

**George Mason University  
Graduate School of Education  
Program: Special Education  
Fall 2011**

**Syllabus EDSE 590: Research in Special Education (3 credits)  
Cohort: Loudon County Section: 660  
Wednesdays, 4:30 – 9:00  
Stone Bridge High School**

Instructor:

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Describes fundamental concepts and practices in education research in special education. Specific application of educational research methods to problems in special education will be covered. Emphasis is on reviewing and critiquing special education research and applied classroom research for teachers.

Prerequisites\*: There are no *required* prerequisites for this course, but each Program in Special Education strongly *recommends a specific sequence*. Please refer to your Program of Studies to determine where this course fits within your overall program.

\*Advising contact information: 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.

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

- Identify and understand different methods of educational research suitable for different research purposes in special education.
- Describe and discuss basic theories and methods of quantitative experimental and quasi-experimental research in special education.
- Describe and discuss basic theories and methods of survey research in special education.
- Describe and discuss basic theories and methods of single subject research in special education.
- Describe and discuss basic theories and methods of qualitative research in special education.
- Describe and implement teacher application of classroom research to address specific classroom problems.

**Relationship of Course to Program Goals and Professional Organizations:** This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education, and Special Education Program for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the special education areas of Emotional Disturbance, Learning Disabilities, and Mental Retardation. This program complies with the standards for teacher

licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children, the major special education professional organization. As such, the learning objectives for this course cover many of the competencies for learning environments and social interactions (CEC Standard 5) and assessment (CEC Standard 8). The CEC Standards can be found on the following web site: <http://www.cec.sped.org/> by clicking on the Professional Standards button to the left of the homepage.

**Nature of Course Delivery:** Learning activities include the following:

- Class lectures, handouts, discussions, activities and participation
- Study and independent library research
- Relevant media presentations
- Application activities
- Presentation of research article papers and research projects

## REQUIRED RESOURCES

### *Textbooks*

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

McMillan, J. H. (2011). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Reading, MA:

Addison-Wesley Longman.

### *Blackboard*

Check Blackboard weekly for additional course materials at <http://courses.gmu.edu>

### *TaskStream*

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 onetime 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.

### *Articles*

Other readings relevant to special education research applications may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor as indicated by the needs and interests of the class.

## STUDENT RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*George Mason University Email:* <https://mserver3.gmu.edu/> From this link, follow the directions for activating an email account. GMU makes such accounts available at no cost to students. Every student is required to establish a GMU email account to access Blackboard and other important university correspondence that will be sent to GMU email accounts only. Once an email account has been established, it is possible to forward email sent to the GMU account to another email account. Students are responsible for any information shared electronically and should check e-mail regularly.

*George Mason Blackboard:* <http://courses.gmu.edu>. From this link, you will find a variety of materials related to this course. The site will be updated as the course progresses. **Students are responsible** for any information shared via Blackboard and should check the site regularly

*George Mason Patriot Web:* <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu>. This is a self-service website for students, faculty, and staff of George Mason University. A wealth of useful links, information, and online forms are available on this website including program of studies details, application for graduation, request for transfer of credit, and internship application.

*Cohort Information:* Please visit Blackboard at <http://gmucommunity.blackboard.com> and begin by clicking "login" and using the User Name "cohort" followed by the Password "cohort" to access a variety of materials including the Frequently Asked Questions Guide, Enrollment forms, Textbook information, and TaskStream support.

*Advising Contact Information:* Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through the special education program. You may wish to contact Jancy Templeton, GMU Special Education Advisor, at [jtemple1@gmu.edu](mailto:jtemple1@gmu.edu) or 703-993-2387. When contacting her, be prepared to provide your G number.

*APA Style:* The standard format for any written work in the College of Education. If you are unfamiliar with APA, it would benefit you to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.) or to access one of the internet sites that provides a summary of this information. All work produced outside of class must be typed unless otherwise noted.

*Academic Integrity:* Students in this course are expected to exhibit academic integrity at all times. Be aware that plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. **Whether the act is deliberate or unintentional is irrelevant.** You must take great care to give credit to an author when you borrow either exact words or ideas. Generally, if you use 4 or more words in a row you should use quotation marks and a proper citation. Evidence of plagiarism or any other form of cheating in this class will result in a zero on that assignment and a report of the incident to the registrar. Remember that plagiarism is a very serious offense and can result in dismissal from the University. The instructor reserves the right to submit your work to **turnitin** or **safeassign**, plagiarism detection services, for an integrity assessment as needed.

*Graduate School of Education Dispositions Criteria:* Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://www.gse.gmu.edu/> for a listing of these dispositions.

*George Mason University Honor Code:* [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC\\_H12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) 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.

*Students with Disabilities:* [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See the website or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

*Responsible Use of Computing:* <http://mail.gmu.edu> Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. From the link above, click on the Responsible Use of Computing link found at the bottom of the screen.

