

## **Characteristics of Students with Severe Disabilities**

EDSP 663 Characteristics of Students with Severe Disabilities (RU)

EDSE 547: Medical and Developmental Risk Factors for Children with Disabilities (GMU)

EDIS 513: Characteristics of Severe Disabilities (UVA)

TEDU 651: Topic: Severe Disabilities (VCU)

SPE 523: Characteristics of Students with Severe Disabilities (NSU)

### **Summer 2010**

**Class meetings Monday, May 17, Tuesdays May 18-July 13, 4:00-6:40 p.m.**

**And weekly asynchronous web-based discussions and assignments**

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#### **Instructor:**

Dr. Valerie Walton Ed.D., Adjunct Instructor

Special Education Department

PO Box 6959, Norfolk State University

Phone: 757-538-2637 (from 7:00 pm til 9:00 pm)

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#### **Course Texts:**

- McDonnell, J.J., Hardman, M.L. & McDonnell, A.P. (2003). *An introduction to persons with moderate and severe disabilities: Educational and social issues*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Selected readings on current research in the field of severe disabilities in the journal *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*.
- Web-based readings: Additional websites to be explored and articles to be read will be posted in the Assignments folder on Blackboard.

#### **Recommended Reading:**

- Kamata, S. (Ed.). (2008). *Love you to pieces*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

#### **Course Purpose and Description:**

*Characteristics* serves as the foundational course for the licensure program in Special Education adapted Curriculum K-12, and will be offered as a combination of distance-learning and web-based learning modules and interactive sessions (within both synchronous and asynchronous formats.)

The purpose of this course is to provide students with knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and needs of individuals with severe disabilities. The text will be used as a jumping off place to connect with texts (e.g. , Christmas in Purgatory, 1974

<http://www.mnddc.org/parallels2/pdf/Xmas-Purgatory.pdf>), persons (e.g. Henry Goddard, Burton Blatt, Lou Brown, Wolf Wolfensberger, Beth Harry) and organizations (e.g. TASH, AAMR) that have shaped our current ways of understanding, valuing and supporting people with severe disabilities, their families and their cultures. Course assignments will also include inquiry into current research and evidence-based practice in areas such as biomedical intervention, assistive technology, and programs, services and intervention/teaching strategies for individuals with severe disabilities at various points in the lifespan (e.g. Batshaw, 1997; Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Giangreco; Fisher; other research articles published in Research and Practice.)

#### **Topics to be covered will include:**

- Overview
- Definition and prevalence
- History of services and educational approaches
- Values that undergird our work

- Characteristics of the disabilities that result in or are associated with severe disability including intellectual disability, developmental delay, autism, cerebral palsy, multiple disabilities, sensory impairments (deaf-blindness), and traumatic brain injury
- Critical social, educational and political issues for people with severe disabilities and their families
- Importance and need for culturally competent services for people with severe disabilities and their families
- Comparison of organizations established to support, serve and/or study people with severe disabilities
- TASH policy statements
- Inclusion as a value and a practice
- Basic principles of service and support
- Services available and needed at various key points across the life span

### **Learning Objectives:**

The following Virginia Department of Education competencies will be addressed by this course as they relate to students with severe disabilities (Special Education Adapted Curriculum K-12)

- **Human growth and development (birth through adolescence).** Skills in this area shall contribute to an understanding of the physical, social, emotional, speech and language, and intellectual development of children and the ability to use this understanding in guiding learning experiences. The interaction of children with individual differences -- economic, social, racial, ethnic, religious, physical, and mental -- should be incorporated to include skills contributing to an understanding of developmental disabilities and developmental issues related to but not limited to attention deficit disorders, substance abuse, child abuse, and family disruptions.
- **An understanding and application of service delivery, curriculum, and instruction of students with disabilities including:**
  - Use of technology to promote student learning; and
  - Structure and organization of general education classrooms and other instructional settings representing the continuum of special education services.
- **Knowledge and understanding of the characteristics, learning and support needs of K-12 students with disabilities whose cognitive impairments or adapted skills require adaptations to the general curriculum.** This includes intellectual disabilities, developmental delay, autism, multiple disabilities, traumatic brain injury and the emotional, social, neurobiological, linguistic, medical, and educational aspects of severe disabilities based upon current research, best practice and legal considerations;
- **Child abuse recognition and prevention, and issues and strategies unique to working with students with disabilities.**

The following CEC Knowledge and Skill standards for All Beginning Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities in Individualized Independence Curriculum will be addressed by this course.

