2/23/10

Spring 2010

**Instructor:**

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**Office hours:** by appointment

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**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
5. Written responses to posted discussion questions posted on Blackboard.

**Required Texts:**

Holbrook, C., Koenig, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Foundations of education. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)* New York, NY: American Foundation for the Blind. Set of 2 volumes

**Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend class. 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.

**Late Assignments:**

Assignments turned in after the due date will automatically deduct 10% of the total points for each day it is late.

**Course Assignments:**

| Assignment   | Points                   | Due Date |
|--|--------------------------|----------|
| Weekly class participation, including online written discussions | 20<br>4 points each week | Weekly   |
| Blindfold activity   | 10                       | 2/2/10   |
| Resource portfolio project                                       | 20                       | 2/9/10   |
| Signature assignment paper and presentation                      | 30                       | 2/16/10  |
| Final exam   | 20                       | 2/23/10  |
| Total  | 100                      |          |

| Grade | Points and % |
|-------|--------------|
| A+    | 99-100       |
| A     | 95-98        |
| A-    | 90-94        |
| B+    | 89           |
| B     | 85-88        |
| B-    | 80-84        |
| C     | 70-79        |
| F     | <70          |

**Participation Rubric:**

| Weekly Points Possible | Point Distribution   |
|------------------------|--|
| 4                      | <p><b>2 points:</b> Student engages in written and verbal discussion when appropriate or assigned. Written participation assignments contain a minimum of specified words required for the assignment.</p> <p><b>2 points:</b> Student uses appropriate communication and terminology and demonstrates progress toward professional development.</p> |

**Proposed Class Schedule:** Subject to change depending on class needs

| Date    | Topic  | Reading and Assignments   |
|---------|--|---|
| 1/26/10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction and orientation to course syllabus, Blackboard and Connect</li> <li>▪ Overview of blindness and visual impairment</li> <li>▪ Role of a teacher of students with visual impairments and related fields of service</li> <li>▪ Historical perspectives and stereotypes associated with blindness and visual impairment</li> </ul> | <p><b>Foundations Vol. 1:</b><br/>           Ch. 1 Historical Perspectives<br/>           Ch. 2 Visual Impairment<br/>           Ch. 10 Professional Practice<br/>           VOL II: Appendix C: Role of Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments or Updated version found on CEC website.<br/>           Additional readings found on Blackboard</p>   |
| 2/2/10  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The visual system and causes of blindness, visual impairment and multiple disabilities</li> <li>▪ The effects of learning and development when a visual impairment is present</li> <li>▪ Assessments and evaluations</li> <li>▪ Eligibility for vision related services</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Foundations Vol. I:</b><br/>           Ch. 3 The Visual System<br/>           Ch. 4 Growth and Development of Young Children<br/>           Ch. 5 Growth and Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence<br/>           Ch. 9 Educational Programming<br/> <b>Foundations Vol. II:</b><br/>           Ch. 4 Specialized Assessments<br/>           Pages 202-208<br/> <b>Blindfold activity summary due</b></p> |
| 2/9/10  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Placement and service delivery options</li> <li>▪ IFSP's, IEP's and 504 plans for students with visual impairments</li> <li>▪ Literacy and reading options</li> <li>▪ Accommodations, modifications and adaptations</li> <li>▪ Adapting the Core Curriculum:</li> <li>▪ Expanded Core Curriculum</li> </ul>                                 | <p><b>Foundations Vol. II:</b><br/>           Ch. 5 Basic Techniques for Modifying Instruction<br/> <b>Foundations Vol. II:</b><br/>           Ch. 14 Assistive Technology<br/>           "The Expanded Core Curriculum" Phil Hatlen, TSBVI; resource found on BB<br/> <b>Resource portfolio due</b></p>  |
| 2/16/10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Disability law and legislation</li> <li>▪ Emotional and psychological implications of blindness and visual impairment</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Foundations Vol. I:</b><br/>           Ch. 6 Psychosocial Needs of Children and Youths<br/> <b>Signature Assignment Paper due</b></p>   |
| 2/23/10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working with students who have multiple disabilities</li> <li>▪ Cultural Considerations</li> <li>▪ Transition and adults with visual</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Foundations Vol. I:</b><br/>           Ch. 7 Children and Youths with Visual Impairments and Other Exceptionalities</p>   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | impairments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Course conclusion</li> <li>▪ <b>Final exam</b></li> </ul> | Ch. 8 Multicultural Issues<br><b>Foundations Vol. II:</b><br>Ch. 20 Students with Visual Impairments and Additional Disabilities |
|--|--|--|

**Assignments:**

**Blindfold Activity**

Complete a 30-minute activity while blindfolded and write a 200-word summary about the experience that will be shared with the class and posted on Blackboard. Your summary should include the activity you chose, your procedure for doing the task, adaptive measures you had to take, or should have taken, and the time it took to complete the task.

