

Rutgers University
Graduate School of Education
Department of Educational Psychology
Special Education

Learning Disabilities: 15.293.522

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Online

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the field of learning disabilities (LD). The focus of the course is on causes, characteristics, assessment, and instructional needs of students with LD. Topical coverage addresses cognitive characteristics that distinguish students with LD in areas of attention, memory, organization and the academic needs of students in writing, reading, and math, and social competence. The needs of students with LD across the continuum of educational placements will be examined. Ongoing developments in the field with changing conceptualizations of LD and alternative identification methods to IQ-achievement discrepancy (e.g., RTI) will be covered in depth.

Course Objectives

1. Identify and describe the historical milestones, legal basis, and current issues in educational programs for students with learning disabilities;
2. Understand the current educational definition of individuals with LD, including identification criteria, labeling issues, and current incidence;
3. Understand the psychological characteristics of students with LD across the lifespan, including intelligence, perception, memory, metacognition, attention, and language development;
4. Understand the academic characteristics of individuals with LD in reading, written language, and mathematics;
5. Understand the social-emotional characteristics of individuals with LD, including social imperceptiveness, juvenile delinquency, and learned helplessness;
6. Identify and describe basic research supported instructional strategies and practices for teaching individuals with LD;
7. Identify relevant professional organizations, governmental agencies, and advocacy groups relevant to providing services and supports to individuals with LD, as well as related journals and Web-based resources.

Required Texts

Mercer, C.D., & Pullen, P.C. (2009). *Students with learning disabilities* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Shaywitz, S. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Supplemental Readings

American Psychological Association: www.apa.org

New Jersey Special Education Regulations (6A:14): www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/reg/

Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE): www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/

LD online: www.ldonline.org/

Council for Exceptional Children: www.cec.sped.org

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (nichcy): www.nichcy.org

Others: TBA

Acceptable Journals

Journal of Learning Disabilities

Remedial & Special Education (RASE)

Teaching Exceptional Children

Exceptional Children

Learning Disabilities Research & Practice

Assignments

Attendance and Participation Students are expected to attend each class promptly and meaningfully participate individually or in groups. In an online course this means faithful and relevant involvement in all online discussion threads. A lack of meaningful participation will affect your final grade. **The following is what makes for a good response in a threaded discussion group from a grading perspective:** I am looking for you to post thoughtful, well reasoned expressions of your ideas about the topics and questions at hand and respond to your classmates' ideas in the same way. I ask that you respond **vigorously and early** to my questions and your classmates responses. Obviously, how well you do this has an impact on your class participation grade, which necessarily carries more weight in an online class. **Remember: early, thoughtfully, and frequently.** As stated in the Course Introduction, operationally this means responding thoughtfully to each Discussion Thread at least one time by Wednesday and then responding thoughtfully to a minimum of three of your classmates by Saturday. (Except for Unit 1, which begins on a Thursday, all units will be available for "discussion" beginning on Monday until Sunday. Generally, Sunday comments do not lend themselves to interaction among classmates, so please don't wait until the last minute. "Thoughtfully" means I can readily tell that some focused cerebral energy went into the formulation of what you decided to share.

Required Readings and Homework Students should digest required readings **prior to each week's class** and be fully prepared to discuss the material and ask questions. Discussion guides may be distributed to focus reading attention.

Quiz There will be one quiz this semester which may cover any material from readings, online discussions, etc.

Research Paper This will be a comprehensive, cogent, detailed and scholarly discussion of a current topic in the education of students with learning disabilities. APA format must be followed. A rubric will be provided. Your choice of a topic must be approved in advance.

Journal Article Reviews Each student will review two recent articles concerning separate topics in the education of students with learning disabilities. One review will be submitted as a two page paper following APA format. Articles will be "presented and discussed in class." Written component of assignment will

consist of a two-page summary and opinion: preferably no more than one page of each. Remember APA. The other will be presented in class as a PowerPoint presentation with handouts. Acceptable Journals are noted above.

Important Note: Your choices must be approved in advance.

Final Exam This will be discussed in class.

