



**College of Education and Human Development  
Division of Special Education and disAbility Research**

Summer 2016

EDSE 511 6Y1: Characteristics of Students with Visual Impairments

CRN: 42659, 2 - Credits

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| <b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Kitty Greeley-Bennett                                       | <b>Meeting Dates:</b> 05/16/16 - 06/18/16                 |
| <b>Phone:</b> 303-827-5183   | <b>Meeting Day(s):</b> Thursdays; 6/2, & 6/16 ONLY        |
| <b>E-Mail:</b> cgreeley@gmu.edu  | <b>Meeting Time(s):</b> 4:30pm – 7:10pm; 6/2, & 6/16 ONLY |
| <b>Office Hours:</b> Before and after class, or scheduled appointments (preferred) | <b>Meeting Location:</b> Internet                         |

***Note:** This syllabus may change according to class needs. Students will be advised of any changes immediately through George Mason e-mail and/or through Blackboard.*

**Course Description**

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.

Notes: Course delivered online.

Schedule Type: LEC

Hours of Lecture or Seminar per week: 1

Hours of Lab or Studio per week: 0

**Prerequisite(s):** None

**Co-requisite(s):** None

### **Advising Contact Information**

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program. Mason M.Ed. and Certificate students should contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703) 993-3670 for assistance. All other students should refer to their faculty advisor.

### **Nature of Course Delivery**

This course will be delivered online using an (asynchronous and synchronous) format via the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. The recorded classes will be May 19, May 26, and June 9. The live classes will be June 2, and June 16.

Learning activities include the following:

1. Class lecture and discussion
2. Application activities
3. Small group activities and assignments
4. Video and other media supports
5. Research and presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

### **DELIVERY METHOD:**

This course will be delivered online using a asynchronous and synchronous format via the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before “@masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on May 16, 2016.

### **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:**

To participate in this course, students will need the following resources:

- High-speed Internet access with a standard up-to-date browser, either Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox. Opera and Safari are not compatible with Blackboard;
- Consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of the course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for Pcs and Macs respectively, available for free downloading by clicking on the link next to each plug-in:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>
  - Windows Media Player: <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/downloads/windows-media-player>
  - Apple QuickTime Player: [www.apple.com/quicktime/download/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)
- A headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool

## EXPECTATIONS:

- **Course Week:** Refer to the asynchronous bullet below if your course is asynchronous or the synchronous bullet if your course is synchronous.
  - **Asynchronous:** Because online courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will **start** on **Monday**, and **finish** on **Sunday**.
  - **Synchronous:** Our course week will begin on the day that our synchronous meeting take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes.
- **Log-in Frequency:** Refer to the asynchronous bullet below if your course is asynchronous or the synchronous bullet if your course is synchronous.
  - **Asynchronous:** Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, at a minimum this should be 2 times per week.
  - **Synchronous:** Students must log-in for all scheduled online synchronous meetings. In addition, students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, at a minimum this should be 2 times per week.
- **Participation:** Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- **Technical Competence:** Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students are expected to seek assistance if they are struggling with technical components of the course. Contact ITU (<http://itservices.gmu.edu/help.cfm>) at (703) 993-8870 or [support@gmu.edu](mailto:support@gmu.edu).
- **Technical Issues:** Students should expect that they could experience some technical difficulties at some point in the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- **Workload:** Expect to log in to this course **at least three times a week** to read announcements, participate in the discussions, and work on course materials. Remember, this course is **not** self-paced. There are **specific deadlines** and **due dates** listed in the **CLASS SCHEDULE** section of this syllabus to which you are expected to adhere. It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.

**Netiquette:** Our goal is to be **collaborative**, not combative. Experience shows that even an innocent remark in the online environment can be misconstrued. I suggest that you always re-read your responses carefully before you post them to encourage others from taking them as personal attacks. **Be positive in your approach to others and diplomatic with your words.** I will do the

same. Remember, you are not competing with each other but sharing information and learning from one another as well as from the instructor.