Activity suggestions:

- Play a game
- Build a tower of blocks or a sand castle
- Put together a puzzle
- Listen to an audio reading
- Make and eat a sandwich, snack, meal and clean up (do not use heat or knives unless you know the adaptive techniques to do so)
- Do the dishes, either by hand, wash, dry, put away or load dishwasher, pour in soap, turn on machine and put away dishes.
- Laundry: sort, wash, dry, fold and put away clothes
- Vacuum or sweep the floor
- Dust furniture
- Pick out a set of clothes and get dressed

Note: Students who are blind may simulate a multiple disability to complete this activity

**Blindfold Activity Rubric: 10 points**

| Item                                   | Exemplary  | Satisfactory   | Unsatisfactory  |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Length and posting<br/>2 points</b> | Summary is 200 or more words and was posted on BB (3 pts)  | N/A  | Summary is fewer than 200 words or was not posted on BB (0-1 pt)                            |
| <b>Chosen activity<br/>2 points</b>    | Student chose an activity that is highly visual and requires adaptations to complete while blindfolded (2 pts) | Student chose activity that requires vision, but is not highly visual (1 pt) | Student chose activity that is not visual and require little adaptations to compete (0 pts) |
| <b>Adaptations<br/>4 points</b>        | Student employed optimal adaptive skills to complete activity (3-4 pts)  | Student employed adequate adaptive skills to complete activity (2 pts)       | Student did not use adaptive skills to complete activity (0-1 pts)                          |
| <b>Mechanics<br/>2 points</b>          | Summary is free from errors or contains an extremely minor error (1-2 pts)                                     |  | Summary contains multiple errors (0 - .5 pts)   |

## Resource Portfolio Project

Teachers of students with visual impairments must have readily available access to resource information. Students will create a resource packet for parents, students or professionals (teachers, related service providers, administrators) that can be used directly in their work and updated as necessary.

Packets must include at least 20 resources, including:

- Specification of individuals who benefit from your packet (parents, teachers, students, professionals or a combination)
- List of support organizations (private and government agencies, local, state and federal)
- Toy and/or activity suggestions or teaching aids (adaptive and non-adaptive)
- Book and/or pamphlet recommendations
- Website recommendations

Each resource must include a brief description of the item.

### Resource Packet Rubric: 20 points

| Item  | Exemplary<br>5 points  | Satisfactory<br>3-4 points   | Unsatisfactory<br>0-2 points  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Contains 20 resources</b>                          | 20 or more resources included  | N/A  | Fewer than 20 resources included  |
| <b>Contains components listed above</b>               | All components included  | N/A  | Missing components listed above   |
| <b>Resources for target audience and organization</b> | Resources are optimal for target audience; packet is optimally organized and user friendly | Resources are adequate for target audience; packet is adequately organized | Resources are insufficient or inappropriate for target audience; packet is poorly organized |
| <b>Mechanics</b>                                      | Packet is free from errors   | Packet contains minor error(s)   | Packet contains multiple errors   |

### Signature Assignment Paper and Presentation

The role of a teacher of students with visual impairments continues to change and progress, however, challenges still exist. Students will choose two areas of serving students with visual impairments that could pose challenges and write a paper with the following criteria:

- Summary of two challenges TVI's encounter and how these challenges affect students with visual impairments
- Explanation of other factors that make each situation and student unique when addressing the challenges. (Ex. multiple disabilities or varying/unstable vision conditions, limited English proficiency, family situations, etc.)
- Explanation of progress toward better understanding and positive influences, methods, strategies and resources TVI's can use to address these challenges with best practices

Examples of challenges:

