



Special Education Vision:

*We are a community of learners knowing, doing, and becoming.*

Education 348: Nature and Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities

Term: Spring 2005

Instructor: Chris Cain

Office/Office Hours: M-W-F 1-3 / by appointment

Phone/E-Mail: 828-689-1495 / ccain@mhc.edu

Course Description:

This course is designed to consider the specific area of learning disabilities in depth, including etiology, prevalence, and characteristics. This course will review and analyze current practice and research on issues relating to the education of students with learning disabilities. Historical and current aspects pertaining to the particular area disability will be revealed as well.

Texts: Mercer & Pullen; Students with Learning Disabilities, Sixth Edition, 2005. (ISBN 0-13-111539-1)

Course Goals and Objectives:

Through the readings, discussions, and activities offered in this course, candidates will be able to:

- Identify etiologies, definitions, and characteristics associated with learning disabilities as well as prevalence in a variety of populations and cultures. (S-8 I-1, 2)
- Describe present and historical approaches and medical aspects to the treatment and education of learning disabled students.
- Demonstrate knowledge of legislation, litigation, and policy issues related to learning disabilities. (S-9 I- 1, 2, 3, 4)
- Review North Carolina placement procedures and those of PL 94-142/IDEA, including the development of an Individual Education Program and Transition Plan. (S-9 I- 1, 2, 3, 4)
- Explain the levels of severity of learning disabilities and the continuum of service options.
- Discuss appropriate curriculum modifications, research based instructional strategies, Assistive Technology, and assessment procedures (including: CBA, traditional and alternative) for learning disabled students. (S-2 I- 1,2) (S-4 I-1) (S-5 I-1) (S-6 I-1,2,3,4,5,6) (S-7 I-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
- Demonstrate an understanding of behavior management programs appropriate for learning disabled students.
- Discuss the social emotional effects of a learning disability and the value of a positive classroom environment where students are not afraid to take risks and work collaboratively with one another (peer-tutoring).
- Describe the effects a learning disability may have across the life span of the child and on the functioning of the family. (S-8 I-1, 2)
- Display communication and collaboration skills for use with families of learning disabled students and with professional colleagues. (S-10 I1, 2, 3, 4)

Instructional Methods:

- a. The candidates will be expected to participate in various roles during mock IEP team meetings where different view and cultural aspects will be presented. (S-8 I-1, 2) (S-10 I1,

2, 3, 4) (S-11 I-2)

- b. Two formal evaluations (mid-term and final)
- c. The candidates will produce weekly reflective essays:  
Every week you will be given a “thought question,” which should be addressed in the form of a brief essay/reflection (no more than two typed, double-spaced pages) due at the beginning of class the following week. These questions will be based both on the textbook and supplemental readings and will involve important themes in the class as well as best practices related to that theme. Your position or main point should be articulated clearly in the form of a thesis statement and supported in your discussion. You should draw on the target readings, other relevant sources from this and other courses, and your own experience to support your argument. Some of the questions will involve current controversies in the field of learning disabilities; therefore, your opinions may differ from those of your instructor, classmates, and the authors of articles. Assessment of your work in these instances will be based on the quality of your work rather than the specific position taken. Accuracy of spelling and mechanics and clarity of writing (e.g., organization, smooth transitions, and correct word usage) will be components of your grade on all written work, so take the time to proofread your papers. Please use appropriate APA citations.
- d. The candidates will produce written questions in preparation for each class meeting, you should generate in writing 2-3 good questions based on the readings. Your questions may involve aspects of the reading you found difficult or confusing, issues that you felt were not fully addressed in the readings, hypothetical situations, etc. You may be asked to use your questions to initiate a discussion. The questions will be collected periodically and will be a component of your class participation grade.
- e. Each candidate shall conduct a “simple” Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA), using a case study that focuses on a child with a learning disability. This will involve: (S-4 I-1) (S-5 I-1) (S-6 I-1, 2) (S-7 I-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) (S-9 I- 1, 2, 3, 4)
  - a. Pulling material from the Standard Course of Study and developing a determination of the skills this child most desperately needs (through non-biased assessment) in order to function at his / her most proficient level. The students will then be expected to suggest a research-validated learning / instructional strategy that will enable this child to have access to the regular education curriculum, while upholding the child’s self-esteem and increasing his / her self-determination.
  - b. The student will complete an IEP goal sheet and design three classroom lesson plans that will teach the effective use to the learning / instructional strategy they have selected.
- f. Research Projects and Presentations: The candidates will have the opportunity to investigate a topic of personal interest to you in greater depth through a brief research project. The paper should be no more than 5 pages in length (12 point in Times New Roman font) and should include a minimum of 10 citations, at least 6 of which should be professional books or journal articles. The others may be Internet sources or books and articles from the popular press (e., Newsweek, books written for parents or children, etc.). You will work collaboratively with a group of 3-4 students who have selected related topics to design a 15-20 minute symposium-type presentation.
- g. Candidates choose a specific small-group instructional or tutoring strategy (CWPT, reciprocal teaching, PALs). Include this strategy in a lesson plan, and note how you would use this grouping strategy to meet educational objectives for the lesson. In a separate rationale, explain why you chose this specific grouping strategy, making reference to three research sources evaluating this strategy