### **Learner Outcomes**

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

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the history of the education of persons with a visual impairment.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the terminology used in the field of working with persons with a visual impairment.
3. Demonstrate basic knowledge of basic anatomy of the eye and eye diseases.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the educational settings, which provide education of persons with a visual impairment.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of local, state, and national resources for services to persons with a visual impairment.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic techniques for adapting and modifying instruction for a student with a visual disability.
7. Become familiar with the psychosocial effects of sensory impairment on the child and adult with visual impairment.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of the legal rights of a person with a visual impairment.
9. Recognize the effects of a visual impairment when it occurs in conjunction with other disabilities.
10. Demonstrate knowledge of the need for specialized instruction for persons with a visual impairment, to include areas of the expanded core curriculum.
11. Recognize the importance of considering individual, cultural, and family characteristics in intervention.

### **Required Textbooks**

The following 3-title set can be purchased together for \$50.00 paperback or \$35.00 in accessible electronic version from AFB Press.

Erin, J. N. & Spungin S. (2004). *When you have a visually impaired student with multiple disabilities in your classroom: A guide for teachers*. New York: AFB Press.

McNear, D. & Torres, I. (2002). *When You Have a Visually Impaired Student in Your Classroom: A Guide for Teachers*. New York: AFB Press.

Russotti, M.S. & Shaw, R. (2004). *When You Have a Visually Impaired Student in Your Classroom: A Guide for Paraeducators*. New York: AFB Press.

### **Required Resources**

In order to fully access this course, you are required to have several technology tools. Failure to have these tools for class, particularly during live sessions will result in a deduction in participation points.

- Personal computer
- An Internet connection

- A headset with microphone
- A webcam

### **Additional Readings**

Additional articles and assigned readings will be posted to the course site on Blackboard. Students are expected to read course readings as assigned.

### **Course Relationships to Program Goals and Professional Organizations**

This course is part of the Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Vision Impairment Program for teacher licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the special education areas of Special Education: Visual Impairments PK-12. This program complies with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization. The CEC standards that will be addressed in this class include Standard 1: Learner development and individual learning differences; Standard 3: Curricular content knowledge.

### **GMU Policies and Resources for Students:**

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services and inform their instructor, in writing, as soon as possible. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor. [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>]. Students from other Consortium universities must submit documentation from their university offices in order to receive approved accommodations.

- Radford: <http://www.radford.edu/~dro/>
- NSU: <http://www.nsu.edu/disabilityservices/index.html>
- ODU: <http://studentaffairs.odu.edu/educationalaccessibility/>

- JMU: <http://www.jmu.edu/ods/>

f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

### **Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### **Core Values Commitment**

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. [See <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>]

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>]

### **Course Policies & Expectations**

*Attendance.* This course is primarily offered asynchronously. Students are expected to review course content on Blackboard and participation points will be based on your accessing and engaging with the online materials. Students are expected to attend class during live Blackboard Collaborate sessions. Additional points will be assigned for participation in online discussions (both synchronous and asynchronous) and group activities. Failure to participate during an asynchronous week or failure to attend a synchronous class without communicating to the instructor will result in a loss of 10% from your final grade and no credit for missed assignments. Absences that are communicated to the instructor will be dealt with on an individual basis.

*Late Work.* **Late work will not be accepted.** Only in the case of serious family emergency or illness that is immediately communicated to the instructor will late submission be considered. Communication via email should be done immediately with any appropriate documentation of the emergency or illness.