CEC 2003: What Every Special Educator Must Know - Ethics, Standards and Guidelines for Special Educators

[http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/Red\\_book\\_5th\\_edition.pdf](http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/Red_book_5th_edition.pdf)

- Current educational terminology and definitions of individuals who would benefit most from an independence curriculum, including the identification criteria and labeling controversies,

utilizing professional accepted classification systems and current incidence and prevalence figures.

- Evolution and major perspectives from medicine, psychology, behavior, and education on the definitions and etiologies of individuals with disabilities\*.
- Continuum of placement and services available for individuals with disabilities\*.
- Current educational terminology and definitions of individuals who would benefit most from an independence curriculum, including the identification criteria and labeling controversies, utilizing professional accepted classification systems and current incidence and prevalence figures.
- Articulate the pros and cons of current issues and trends in the education of individuals with disabilities\*.
- Delineate the principles of normalization versus the educational concept of “least restrictive environment” in designing educational programs for individuals with disabilities\*.
- Physical development, physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, and health impairments as they relate to the development and behavior of individuals who would benefit most from a functional independence curriculum
- The various etiologies and medical aspects of conditions affecting individuals with disabilities\*.
- Sources of unique services, networks, and organizations for individuals with disabilities\*, including career, vocational, and transition support.
- Consumer and professional organizations, publications, and journals relevant to individuals with disabilities\*.
- Rights to privacy, confidentiality, and respect for differences among all persons interacting with individuals with disabilities\*.
- Participate in the activities of professional organizations relevant to individuals with disabilities\*.
- Seek information regarding protocols, procedural guidelines, and policies designed to assist individuals with disabilities\* as they participate in school and community-based activities.
- Maintain confidentiality of medical and academic records and respect for privacy of individuals with disabilities\*.

## Assignments:

A brief description of each assignment appears below. A detailed explanation and written guidelines will be posted on Blackboard and explained during the appropriate class time.

All written work submitted for credit must be:

1. Typed as a Word document and submitted through Blackboard (NOT e-mail).
  2. Free of mechanical errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. You MUST proof read and edit your work.
  3. Have appropriate citations and references for any and all resources used to help you with the assignment. APA style must be used for your reference page. Please purchase an APA style manual. You can also refer to this tutorial at <http://lib.radford.edu/tutorial/index.asp> for specific rules on quoting, paraphrasing, and creating a reference list.
1. **Online Discussions- 100 points:** Students will participate in a series of online discussions throughout the semester using the Discussion Forum on Blackboard. Students will be expected to respond to topic questions posed by the instructor related to course readings and lectures. Students are expected to utilize their knowledge and skills acquired during class as well as their experiences to answer the questions. For Discussions 2 and 3, students are expected to engage in interactive dialogue with classmates. Students will be expected to post their direct response by a specific date (Wed) and then respond/comment to at least three peers by second date (following Monday). Discussion board topics will be available on Blackboard one week prior to the due date for each direct response. Please refer to Blackboard for complete assignment description and rubric.
    - a. Discussion 1: Personal Story -30 points (Due May 26)
    - b. Discussion 2: Family Support -35 points (Initial Post Due June 9, Peer Responses Due June 14)
    - c. Discussion 3: Research -35 points (Initial Post Due June 16, Peer Responses Due June 21)
  2. **Online Learning Modules - 50 points each (150 total):** Students will participate in a series of online modules throughout the semester. The module assignments will be posted in the Assignment section of Blackboard at least two weeks before each module is due. Each module will contain readings in PDF format, links to websites, and supplemental activities related to course topics. Student may be required to submit written responses to either through the Upload Assignment link or the discussion board within Blackboard. Please refer to Blackboard for complete assignment description and rubric.
    - a. Module 1: Values -50 points (Due June 7)
    - b. Module 2: Film Critique/Reflection -50 points (Initial Post Due June 23, Peer Response due June 28)
    - c. Module 3: Abuse and Neglect -50 points (Due July 12)
  3. **Disability Study- 150 points:** Students will be assigned to work in small groups to develop a PowerPoint presentation related to a specific disability. PowerPoints will be posted on Blackboard and presented to peers on June 22, 29 and/or July 6. The PowerPoint will provide an overview of the assigned disability as well as outline how the selected disability impacts families, and what cultural differences must be addressed; describes the complex needs of individuals with this disorder/disability, presents a range of special education and community-based supports and services that are needed to maximize their achievement and capacity, and discusses the impact of the disability on normal growth and development and the ability to

learn, interact socially and live is fulfilled contributing members of the community. Please refer to Blackboard for complete assignment description and rubric.

- 4. Research Journal - 100 points total:** Candidates will critique six (6) peer reviewed articles from *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*. Due July 5th at 11:59pm. Articles must not be older than five years. Four of your selections must be either research or reviews of research on instructional practice with students with severe disabilities. The remaining two are your choice – however, they (1) must be a minimum of five pages in length, (2) they may not be book reviews or introductions, and (3) if you choose to respond to commentary, you must include all articles related to that commentary section. A separate handout with more information can be found on Blackboard. All articles will be submitted to Blackboard in the assignment area. You will create a reading journal with a brief summary and personal and critical reflection on six articles. Please refer to Blackboard for complete assignment description and rubric. (Due July 5)

**Grading (Total points possible 500):**

A (94-100%) = 470-500	B (84-87%) = 420-439	C+ (78-80%) = 390-404
A- (91-93%) = 455-469	B+ (88-90%) = 440-454	C (74-77%) = 370-389
	B- (81-83%) = 405-419	F (<73% = 388 or less

Course grades will be calculated by summing the points earned on assignments along with a consideration of the average and range of performance of others in class. All written products must be edited before submission – No submission with significant problems with writing quality and/or errors in writing mechanics will be eligible to receive the grade of A. The average and range of performance of others in class may also be considered in determining the need for a grading curve. By the third class, you will be able to access your current standing in class on Blackboard. There will be a penalty of one letter grade for assignments submitted after the due date. But I will work with you if there are extenuating circumstances – please contact me in advance of the due date to contract for an extension or a grade of incomplete. Any incomplete grades need to be completed within six weeks following the end of the course or final grades will be reduced a grade for each additional month delay.

