

Rutgers University
Department of Educational Psychology

15.293.522

Spring 2012

Learning Disabilities

Class Meets: Monday 4.50 to 7.30 p.m. HH A1
Course Instructor: Professor Angela O'Donnell
Office Location: Room 325, Graduate School of Education
Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 1-2 p.m. or by appointment.
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Required Texts:

Mercer, C., & Pullen, P. C. (2009). *Students with learning disabilities*. Upper Saddle River, NJ. Merrill, Available at NJ Books on Easton Avenue.

Other readings available on the Sakai website at <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>

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, and 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

Upon completion of this course, students can expect to:

- Identify and describe the historical milestones, legal basis, and current issues in educational programs for students with learning disabilities;
- Understand the current educational definition of individuals with LD, including identification criteria, labeling issues, and current incidence;
- Understand the psychological characteristics of students with LD across the lifespan, including intelligence, perception, memory, metacognition, attention, and language development;
- Understand the academic characteristics of individuals with LD in reading, written language, and mathematics;
- Understand the social-emotional characteristics of individuals with LD, including emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, self-concept, social imperceptiveness, and learned helplessness;
- Identify and describe basic research supported instructional strategies and practices for teaching individuals with LD;
- 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.

Class Format

The primary method of instruction in this course will be the use of lectures and class discussions, supplemented by small group activities and the use of videos, web resources etc.

Overview of Course Activities

The course includes extensive readings, two unannounced quizzes (open book, open notes), student led (group) presentations on the readings, Website resource reviews, field observation project and a final examination.

<i>Required Activities</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Points Available/% Grade</i>
Group presentation related to the readings	beginning week 3	20%
In class quizzes	unannounced	20%
Field observation project	due on week 12	30%
Website reviews	due on week 13	10%
Final examination	due on May 7th	20%

Policies

Academic Integrity: I expect that you will comply with standards of academic integrity (that is, you will not even think about cheating) in this course. If you need assistance in understanding an assignment or course content, please seek assistance from other appropriate resources or me. Assignments, however, should be your own work, except in cases where I have required a group product. The consequence for violating policies of academic integrity and other elements of the student code of conduct are serious and can have a tremendous negative impact on your academic progress and future career. You should not turn in the same work in two separate classes without the specific written approval of the faculty members involved. Leaving work until the last minute can increase the temptation to plagiarize work from journals or “borrow” friends’ work. You can avoid problems by getting your work done early. Exams are also your own work. The Office of Student Conduct supervises issues related to violations of academic integrity (see (<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>)). Please familiarize yourself with the university policy on academic integrity (<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/policy-on-academic-integrity>). Also see the PowerPoint slides on plagiarism on the course sakai website.

Make Up Exams: Make-up exams will NOT be scheduled unless you miss an exam because of religious observance or because of a properly documented illness. Proper documentation means that you provide a doctor's note that states you were unable to attend class on the specific day of the exam.

Attendance: Attendance at all regularly scheduled classes is required in accordance with the university’s attendance policy. Excused absences include absences due to religious observance (please let me know *before* the holiday), travel on university business (e.g., sports team), and properly documented illnesses. Students who were frequently absent last semester did not do as well in the courses as those who were regularly in attendance. Attendance will be monitored by in-class assignments that students will turn in and these will also function as a record of attendance.

Missed Classes: It is your responsibility to get notes, including handouts, from another student if you miss class. If you miss class when exams are returned, you will need to come to office hours to look at your exam.

Grading Policy: Grades are assigned based on a points system described previously.

Policy on Late Assignments: Assignments must be submitted on time. Late assignments will be accepted but the grade will be reduced.

Classroom Culture: Please turn all cell phones to **SILENT** during class. Please refrain from sending text messages during class. If you bring a laptop to class, I expect that you will use it for the purposes of the class **ONLY**. In other words, please do not use your laptop to surf the web or check email.. I expect that all of us (instructor included) will treat one another with respect and have a pleasant learning environment (I cannot make promises about the heating/cooling issues!!).

Problems?

Personal problems. A variety of resources are available at the university to assist you with personal difficulties (e.g., stress, anxiety, bereavement, etc). Each campus has a counseling center and these services are free to you as a student. Please seek assistance as early as you can so you can maintain a good academic performance.