- Access to braille or literacy, technology, general education, specialized VI services, staffing and availability of necessary support etc
- Access to medical care and vision related medical equipment
- Developmental considerations
- Public and peer perception, stereotypes, discrimination, harassment
- Family, economic, stability and financial concerns
- Social, self esteem issues
- Transition, post secondary options and employment prospects
- Any other topic discussed in class that you feel could pose a challenge

Papers must:

- Be a minimum of 800 words
- Contain a minimum of 2 APA references
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the exceptional conditions and varying factors
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the TVI's role in serving students and working through challenges
- Contain other components outlined in rubric

Students will give a brief (5-10 minute) presentation to the class on their papers, summarizing the challenges and strategies TVI's can use to address the issues.

**Signature Assignment Paper: 30 points**

| <b>Item</b>                                  | <b>Exemplary<br/>5 points</b>   | <b>Average<br/>3-4 points</b>  | <b>Unsatisfactory<br/>0-2 points</b>   |
|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Topic and explanation</b>                 | Student chose and explained 2 challenges optimally, exhibited comprehensive understanding of the challenges and varying impact on students with visual impairments. Student demonstrates exemplary knowledge of characteristics of students with VI a TVI's responsibility in these situations. | Student chose and explained 2 challenges adequately, exhibited basic knowledge of these challenges and varying impact on students with visual impairments. Student demonstrates basic knowledge of characteristics of students with VI and a TVI's responsibility in these situations. | Student omitted one challenge or provided limited explanation. Student exhibited limited understanding of the varying impact the challenges have on students with visual impairments. Student demonstrates poor knowledge of characteristics of students with VI and a TVI's responsibility in these situations. |
| <b>Methods, Interventions and Strategies</b> | Methods, interventions and strategies discussed are best practices.   | Methods, interventions and strategies discussed are appropriate.   | Methods, interventions and strategies discussed have limitations or are not suitable.  |
| <b>Terminology, support and</b>              | Student includes ample supporting   | Student includes adequate support  | Inadequate supporting evidence   |

|                     |   |   |  |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>resources</b>    | evidence for topic and uses accurate and ideal terminology for this field. Respect for students with visual impairments is clear.   | for topic and uses appropriate terminology for this field. Respect for students with visual impairments is evident.   | presented in paper. Terminology is outdated or unacceptable.   |
| <b>Mechanics</b>    | Paper is free from spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors. At least 2 APA references were used and formatted accurately.  | Paper contains minor grammatical, spelling, punctuation and/or APA formatting errors. At least 2 APA references were used.  | Paper contains several mechanical and APA errors or references were omitted.   |
| <b>Paper length</b> | Paper is or exceeds 800 words.  | N/A   | Paper is not 800 words.  |
| <b>Presentation</b> | Student led a 5-10 minute presentation that optimally highlighted challenges, the impact and progress and/or resources. Presentation was well organized and easy to follow. | Student led a 5-10 minute presentation that adequately highlighted challenges, the impact and progress and/or resources. Presentation had some organizational limitations, but could be followed. | Student's presentation was under 5 minutes, had limitations in highlighting challenges and impact, did not offer suitable progress or resources and/or was poorly organized and difficult to follow. |

***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.

**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.

**CEC Special Education Content Standard #2: Development and Characteristics of Learners**

Special educators know and demonstrate respect for their students first as unique human beings. Special educators understand the similarities and differences in human development and the characteristics between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs (ELN)<sup>1/</sup>. Moreover, special educators understand how exceptional conditions can interact with the domains of human development and they use this knowledge to respond to the varying abilities and behaviors of individual's with ELN. Special educators understand how the experiences of individuals with ELN can impact families, as well as the individual's ability to learn, interact socially, and live as fulfilled contributing members of the community.



Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of 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 preparation program is preparing candidates.

**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> 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](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.

*Accommodations:*

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Office of Disability Services or participating consortium university accommodations office and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See <http://ods.gmu.edu/> or call 703.993.2474 to access the DRC.

*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.

*George Mason University Email: [mail.gmu.edu](mailto:mail.gmu.edu)*

Please activate your account and check it often. Course email correspondence and other important university emails will be sent to GMU and Consortium email accounts.

*George Mason Blackboard: <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>

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, 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### *Cell Phones*

All cell phones and beepers should be silenced during class.

#### *Weapons*

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