### **Tk20 Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement**

Every student registered for any Special Education course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit the *Response and Reflection Paper on Visual Impairments* to Tk20 through Blackboard (regardless of whether the student is taking the course as an elective, a onetime course or as part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Tk20 through Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Tk20 (through Blackboard) will result in the course instructor

reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Tk20 submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

**Grading Scale**

- A = 95-100%
- A- = 90-94.9%
- B+=87-89.9%
- B = 84-86.9%
- B-=80-83.9%
- C+=77-79.9%
- C = 74-76.9%
- C-=70-73.9%
- F = Below 70%

**Assignments**

| Assignment   | 350 Total Points Possible | % of grade | Due Date                                   |
|--|---------------------------|------------|--|
| Class Attendance & Participation                       | 50                        | =10%       | 10 points per class<br>3 discussion boards |
| MENU Item #1   | 100                       | =27%       | June 5                                     |
| MENU Item #2   | 100                       | =27%       | June 12                                    |
| Reflection Paper (Signature Assignment submit to Tk20) | 125                       | =33%       | June 19                                    |
| Total  | 375                       |            |  |

As indicated above, each requirement has a point value allocated toward the final grade. All requirements must be completed and received by the instructor by the date (see class schedule). At the end of the semester, you will be given a grade based on the total number of points you have accumulated and grading scale.

- Unless otherwise indicated, all formal written work must be word-processed. All assignments must be typed and free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- Please allow time after submitting your assignment for grades and comments to be posted. Most grades will be posted a week after submission; however, sometimes commitments to other class or duties interfere with grading time.

**Performance-based Assessment (Tk20 submission required).**

The Tk20 assignment for this class will be a written paper. Candidates will demonstrate their knowledge by selecting a case study student, or one of their own students in a field placement or current teaching position, and will discuss and describe instructional strategies, accommodations, modifications, assistive technologies and other supports for the student in a general education content area. Complete and detailed information on the assignment will be posted to Blackboard and discussed throughout the semester. This assignment is worth 125 points.

## Performance-based Common Assignments (No Tk20 submission required).

### 1. MENU ITEMS

*Graduate students must complete two menu items (100 points each). Choose from the list below:*

- a) Spend three days without the use of your personal car and write a 3 to 5 page paper describing the impact this had on your activities during the time period you were car-free. Discuss your feelings related to independence/dependence, asking for assistance, the methods you used for travel and why you selected them, and how you will apply the information you learned to your future work. Do not provide a time diary; rather synthesize the experience when writing your paper. (You may do this only if you regularly drive your own car in Virginia). The assignment must be completed during the fall semester.
- b) Develop a 2 hour in-service about visual impairment or deafblindness for a school or adult agency in which a child or adult is to be included. Include a brief description of the child/adult including visual condition, functioning level, and classes/work the student is involved with at the setting. Your in-service should include an outline of the key points you will make, a description of any activities you will have participants do, samples of unique handouts (not simply a Xerox of things off of the course web site or what the instructor has provided in class), a list of references, an agenda etc. Creativity and thoroughness will be considered in the assignment of a grade for this project.
- c) Interview an individual with a visual impairment OR the parent of a person with a visual impairment. This individual should not be someone whose history you know in regards to his/her visual impairment or child's visual impairment. Gather information about ways in which his/her life is affected by blindness/low vision and about how others respond to the visual impairment. Write a 3 to 5 page paper summarizing the interview. Your paper should be a reflective summary, not a transcript of the interview! It is fine to use quotes in the paper, however, it is important to organize the information and weave together a story about the person interviewed. **Please speak with me by 5/25 if you'd like to do this assignment and I will help you locate someone to interview.**
- d) Read an **adult level** autobiography or a biography of an individual with a visual impairment. Write a 3 to 5 page paper about the experiences of the person as they relate to the visual impairment, the reactions of others to the visual impairment, the adaptations the individual uses, etc. Do not spend more than 1 page telling the story of the book! Your paper should focus on the **character's visual impairment and his/her experiences** as an individual with visual impairment. *See Blackboard link for ASSIGNMENTS partial list of books*
- e) Review 3 children's books that have characters with visual impairment or dual sensory impairment. Write a review of each book you read. Your reviews should focus on the **character's visual impairment or dual sensory loss**, do not spend more than 1-2 paragraphs retelling the story. Read at least one of the books to a child. For the one(s)



you read to a child, tell about the child's reaction to the book and any material presented. You may substitute an adolescent level book (grades 6 and up) for 2 children's books thus only reading 2 books instead of 3. *See course lecture notes for a link to a list of books. See Blackboard link for ASSIGNMENTS partial list of books*