Course Announcements It is critical that you look here on a regular basis for updates and clarifications. Currently you will note separate announcements on the following topics:

Participation: Discussion Threads / Posting Responsibilities

Warning: Online Timeout

Person-first Language

Online Writing Reminders & Writing Checklist

Going forward you can expect to see important information regarding quizzes, journal article reviews, final exam, etc., located here.

Email Response I **intend** to respond to all of your emails sent to me. Likewise, I would appreciate a response to all emails I send to you. This pertains to those that accompany returned work, individual communications, anything. I need to know that you are in continuous communication with me. A simple “I received this” or “I got the message” relieves my anxiety. If you don’t receive an email response from me, I would appreciate a call at the number on the syllabus. Ask me why I didn’t respond. Depending entirely on technology can be a slippery slope.

Grading Criteria

Each assignment is given a point value and the total number of points is used to calculate the final grade. No grades will be curved and no extra credit is available. Late assignments will only be accepted with **advance permission**. Any such situations must be discussed with me prior to the due date of the assignment. **Late assignments are not eligible for maximum credit or a grade of A.**

Point Values

Attendance & Participation	25 points
Quiz	10 points
Two Journal Review Assignments @ 10 points each	20 points
Research Paper	25 points
Final Exam	20 points

Other Course Information

- All assignments should be typed, double spaced, and neat. Please use a 12-point traditional / professional font.

- Journal “Article Reviews should be completed using **APA Format (5th Edition)**. [If you have **APA questions, ask them before and not after an assignment is submitted.**] Please review the APA websites located in the Course Webliography.
- Discussion Thread postings do not follow APA format. Neither should these contributions be considered so informal, however, as to include texting abbreviations (IMHO) or keyboard emoticons ☹.
- Submission of written work will be done through email attachments sent directly to me. I will not be working with Drop Boxes. Please save documents in word format and be certain to include your name as part of the file name, e.g., DJeter Journal Article Review 1
- Students with documented disabilities who are entitled to accommodations should contact me as soon as possible to discuss academic accommodations or alternatives. Additional assistance is available through the New Brunswick Campus Coordinator at (732) 932-1711.

University Regulations

- The University Code of Student Conduct: <http://rci.rutgers.edu/%7Epolcomp/judaff/ucsc.shtml>
- The Academic Integrity Policy: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/integrity/policy.shtml>
- Plagiarism Policy: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/integrity/realifeexamples.html>
- [Related regulations may also be found in the Rutgers Graduate School of Education Catalog]

SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE	READING
9/1	Syllabus Introductions Special Education Regulations	Read NJAC 6A:14	NJAC 6A:14 www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/reg/
9/12	History, Definitions, Characteristics		Mercer & Pullen Chapter 1 Shaywitz Part I NJAC 6A:14-3.5(c)12 Eligibility
9/19	Medical Aspects		Mercer & Pullen Chapter 2
9/26	ADHD & OHI APA Format		Mercer & Pullen Chapter 3 NJAC 6A:14-3.5(c)9 Eligibility
10/3	Assessment & RTI	Quiz	RTI Video Mercer & Pullen Chapter 4 Shaywitz Part II NJAC 6A:14.3.4 Evaluation NJAC 6A:14-4.10 Statewide Assessment
10/10	Educational Settings & Services	Journal Article (1)	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 5

			NJAC 6A:14-4.2 through 4.8 Settings
10/17	Teaching Theories & Practices		Mercer & Pullen Chapter 6
10/24	Oral Communication: Speech & Language		Mercer & Pullen Chapter 7
10/31	Reading		Mercer & Pullen Chapter 8 Shaywitz Part III
11/7	Written Communication: Handwriting, Spelling & Written Language	Journal Article (2) Ppt. Presentations	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 9
11/14	Mathematics	Research Paper Topic Due	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 10
11/21	Social & Emotional Behavior		Mercer & Pullen Chapter 11
11/28	The Family & Learning Disabilities Early Identification & Intervention		Mercer & Pullen Chapters 12 & 13 PRISE
12/5	Adolescents & Adults w/ LD	Research Papers Due	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 14 Shaywitz Part IV
5/12	FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM