



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

Spring 2024

EDSE 115 006: American Sign Language (ASL) I

CRN: 22498, 4 – Credits

Instructor: Shanmugam Pillai	Meeting Dates: 1/16/24 – 5/8/24
Phone: (571) 350-8117	Instructional Method: Mix of face-to-face meetings and online instruction. See the face-to-face meeting dates below. Online instruction will be purely asynchronous.
E-Mail: spillai@gmu.edu	Meeting Day(s): Wednesday
Office Hours: By Appointment	Meeting Time(s): 7:20 pm – 9:10 pm
Office Location: Fairfax; HORIZN 4012	Meeting Location: Fairfax; HORIZN 4012

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

Prerequisite(s):

None

Co-requisite(s):

None

Course Description

Focuses on introduction of American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf culture. Teaches basic person-to-person conversational signing. Emphasizes development of expressive and receptive skills. Increases knowledge of ASL vocabulary and the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of the language.

Advising Contact Information

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress in your program. Students in Special Education and Assistive Technology programs can contact the Special Education Advising Office at 703-993-3670 or speced@gmu.edu for assistance. All other students should refer to their assigned program advisor or the Mason Care Network (703-993-2470).

Advising Tip

Are you interested in an ASL minor? Submit your Minor Declaration (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/UMD.pdf>), or contact the program for more information: speced@gmu.edu.

Course Delivery Method

Hybrid

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

A percentage of this course will be delivered online using an asynchronous format via the Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on January 16, 2024.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see: [Browser support \(https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Ultra/Getting_Started/Browser_Support\)](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Ultra/Getting_Started/Browser_Support)
- Students must maintain 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 course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
 - [Adobe Acrobat Reader: https://get.adobe.com/reader/](https://get.adobe.com/reader/)
 - [Windows Media Player: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player)

- [Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)

Expectations

- **Course Week:**
Our course week will begin on the day that our face-to-face meetings take place as indicated on the Schedule of Classes. Online instruction will be purely asynchronous.
- **Log-in Frequency:**
Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 3 times per week.
Participation:
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing 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 who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- **Technical Issues:**
Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- **Workload:**
Please be aware that this course is not self-paced. Students are expected to meet specific deadlines and due dates listed in the Class Schedule section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- **Instructor Support:**
Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- **Netiquette:**
The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.* Remember that you are not competing with classmates but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
- **Accommodations:**
Online learners who require effective accommodations to ensure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Service.

Learner Outcomes

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

1. Develop minimal ASL conversational skills and vocabulary to effectively communicate with members of the Deaf community in the United States (DH1S2, C1.1).
2. Introduce self and produce correct handshape form for letters and numbers, fingerspell names, ask yes/no questions (C1.1).
3. Narrate language and home background (C1.1).
4. Identify person and give information about that person (C1.1).
5. Describe residence, use contrastive structures, tell about living arrangements (C1.1).
6. Talk about family and family relationships, tell similarities and differences between self and sibling, discuss information about relationship, marital status, age, etc (C1.1).
7. Develop a basic awareness of language and culture alive in the Deaf community today (DH1S2, C2.1).

Professional Standards

Goals, objectives, and assignments in this class address NCATE Standard 1b/ Pedagogical Content Knowledge and 1c / Skills Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Knowledge and Skill Standards, the Council on Education of the Deaf, and the Virginia Department of Education teacher licensure competencies. Goals, objectives, and assignments in this class address the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Knowledge and the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA) competencies. Code for CEC Standards: DH = Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Code for ASLTA Standards: C1 = Communication, C2 = Culture, C3 = Connections, C4 = Comparisons, C5 = Communities.

Required Texts

Smith, C., Lentz, E., & Mikos, K. (2008). *Signing naturally: Units 1-6 student set*. Dawn Sign Press.

Recommended Texts

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, VIA, hard copy).

VIA Performance-Based Assessment Submission Requirement

There is no required performance-based assessment for this course.

Assignments and/or Examinations

Course Format: Hybrid format

1. **Online portion:** students will study the new vocabulary, complete the weekly lessons and assignments, and complete the weekly vocabulary quizzes before attending class.
2. **Weekly class meetings,** students will review any assignments/materials for further clarification, review the new signs learned online, and practice signing with classmates on interactive activities learned in class.
 - a. **Feedback:** Will be given during class for students, this is an opportunity for students to fix their sign production errors. Students need to pay attention to feedback given to their classmates in class as a learning tool.