## Proposed Class Schedule

Date	Topic/In Class Activities	Readings	Assignment Due (Assign. Available)
May 17 (M) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introductions</li> <li>▪ Course Requirements</li> <li>▪ Current Understandings of People with Severe Disabilities</li> <li>▪ Values Clarification Activity</li> <li>▪ Introduction to Blackboard</li> <li>▪ Focus Question – Due at the beginning of the next class</li> </ul>		
May 18 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ History of People with Significant Disabilities; Social Construction of Disability</li> <li>▪ Assign groups for Disability Study &amp; review requirements for Disability Study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapters 1 &amp; 2</li> </ul>	
May 25 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social Construction of Disability continued; How, why and who we define as persons with severe disabilities</li> <li>▪ Cultural issues surrounding persons with significant disabilities; Important National Organizations; overview of Disability Study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 4</li> </ul>	(Discussion 1 available on Blackboard) (Module 1: Values available on Blackboard)
May 26 (W) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion 1: Personal Story Due</li> <li>▪ Posted the Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 1(T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Supporting persons with severe disabilities and their families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapters 3 &amp; 5</li> </ul>	
June 7(M) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module 1: Values Due</li> <li>▪ Submitted though the upload assignment link on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 8 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Services and Programs for Infants and Preschoolers and their families</li> <li>▪ Focus Question: Due at the beginning of the next class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapters 8 &amp; 9</li> </ul>	(Discussion 2 available on Blackboard) (Module 2 available on Blackboard)
June 9 (W) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion 2: Family Support- Direct Response Due</li> <li>▪ Posted the Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 14 (M) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion 2: Family Support- Peer Responses Due</li> <li>▪ Posted the Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 15 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elementary-aged students with severe disabilities in our</li> </ul>		(Discussion 3 available on Blackboard)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communities and schools</li> <li>▪ Assessments</li> </ul>		
June 16 (W) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion 3: Research- Direct Response Due</li> <li>▪ Posted the Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 21 (M) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion 3: Research- Peer Responses Due</li> <li>▪ Posted the Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 22 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elementary-aged students with severe disabilities in our communities and schools</li> <li>▪ Disability Study Presentations: Multiple Disabilities/Medically Fragile and Deaf-Blindness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Study Presentations: Multiple Disabilities/Medically Fragile and Deaf-Blindness</li> <li>• Submitted though the upload assignment link on Blackboard by 4pm</li> </ul> <p>(Module 3 available on Blackboard)</p>
June 23 (W) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module 2: Film Critique/Reflection - Direct Response Due</li> <li>▪ Posted the Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 28 (M) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module 2: Film Critique/Reflection - Peer Responses Due</li> <li>▪ Posted the Discussion Board on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
June 29 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Services and programs for secondary aged students</li> <li>▪ Disability Study Presentations: Mental Retardation and Autism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 11</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Disability Study Presentations: Mental Retardation and Autism</li> <li>▪ Submitted though the upload assignment link on Blackboard by 4pm</li> </ul>
July 5 (M) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research Journal Due</li> <li>▪ Submitted though the upload assignment link on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
July 6 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing Inclusive Educational and Community Opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities: Working for Systems Change</li> <li>▪ Disability Study Presentations: Cerebral Palsy and Brain Injury</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Disability Study Presentations: Cerebral Palsy and Brain Injury</li> <li>▪ Submitted though the upload assignment link on Blackboard by 4pm</li> </ul>
July 12 (M) Online			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Module 3: Abuse and Neglect Due</li> <li>▪ Submitted though the upload assignment link on Blackboard by 11:59pm</li> </ul>
July 13 (T) In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What we've learned from the research</li> <li>▪ The future for persons with severe disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapters 6, 12, 13</li> </ul>	

## **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://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

VCU: [www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7honor.html](http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7honor.html).

UVA: <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/>

Radford: [http://www.radford.edu/~dos-web/handbook02-03/Honor\\_Code.pdf](http://www.radford.edu/~dos-web/handbook02-03/Honor_Code.pdf)

NSU: [http://www.nsu.edu/student\\_judicial/policy.html](http://www.nsu.edu/student_judicial/policy.html)

### Attendance

Since many of the classes involve activities, videotapes, discussion, etc., regular attendance is vital to gain maximum benefit. Anyone who misses more than one class will lose 10 points for each class missed after the first absence. Significant tardiness or early departure will count as an absence. If you know ahead of time you will not be in class, please contact me the week before the class. If you miss class, you need to watch the archive of the class session and complete all activities/assignments per the syllabus.

### Accommodations for Disability

At all the participating universities, accommodations can be made with the instructor if a student has a disability. If this is relevant to you, please contact me on the first night of class (can be through email) and indicate both what the disability is and how your university has made accommodations for you in the past. I will discuss (via email) this further with you until we reach consensus. University specific information regarding eligibility, services and accommodations can be found at:

GMU: <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/>

VCU: <http://www.students.vcu.edu/dss/index.html>

UVA: <http://www.virginia.edu/vpsa/services.html>

Radford: <http://www.radford.edu/~dro/>

NSU: <http://www.nsu.edu/disabilityservices/index.html>

### Inclement Weather

If classes are cancelled at Norfolk State 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. If in doubt, visit the university website at [www.nsu.edu](http://www.nsu.edu). Do not email me; I will email you regarding weather as soon as it is announced. Please note, 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. Please consult your student handbook for specific information concerning this policy at your university.