- f) Pick a topic covered in the course. Design a public relations promotional project (e.g., a Power Point, a collage, a role play script, a brochure, a video) that educates the general public about the positive abilities of visually impaired children and/or adults in this area. This project will be graded based on your creativity, clarity with which information is conveyed, and the message given about people with visual impairment. Provide a paragraph of information explaining the purpose or goals of the project as well as characteristics of the intended audience.
- g) Pick one of the 3 scenarios below. For the individual in the scenario locate 10 web sites that would assist the individual in getting information specific to his/her needs at this time. For each web site provide the (a) name of the company or organization, (b) the address (URL) and (c) 1-2 paragraphs describing what you found at the site that would **specifically** be of value to the individual in the scenario. Give at least one example of something on the site and how it applies to the individual in the scenario. Your opinion of the site and a description in your own words is what is being sought here – please do not “cut and paste” the site’s description into your paper! **You will lose points if you “cut and paste” directly from the site or if you don’t give examples of what specifically on the site would be relevant to the individual in the scenario.**
- 1) Lyle was born with a syndrome called CHARGE. Mrs. Hines is going to be Lyle’s 3rd grade teacher this year. She has been told that Lyle cannot see and has a severe hearing loss. Lyle will have an intervener working with him. Mrs. Hines has never had a child who is deafblind in her classroom. She wants to learn more about CHARGE, how deafblind people communicate, what exactly an intervener does, what materials and equipment Lyle might use in her classroom, and what she can do to assist the 24 other 3rd graders to get to know and accept Lyle as their peer.
  - 2) Shawn is the father of a 10 month old daughter, Ashley, who has been diagnosed with cortical visual impairment and appears to have delays cognitively. Ashley is not yet sitting by herself and rarely reaches out for things. Shawn has an older son (age 7) and an older daughter (age 5). His wife is taking on the primary responsibility for Ashley’s care and is the one who is home when the teacher of the visually impaired comes each week. Shawn wants to know more about his daughter’s visual impairment. He wants to know what equipment and materials she’ll need at school as she gets older. He’s also interested in knowing what resources are out there for siblings of children who have disabilities such as Ashley’s. He’d like to learn about how people who have disabilities He’d like to learn about how people who have disabilities and can’t read and write communicate.
  - 3) Marla is 16 and has just been diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). She has failed the eye exam to get her driver’s license because her visual fields are so restricted. She is really having a lot of trouble seeing the white board and overheads in school. When walking she often has branches hit her in the head because she does not see them. She is unable to see at night and therefore won’t go out of the house

unless she is with a family member or close friend. Marla would like to find out what resources are available to her if she goes to college, she'd like to know about tools that may help her at night, she is very anxious to talk to other's with the same condition, and most importantly she wants to see if there is a way she can drive.