Vocabulary: Students will watch and learn the new vocabulary in Blackboard and refer to their textbook for the definition. Students are expected to practice signing the new vocabulary.

Vocabulary Quizzes: Students will have weekly quizzes which will be administered via Blackboard. There is a time limit for quizzes, it will be automatically submitted when the time expires. All answers will be typed.

Lessons and Assignments: Students will complete weekly assignments in Blackboard. Students will check the modules on **Blackboard** for more details about the assignments.

1. **Reading Assignments** – some assignments require you to read and find the answers in your textbook.
2. **Lesson/Assignment Question Formats**
 - a. **Multiple Choice** – pick an answer
 - b. **Multiple Answers** - total points indicates how many answers
Example: Question worth 3 points = 3 answers
 - c. **True/False** - type the full word, not T/F
 - d. **Hotspot** - click on the spot or picture given
 - e. **Jumbled Sentences** - pick an answer from the drop-down list
 - f. **Matching** - select the correct answer that matches the information given
 - g. **Ordering** - put the answers in the correct order
 - h. **Fill in the Blank/Fill in Multiple Blanks questions**
 - i. **Numbers** – type the number only (do not spell it out)
 - ii. **1-word answers** – most questions require 1-word answers
 - iii. **2 or 3-word answers** If you see (2 words) or (3 words) next to the question/blank space, follow accordingly.
 - iv. **Parenthesis** – pick an answer given in the parenthesis
 1. (bored/excited)
 2. ... means etc.
Example: 1st, 2nd, 3rd ... – answer will be any number given in that format
 - v. **Spelling** – will be deducted if not correct (use Google to double check your spelling)
 - vi. **Abbreviations** – are not allowed
 - vii. **Capitalization** – is not required

3. **Answer Key** – correct answers will be available after the due dates.
4. **My Grades Tab** – Check my grades tab in Blackboard for the assignment due dates.

Deaf Events: Students will attend **one** Deaf event. Students can find events using the websites below detailing location, type, and time of events.

Here are some websites students can check to find upcoming events:

1. Instagram: @DeafCityEvents
2. Fairfax ASL Social: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/aslclub2015/>
3. ASL Bridge: <https://www.meetup.com/ASLBridge/>
4. Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons (click on community events calendar): <https://nvrc.org/news/>
5. Gallaudet University: <https://my.gallaudet.edu/calendar>
6. ASL Trivia (must be 21+) <https://www.facebook.com/ASLTriviaDC/>

Another option is to Google the following – Silent Dinner in (city, VA), Silent Supper in (city, VA), or Deaf Event in (city, VA).

The following do not count as a Deaf event:

- Church settings
- Deaf plays
- Interpreted events
- Captioned movies

The purpose of this event is for students to practice their signing skills.

For the event, students will draft a paper detailing their experience. The paper should be one page, double spaced. Include a comprehensive answer to each question below.

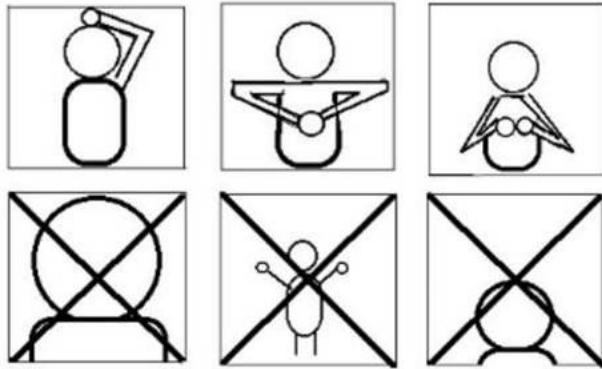
1. Name of the Deaf Community Event
2. When the event occurred
3. The purpose of the event
4. Describe the people who attended.
5. What observations were made?
6. Describe the feelings evoked.
7. Thoughts and feeling toward this event (before and after)
8. What was learned from this experience?
9. Describe any differences between a hearing event and a Deaf event.
10. Other keen observations, thoughts, or unanswered questions

It is the **student's responsibility** to find a Deaf event to attend. If you do not meet the requirements above, the assignment will result in a zero. The due date is shown on the schedule below.

Post: Blackboard

Editing ASL videos: Students are required to edit their ASL videos.