### Course Materials

This course gives you access to PowerPoint files, class lecture notes, handouts, and copyrighted articles. For the articles (available both on Blackboard and on a class CD), 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; PowerPoints will be available on Blackboard by noon of the class day or sooner. If you plan to print copies of PowerPoint slides, this must be done before class begins (before 4 pm or 7:20 pm) and using a 3 or more slides per page handout format (do not print full slide pages). All of these materials should be regarded as authored materials, which if used or referred to must be fully credited through reference to the author, the class, and date. If used beyond citation, permission of the instructor/author is required.

### 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://gmucommunity.blackboard.com/>.

NON GMU Students: Your login for Blackboard Community is: *x\_first name.last name* For example John Smith's username would be: *x\_john.smith* Your password is: *bbcommunity*

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. Although Microsoft PowerPoint is part of the Microsoft Office Suite, students who do not have PowerPoint can download a free viewer that will allow at

<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=D1649C22-B51F-4910-93FC-4CF2832D3342&displaylang=en> 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>

Students using Microsoft Office 2007 are expected to save and submit assignments in the Microsoft Office 2003 format, as all universities have not yet made the transition to Office 2007.

### TaskStream Submission

TaskStream ([www.taskstream.com](http://www.taskstream.com)) is an electronic portfolio and assessment management tool that the SD Consortium is utilizing in part to meet accreditation requirements for the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as well as for student portfolio evaluation purposes. 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. Directions for creating an account in TaskStream and submitting assignments are available on Blackboard in the *TaskStream* folder within the *Syllabus* section.

The signature assignment(s) for this class is: *Disability Study*

### Course Facilitators

Each class will have a facilitator or assistant who will assist with the class. Learn who that person is as they will be taking role and keeping track of class participation and reporting it to me weekly. However, if you think you must miss a class, please email me ahead if at all possible (or later if need be). Because of the potential of confusion caused by people speaking at the same time in this multi-site course, it will be important to raise hands before asking questions or making comments. Along with the facilitators, I will try hard to enforce this rule and to be alert to questions from the distance sites. Facilitators will also FAX in-class written tasks following class or early the next day to me. When in class assignment forms or handouts are send the day of the class, facilitators will need to download and copy them for class members.

### Blackboard Assistance

This course requires that you be a regular email user and be able to use various features of Blackboard (sign on, download materials, hand in completed assignments electronically in the drop box). You may direct your questions about Blackboard to the facilitator at the class site as well as to email Marci Kinas Jerome (mkinas@gmu.edu). She will be the best resource. We are all learning this system together and some of us will be faster than others. Expect some snafus along the way, but please help each other out as you can. You will want to download all the required materials early in the semester or as soon as they are posted. Please note that some handouts/readings may be given to you in class that are not posted on blackboard. Also check Blackboard for announcements. Sometimes I will place handouts for class on Blackboard and will alert you by email or in the previous class; in these cases please download and bring them to class.

### Remote Site Viewing

All Consortium courses are recorded and archived on a video-streaming server. Students and faculty are welcome to view previous classes at <http://torrent.gmu.edu> and click on the link for [Communication] in the Public Folders link. Classes are listed by date and time. Since the Consortium includes some remote site students, all consortium classes are broadcast live via the Internet at the same website. It is the policy of the consortium that students attending classes at university sites are expected to be present at those university sites during class time. However, in instances where students would otherwise miss class (in accordance to the attendance policy) students may participate in the class via the live web stream. However, students who participate in the web-stream instead of at their university site are still subject to the response cost as outlined in the attendance policy for this course. Directions for viewing the video-stream can be found in the course Blackboard site.

Student may also view the PowerPoints, communicate with the instructor, and interact with other at home students using Adobe Connect. Each consortium class has their own Adobe Connect website. To get to your Adobe Connect course site go to:

- Characteristics: <http://webcon.gmu.edu/characteristics/>
- Transition: <http://webcon.gmu.edu/transition/>
- Reading: <http://webcon.gmu.edu/reading/>

You will login with the guest username (sdcguest@gmu.edu) and password (sdcsite).

The first time you use Adobe Connect you may be prompted to download a plug in, it only takes a few seconds to install.