**IMPORTANT NOTES**

- For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, demonstrate professional behavior in the classroom (see Professional Disposition Criteria), and complete all assignments with professional quality and in a timely manner.
- When absence from class is unavoidable, students are responsible for getting all class information (e.g., handouts, announcements, notes, syllabus revisions, etc.) from another class member prior to the class meeting that follows the absence. Be aware that any points earned for participation in class activities during a time of absence will not be earned and cannot be reclaimed.
- The use of electronic devices that produce sound or otherwise interfere with the learning of others (i.e., cell phones, pagers, etc.) is prohibited during class. Please turn these devices off before the start of class.
- Computers may be used to take notes during class, but they may not be used for internet exploration or other non-class activities during class time.
- Exemplary work may be kept and shared in the future (with your consent, of course!).
- Routine access (daily) to electronic mail and Blackboard for communication and assignments is crucial to effective participation in this class.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS***1. Participation, Attendance, and Class Activities*

Class attendance and participation is demonstrated by attending class and being psychologically available to learn, completing and handing in weekly class assignments, and participating in class discussions/activities throughout the semester. Points are negatively affected by being late to class, demonstrating a disinterest in the material/discussions (e.g., reflection activities, small group activities, discussions, etc.), being unprepared with materials, and/or absences. Points are positively impacted by thoughtful contributions made in class, listening to the ideas of other peers, respectively, and demonstrating an enthusiasm for learning. **Each week, there may be a weekly quiz or a group activity that will count towards this grade.** If you are not in attendance, thus not able to participate and contribute to class when these activities occur, assigned points will not be earned and cannot be made up at another time.

Point values can range from 0.5 to 5.0 per activity.

*2. CITI Program Human Subjects Certification*

Students will complete the online certification program required of all GMU researchers. This program provides a clear overview of the ethical considerations that must be understood for any researcher. You will earn a certificate of course completion. Print one copy of the course completion record to present to your instructor for credit. Refer to the assignments folder on Blackboard for details regarding access.

*3. Article Critiques*

Students are required to complete 4 article critiques using the Critique Guide Sheet, to be provided on Blackboard, during the course of the semester. The first critique will be done in class on a research article provided by the instructor. For the remaining 3 critiques, students are to select appropriate research articles published in the last 5 years from a peer-reviewed academic journal. The article critiques will be graded on the appropriateness of the selected article, clear and through summary, accuracy in APA

citation, and overall thoughtfulness in analysis. Time may be given in class to begin (and possibly complete) each critique.

The 6 article types (select 3):

- Research Synthesis
- Experimental Research
- Quasi-Experimental Research
- Nonexperimental Quantitative Research
- Single Subject Research
- Qualitative Research
- Mixed Methods Research

#### **4. \* *Research Application Paper***

The research application project is designed to provide experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating a research application project in special education. Students will employ appropriate research methodology to investigate an area of interest in their classrooms. Students will prepare a research report on this project using the format recommended by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). The research report will include an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion. The grading rubric will be available on the class Blackboard site. **NOTE: As this is the signature assignment for EDSE 590, submit both a hard copy for grading AND an electronic version to TaskStream as directed below.**

Students may turn in sections of the paper for feedback on particular dates (see course schedule.) Feedback will not be given past the assigned dates.

<b>Research Project Checklist</b>		
Name:		Name of Reviewer:
	Points	Comments
<b>Abstract (1)</b>		
<b>Introduction (3)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem Clear</li> <li>• Purpose Clear (R? and Hyp)</li> <li>• DV/IV Clear</li> </ul>		
<b>Review of Lit (4)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV lit</li> <li>• IV lit</li> <li>• Other lit (if needed)</li> <li>• Logic is Clear</li> </ul>		
<b>Method</b>		
Participants (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjects</li> <li>• Sampling Method</li> <li>• Other Participants</li> </ul>		
Setting (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Context</li> <li>• Study Context</li> </ul>		
Materials & Procedures (6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan Clarity</li> <li>• Step-by-step procedures</li> <li>• Appendix links</li> </ul>		
Research Design (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual design used</li> <li>• Why design was selected</li> </ul>		
Data Analysis (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity</li> </ul>		
<b>Results (2)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Just the facts”</li> <li>• Table</li> </ul>		
<b>Discussion (8)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions (address Hyp.)</li> <li>• Interpret results (link to lit)</li> <li>• Limitations</li> <li>• Recommendations</li> </ul>		
<b>APA Style/Form (3)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ref. list</li> <li>• In-text</li> <li>• Table(s)</li> <li>• Appendix</li> <li>• Title Page</li> <li>• General</li> </ul>		

5. *Research Application Poster Presentation*

Students will present the results of their program evaluation project to their peers using a poster presentation format. The grading rubric and a sample presentation will be available on the class Blackboard site.

**Grading**

Below are the values of the various kinds of work required for the course, but students should always bear in mind that grading is primarily a judgment about your performance on a particular assignment. Grades are designed to indicate your success in completing assignments, not the level of effort you put into them.