1. Ensure the computer or tablet is on a firm surface (a desk or table). Do NOT have the computer on the student's lap, a bed, or any other surface where the student will be moving.
2. Make sure the video is centered and visible where the instructor can see the top of the student's head and the bottom of the student's chest area as shown below.



3. If students use their phone, follow the format below:



4. Make sure eyes are facing the camera, not looking to the side, above or below. Brief glances are acceptable.
5. Make sure that the background is clean (one-colored wall) and free of “visual noise” (people, books, television, animals appearing, etc.).
6. The color of the student's shirt should contrast their skin tone. Avoid red, yellow, and orange shades. If students have tattoos on their arms, they should wear long-sleeved shirts. Tank tops and string shirts are not allowed.
7. Remove hats and excessive jewelry. Wedding rings and small earrings are ok.
8. If students are sitting, do not swivel.
9. All videos must be submitted on Blackboard as one.
10. Review the quality of the videos before submitting.

Video Feedback: Students can check for video feedback for Unit Expressive Tests via Blackboard.

Tests: The course objectives focus on the receptive and expressive use of ASL. Each test will have a receptive and an expressive portion at the end of each unit. ASL I will cover units 1-4. Students will check **Blackboard** for more details about the Unit Tests.

1. **Receptive Tests:** The receptive portion of the test will be administered via Blackboard. The formatting will be similar to assignments, however

there is a time limit for tests. The test will be automatically submitted once the time has expired.

2. **Expressive Tests (videos):** Students will post the expressive portion (signing) on Blackboard. Rubrics are posted on blackboard to be used as a guide.

Note: Students will need to upload to Kaltura before posting (a video with instructions is included at the end of each expressive test).

Note: Remember the purpose of this video is to showcase a student's signing ability. Students will create a fake situation or scenario based on the required criteria. Utilize the vocabulary you have learned from the unit.

Note: Rehearse until you no longer need your notes. Record yourself signing the information and attach it on Blackboard. If a student's eye gaze is not on the camera, it will result in a zero.

Note: Students will submit **three** videos. Each video counts as **6.67%** of the course grade. (Expressive Tests – 20% of the course grade).

Final Exam: The final exam is a comprehensive exam, which focuses on both the production and receptive use of ASL. The final exam will be one-on-one with the instructor involving an interview-style type format.

Student Evaluations of Teaching:

The student evaluation of teaching, or SET, is an online course survey. You are strongly encouraged to complete this form for each course as this feedback helps instructors and administrators improve your class experiences. Towards the end of the course, you will receive email and Blackboard notifications when the evaluations open. Your anonymous and confidential feedback is only shared with instructors after final grades have been submitted. More information about the SET can be found on The Institute of Effectiveness and Planning website at <https://oiep.gmu.edu/set/>

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance/Participation

It is expected that students will attend each class on time.

Students will be allowed one (1) absence without a penalty. Each absence afterwards will result in a 5% deduction from the total grade as shown below:

First Absence – no penalty

Second Absence – 5% deduction of the final grade

Third Absence – 5% deduction of the final grade

Fourth Absence – 5% deduction of the final grade

Note: The following are additional rules that will be applied to the attendance policy:

1. Two (2) late arrivals will be equivalent to one (1) absence which will be applied to the policy stated above.
 2. If a student arrives more than 30 minutes late, it will count as one (1) absence.
- Note:** For excused absences beyond two (2), students would need to get a letter from Disability Services for any mental or physical health related issues.

Late Work

Any papers, videos, or assignments will not be accepted past due dates.

Note: Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.

Other Requirements

No Voicing Policy: To enhance students' language acquisition of ASL, a "no voicing" setting will be enforced. Respect the instructor and classmates by refraining from voicing or interpreting for others. If students do not understand the instructor or classmates (or missed a portion of information), please ask the instructor for clarification. Students can ask a classmate by using signs or writing back and forth.

Students are expected to cease voicing the moment they walk into the classroom until the moment they exit the classroom. Students are also expected to continue signing until the instructor has left the room after the class session. It is expected that students will practice ASL with classmates during times they are in the classroom and the instructor is not present.

If voicing becomes a persistent problem, the instructor will ask the student to leave the class for the day; this will count as an absence for the day.