#### Topic Ideas

- Social acceptance/rejection of students with learning disabilities
- Learning disabilities in adulthood

- The co-occurrence of two or more exceptionalities ( e.g., giftedness and learning disabilities; learning disabilities and ADHD; learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral difficulties; ESL students with learning disabilities)
- Issues related to the diagnosis of learning disabilities ( e. g., the pros and cons of using IQ tests in the identification process, the validity of the IQ/ achievement discrepancy condition)
- Identifying learning disabilities in minority populations
- The social difficulties of students with learning disabilities
- The nature of a particular type of learning disability (e.g., dyslexia, nonverbal disabilities, dyscalculia, etc.) and effective remedial instruction.
- The theoretical construct of intelligence and its measurement
- Controversial treatments for learning disabilities
- The importance of research – validated learning strategies and programs
- Implications of whole language instruction for students with LD
- Attribution theory and motivation
- Emergent literacy
- Technology and special education
- The benefits of technology in writing instruction
- Math anxiety
- The value of early training in phonological awareness
- Transitions (preschool to school or school to employment/post secondary education)
- Issues related to full inclusion of students with learning disabilities in general education classrooms (e.g., response of advocacy groups, how to accomplish responsibly, future directions, etc.)
- Programming for learning disabled students at the college level. (You might wish to investigate the policy established by Boston University and the resulting lawsuit).
- Neurological research related to learning disabilities
- Use of punishment with exceptional children
- Self-esteem! Self-perceptions of learning disabled students
- The most effective behavior management techniques
- Learning disabilities and juvenile delinquency

#### Conceptual Framework Statement:

The Mars Hill College Teacher Education Program develops Teacher Professionals, through a strong grounding in liberal arts and content, professional knowledge, and values and ethics. It is within this statement that the Special Education Program founds our Program and Candidate Vision.

Within this course candidates gain new knowledge of ways to help meet the behavioral, academic, and life needs of students with LD. The candidates research strategies and methods used by teacher professionals in the field. Candidates will conduct simple CBAs (curriculum based assessments) through the use of case studies this will build a strong professional and content knowledge as well as develop moral and ethic values.

#### Diversity Statement:

This course teaches candidates about the many diverse learning and behavioral styles of students from many different cultures. Candidates learn the concepts and structures needed to create classroom environments that are meaningful and relevant for diverse learners. Candidates discover the importance of listening to parents and others to enhance the educational experience. Candidates find that having diversity in a classroom is a strong point.

#### Technology Requirements:

Candidates use the internet in order to find resources. Students discover many new technology devices that enable others a better quality of life and learning. Candidates use technology to plan and develop specific parts of the mini CBAs, as well as keep track of data. The candidates are also responsible for presenting a researched topic to the class with the aid of a current media. (i.e. PowerPoint)

#### Clinical or Field Experience Component:

none

Course Policies and Evaluation Procedure:

Attendance is required for all class sessions. You are now involved in your professional sequence of courses, and you should keep in mind that your attendance, promptness, and preparation for class are a reflection of your commitment to professionalism. The knowledge and insights gained through active involvement in class discussions and activities are essential in meeting the course objectives. Evaluation is an effective teaching/learning tool.

Grading Schedule:

Grading Schedule:

A=100-93

B=92-85

C=84-77

D=76-70

F=BELOW 70

Class Participation	20%
Weekly essays	10%
CBA Project	20%
Research projects and presentations	20%
Specific small-group instructional or tutoring strategy	10%
Mid-term and Final Exam	20%

*“If you have a declared / documented disability and require modifications / accommodations to be successful within this class, please see the instructor.”*

Honor Code

We, the students of Mars Hill College, pledge ourselves to uphold integrity, honest, and academic responsibility in and out of the classroom.

Honor Pledge

On my honor, I have neither given nor received any academic aid or information that would violate the honor code of Mars Hill College.