- h) Go to the public library and find out what services are available for patrons with visual impairments. Develop a handout for families of children with visual impairments to familiarize them with the services available for their child who has a visual impairment. Make your handout attractive, informative, and jargon free. This should be your own work, not a handout from the library. In developing your handout consider how to present material about the services to parents of children with low vision and to parents of children who are blind. Also give consideration to the age of the child and the presence of additional disabilities.
- i) Develop an individual project to increase your knowledge or understanding of visual impairment or deafblindness. Submit a one-paragraph description of your proposed project to the instructor via e-mail by **May 25<sup>th</sup>** for approval. Examples of projects might include a public opinion survey, development of a videotape, or creation of instructional materials. **If you don't get your project approved ahead of time it may not be accepted by the instructor, resulting in a grade of zero points.**
- j) **Simulation Assignment:** Spend at least 2 hours in conditions simulating a visual impairment (very low vision or blindness). Prior to the simulation you should show the person who will be with you how to act as a human guide. This person should be instructed to monitor for your safety and provide information when requested, but to allow you to do things for yourself. You can borrow a sleepshade or low vision simulator from the instructor; you can purchase your own sleepshade; or you can create a blindfold from fabric.
- Select a 2 hour **continuous period of time** when you will be in your home or apartment. Arrange for the human guide to be with you for the entire 2 hours. Part of the time should be spent in your home doing typical activities (e.g., laundry, preparing and eating a meal, cleaning). Part of the time should be spent in your home doing an activity that is not as familiar to you (e.g., preparing a meal you've never made before, planting plants in your garden you've never planted before, trying a new craft project, playing a new card game with someone).
- Directions: Following your simulation, write a 4 to 6 page paper describing the experience emphasizing the following: (a) adaptations you used, (b) feelings you experienced, (c) interactions with others including your guide, and (d) what knowledge you gained about visual impairment and how you will apply this to your own career. Discuss things the guide did to help you, things that the guide did that made you uncomfortable, and things you learned from working with your guide.
- k) Watch a movie that features a character with a visual impairment. After the movie is watched, write a 3 to 5 page paper in which you discuss the portrayal of the character with a visual impairment. Provide a 1-2 paragraph overview of the movie and use the rest of the paper to **discuss in depth the character with visual impairment.** Topics to

discuss in the critique include: (a) how the character felt about his/her visual impairment, (b) attitudes of others toward the visual impairment, (c) techniques used by the character with a visual impairment to complete tasks (e.g., cooking, traveling), (d) your impressions of the realistic portrayal of the visual impairment, (e) how you perceive the character will be viewed by someone watching the movie etc. Focus on the visual impairment, not a play-by-play of the movie plot! *See Blackboard site under CONTENT –Informational Items for a partial list of movies.*

- 1) **Traveling Blind** – Write a reflective 4 to 6 page paper about the book *Traveling Blind* by Laura Fogg. Pick two children that Fogg describes. For each child discuss the child’s learning needs in the areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum and how Fogg addressed them in her teaching. Compare and contrast these two children sharing what similarities and differences they have. Discuss the strategies Fogg used with her students that you believe are exemplary giving an example for each strategy that ties to a specific student. Finally, explain how you will apply Fogg’s work in your own work with people with visual impairments or other disabilities.

**Other Assignments.**

Participation in weekly discussion boards prompts and class discussion. See *Attendance*.

**Schedule**

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Topic</b>  | <b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| Week 1: May 16-22<br><b>Asynchronous<br/>RECORDED</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Review syllabus</li> <li>• Terminology &amp; History</li> <li>▪ Professional Roles</li> </ul> | *McNear & Torres, Ch. 1<br>Hong, Rosenblum, Petrevay & Erin<br><b>Discussion Board 1</b>  |
| Week 2: May 23-29<br><b>Asynchronous<br/>RECORDED</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Structure &amp; Function of the Eye, Common Diseases</li> <li>▪ Implications of Visual Impairment</li> </ul>           | Bishop;<br>Barton;<br>Topor<br><b>Discussion Board 2<br/>Disposition Survey Due</b>   |
| Week 3: June 2<br>(May 30-June 5)<br><b>Synchronous LIVE</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Modifying Instruction &amp; Environmental Modifications</li> <li>▪ Expanded Core Curriculum</li> </ul>                 | *McNear & Torres, Ch. 2-6;<br>Cox & Dykes<br><b>Menu Item #1 Due</b>  |
| Week 4: June 6-12<br><b>Asynchronous<br/>RECORDED</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legal Rights</li> <li>▪ Placement Options</li> </ul>   | Barclay;<br>Correa-Torres<br><b>Menu Item #2 Due<br/>Discussion Board 3</b>   |
| Week 5: June 16<br>(June 13-19)<br><b>Synchronous LIVE</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Literacy &amp; Technology</li> <li>▪ Families, Multicultural and Psychosocial Issues</li> </ul>                        | *Erin & Spungin; Tomasik;<br>Griffin-Shirley & Matlock;<br>MacFarland;<br>Griffin, Davis & Williams<br><b>Response &amp; Reflection<br/>Paper Due</b> |