Grading

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percent Grade
A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	81-83
C+	79-80
C	76-78
C-	74-75
D	70-73
F	Below 70

Grade Distribution:

- 1. Assignments/Deaf Events 20%
- 2. Vocabulary Quizzes 20%
- 3. Unit Tests – Expressive - video assignments 20%
- 4. Unit Tests – Receptive 20%
- 5. Final Exam 20%

Note: Students’ grades will be based on **percentage** for each area as shown above, not **total points**.

Note: A student needs **76%** to pass the course or to move on to the next course.

Final Exam Waiver - If a student gets 89 % or above in class, the Final Exam will be waived.

***Note:** The George Mason University Honor Code will be strictly enforced. See [Academic Integrity Site \(https://oai.gmu.edu/\)](https://oai.gmu.edu/) and [Honor Code and System \(https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/\)](https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/). Students are responsible for reading and understanding the Code. “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” Work submitted must be your own new, original work for this course or with proper citations.

Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times. See [Policies and Procedures \(https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/\)](https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/).

Class Schedule

***Note:** Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Class Meetings: Face-to-face meetings on Wednesdays from 7:20 – 9:10pm. Dates are shown below:

Class Meetings
January 17
January 24
January 31
February 7
February 14
February 21
February 28
March 13
March 20
March 27
April 3
April 10
April 17

Modules: Due on **Tuesdays at 11:59 pm**. Check Blackboard for more information.

Coursework	Day	Submitted by
Module 1	January 23	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 2	January 30	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 3	February 6	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 4	February 13	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 5	February 20	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 6	February 27	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 7	March 5	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 8	March 12	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 9	March 19	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 10	March 26	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 11	April 2	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 12	April 9 Deaf Event Paper Due	11:59 pm (EST)
Module 13	April 16	11:59 pm (EST)
Final Exam	April 24	One-on-One
Final Exam	May 1	One-on-One

Core Values Commitment

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

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code. See [Honor Code and System](https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/) (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See [Responsible Use of Computing](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/) (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor. See [Disability Services](https://ds.gmu.edu/) (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>.
- Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to [Blackboard Instructional Technology Support for Students](https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/) (<https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>).
- [Learning Services \(learningservices@gmu.edu\)](mailto:learningservices@gmu.edu) - Provides a variety of experience-based learning opportunities through which students explore a wide range of academic concerns. Services include support to students with learning differences, individual study strategy coaching, individualized programs of study, and referrals to tutoring resources. Presentations on a variety of academic topics such as time management, reading, and note taking are available to the university community. The programs are open to all George Mason University students free of charge.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per [University Policy 1202](#). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as the [Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#) at 703-380-1434 or [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website [College of Education and Human Development \(http://cehd.gmu.edu/\)](http://cehd.gmu.edu/).

Appendix

Assessment Rubric(s)

	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS
Vocabulary: Usage of vocabulary	Accurate, relevant use of wide variety of vocabulary used from all units studied (2)	Generally accurate, relevant use of vocabulary from more than half the units studied (1)	Vocabulary inaccurate and used covers less than half the units studied
Formation: Handshape, Palm Orientation, Movement, Location	Skilled, accurate, appropriate use of hand shape, orientation, location and movement; transitions smooth (2)	Generally accurate, appropriate use; errors made do not compromise meaning (1)	Less than 50% accurate, appropriate use; errors compromise meaning; effort and practice not evident
Space Referents: Motion/Location of Verbs (includes eye gaze, body shifting and choice of signs)	Use is consistently accurate and appropriate; use precisely expresses intended meaning (2)	Use is generally accurate and appropriate; errors do not compromise the intended meaning; good effort (1)	Use is either not present or awkward; interferes with intended meaning; effort and practice not evident
Grammar: Yes/No Questions “Wh-word” Questions	A variety of sentence types are used; solid knowledge of grammar is evident (2)	A variety of sentence types are used; errors do not compromise meaning; use	Use is awkward and confusing; errors

	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS
Location Negation Contrastive Structures (referents, time, intensity, etc.)		demonstrates effort and thought (1)	compromise meaning; effort and practice not evident
Fluency/Accuracy Smoothness and Fluency of Signs Conceptually Accurate Ideas/Messages	Use is consistently accurate and appropriate; use precisely expresses intended meaning (2)	Use is generally accurate and appropriate; errors do not compromise the intended meaning; good effort (1)	Use is either not present or awkward; sometimes interferes with intended meaning; effort and practice not evident
Total Points Possible = 10	Points earned in parenthesis	Points earned in parenthesis	No points earned