Academic problems. If you are having difficulties with this course, you should seek assistance from me during office hours or by making an appointment with me. e.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

Students requiring accommodations related to disabilities will be provided all necessary supports and accommodations. In such circumstances, students should make sure that they communicate their needs in advance to the instructor in coordination with the Rutgers Office of Disability Services to ensure that they receive appropriate supports commensurate with their needs.

ASSIGNMENT/GRADING REQUIREMENTS: ADDITIONAL DETAILS

- 1. Participation:** Students are expected to come to class having completed all assigned readings for that week and to participate in class discussions. One way to prepare for class is to come up with three questions you have about the material.
- 2. Quizzes:** The course includes two quizzes. The quizzes will sample knowledge of key points and issues in the readings and be able to apply this knowledge. The quizzes will be open notes, open book. The quizzes will be unannounced. .

Students are strongly encouraged to form study groups and email Dr. O'Donnell about parts of the readings for which they have questions.

- 3. Group Presentation** Because of the number of individuals in the class, there will be presentations by groups of students rather than individual students. Groups will be organized based on friendships, common commutes or other variables students see as appropriate.
- 4. LD Class Observation:** Each student will spend a **minimum of 6 hours of total** observational time across a minimum of **4 separate visits** in an inclusion class, resource room, or self-contained special education room addressing the needs of several students with LD. The **target students for the observation must be formally classified as having a learning disability.** The observations must be with the same special education teacher. The graduate student will interview the special education teacher and will also collect samples of teaching and assessment materials. The student will write a paper that examines how the needs of students with LD are being served, based on the observations, interview, and document review. A project rubric with greater detail on the assignment and the required report format will be distributed and discussed at class session # 4. **The project is due at class session #12.** Sample projects are available for viewing in Dr. O'Donnell's office. You are encouraged to set up an appointment to do so. Students needing help securing school placements should contact Dr. O'Donnell.
- 5. Website Review Sheets:** Students will review selected LD and related special education resource Websites (5), filling out a review sheet on each Website (review sheets provided by Dr, O'Donnell at class # 4). Students will complete the review sheets individually and **turn them in at class session #13.** Students are encouraged to begin these reviews early in the semester.
- 6. Take-Home Final Exam:** Details of the final exam will be provided shortly

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS AND CONTENT COVERAGE

SESSION #	CONTENT COVERAGE	READINGS (by informal, shortened name)
1 Jan 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction 	
2 Jan 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of LD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 1, 2
3 Feb 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Identification and Intervention • Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 13 & 4
4 Feb 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to Traditional Views RTI and Evolving Views of LD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rethinking LD-Chapter 12 • <i>Redefining LD as Inadequate RTI</i> (2003)<i>RTI: Definitions, Evidence, and Implications</i> (2003) • Fuchs & Fuchs RTI Blueprint (2004) • RTI NJCLD June 2005 Report • Fuchs & Deschler: What We Need to Know About RTI (2007) • Fuchs et al: Blurring of Special Education (2010)
5 Feb 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Families • Adolescents with LD • Transition Programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapters 12 & 14 • Transition: Why it does not work (2010)
6 Feb 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-Emotional-Behavioral Issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 11 • Handbook of LD-Chapter 14 (Self-Concept) • Social-Emotional Learning and LD • Social-Emotional Side of LD
7 Mar 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADHD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 3 • Barkley Chapter 2 • Pfiffner, Barkley, & DuPaul, Chapter 15
Mar 12	SPRING BREAK	
8 Mar 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory & Practice Addressing LD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapters 5 & 6
9 Mar 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory & Practice II 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be assigned
10 Apr 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoken Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 7 • Child and Adolescent Development for Educators Chapter 7 (Language Development) • Early Language Development and Language Learning Disabilities
11 Apr 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive, Metacognitive, and Memory Issues with LD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbook of LD-Chapter 11 (Memory Difficulties) • Working Memory and Reading Difficulties • Metacognition and LD • Handbook of Educational Psychology Chapter 12
12 Apr 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 8 • Additional readings to be assigned
13 Apr 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 9 • Handbook of LD Chapter 21 (Handwriting/Spelling) • Self-Regulated Strategy Development-Writing Instruction for Students with Disabilities
14 Apr 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 10 • Handbook of LD Chapter 12 (LD in Arithmetic: Problem-Solving Differences and Cognitive Deficits) • Handbook of LD Chapter 19 (Enhancing Mathematical Problem Solving of Students with MD) • Balancing Perspectives on Mathematics Instruction
May 7th	Take home final exam due	