Your performance in the course will be rated upon the following

Participation in Class Activities	30
4 Article Critiques	23
CITI Human Subjects Certification	3
Research Paper*	34
Research Poster Presentation	10
Total	100

**\*The Research Paper is the signature assignment that will be posted to TaskStream**

The course letter grade will be determined by a point system in which the following thresholds will be used: **A=94 – 100%, A-=90 – 93%, B+=87 – 89%, B=80 – 86%, C=70 – 79%, F=< than 70%**

**\*Traditional rounding principles apply (i.e. .5 rounds up)**

All assignments should be typed (submitted as hard copy please) and are due at 4:30 p.m. on the dates indicated. **In fairness to students who make the effort to submit work on time, 5% of the total assignment points will be deducted each day from your grade for late assignments.** Please retain a copy of your assignments in addition to the one you submit.

A final grade of Incomplete will be considered only due to extreme extenuating circumstances; please contact the instructor.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>NOTE:</b>
* The course schedule WILL change according to class needs.

Class	Date	Big Topics	Readings and Assignments Due
1.	9/21/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start of Class Logistics</li> <li>Implementing “Research” in the Classroom</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registration forms</li> </ul>
2.	9/28/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program Evaluation vs. Research</li> <li>Key Components of Research Design: Research Problems, Hypotheses, &amp; Variables</li> <li>In-class Article Critique</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McMillan – Chap. 1 &amp; 2</li> <li>Bring Nougaret, Scruggs, &amp; Mastropieri, 2005 to class</li> <li>Article Critique #1 Due (<i>will be done in class</i>)</li> </ul>

3.	10/5/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Syntheses</li> <li>• Introducing Your Project</li> <li>• Conducting a Literature Review</li> <li>• Writing a Review of the Literature</li> <li>• Build Reference List as You Go!</li> <li>• Informed Opinions Matter</li> <li>• Subjects, Participants, and Sampling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McMillan – Chap. 3 &amp; 4 &amp; 5</li> <li>• <b>Readings on BB</b></li> <li>• <b>CITI Certification due</b></li> </ul>
4.	10/12/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Measures</li> <li>• Non-experimental Research Designs: Descriptive, Comparative, Correlational, &amp; Causal-Comparative Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McMillan – Chap. 6, 7 &amp; 8</li> <li>• <i>Draft of Introduction due</i></li> <li>•</li> </ul>
5.	10/19/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experimental Research Design</li> <li>• Quasi-experimental Research Design</li> <li>• Validity and Reliability</li> <li>• Identification of Research Designs for your Research Investigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McMillan— <b>Chap. 9</b></li> <li>• <b>Readings on BB</b></li> <li>• <i>Draft of Lit Review due</i></li> <li>• <b>Article Critique #2 due</b></li> </ul>
6.	10/26/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single Subject Research Designs</li> <li>• Analysis of Data: Descriptive &amp; Inferential Stats</li> <li>• Accessing Free Online Resources</li> <li>• Data Analysis Section of Methods</li> <li>• Results Section of a Research Report:</li> <li>• Recognizing Statistical Significance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McMillan—Chap. 10</li> <li>• <i>Draft of Methods due</i></li> <li>• <b>Article Critique: Experimental Research due</b></li> <li>•</li> </ul>
7.	11/02/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative Research Designs</li> <li>• In-class Article Critique</li> <li>• Bringing Meaning to Data</li> <li>• Discussion Section of a Research Report: Interpretations, Limitations, Implications, &amp; Recommendations</li> <li>• Connecting the Results Back to the Hypothesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McMillan – Chap. 11 &amp; 13</li> <li>• <b>Readings on BB</b></li> <li>• <i>Draft of Results due</i></li> <li>• <b>Article Critique #3 due</b></li> </ul>
8.	11/09/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Research Designs</li> <li>• Being a competent consumer of research</li> <li>• Review of APA requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McMillan—Chap. 12</li> <li>• <b>Article Critique #4 due</b></li> </ul>
9.	11/16/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed Methods Research Designs</li> <li>• Connecting Research to the Real World</li> <li>• Seeing Yourself as a Researcher</li> <li>• Overview of Research Presentation Guidelines</li> <li>• Modeling of Research Presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit McMillan—Chap. 14</li> <li>• <b>Completed Draft of Research Application Paper Due</b> (<i>including discussion, references, and appendices for review in class; abstract will be added during class</i>)</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building the Abstract</li> </ul>	
<b>10.</b>	11/30/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Presentations with Peer Review</li> <li>• End of Course Logistics</li> <li>• Wrap Up, Closing Comments, &amp; Celebration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Research Application Posters Due</b></li> <li>• <b>Final Copy of paper due to instructor</b> (<i>Hard Copy AND TaskStream Posting</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Any changes will be posted as an announcement on Blackboard prior to class.</b>			

Note: Syllabus is subject to change as needed. Common sense and instructor discretion will be the governing forces in dealing with any circumstances that may arise that are not explicitly addressed in this syllabus.