Rutgers University
Graduate School of Education
Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education
15.293.522 Learning Disabilities-ONLINE
Fall, 2015
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This advanced level graduate 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, 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 LEARNING 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 (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1 & 2);

- Understand the psychological characteristics of students with LD across the lifespan, including intelligence, perception, memory, metacognition, attention, and language development (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1 & 2);

- Understand the academic characteristics of individuals with LD in reading, written language, and mathematics (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 2);

- Understand key diversity and disproportionality related issues concerning students with LD (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standard # 2);

- Understand approaches to assessment and instrumentation used in the field of LD (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standard # 6);

- Understand the social-emotional characteristics of individuals with LD, including emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, self-concept, social imperceptiveness, and learned helplessness (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1 & 2);

- Identify and describe basic research supported instructional strategies and practices for teaching individuals with LD (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1, 2, 3, 7 & 8);

- Identify 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 (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 10).

SPECIAL EDUCATION MASTERS PROGRAM GOALS

Learning Goal 1: Attain mastery of the essential aspects of practice and research in the field of special education.

Learning Goal 2: Attain in-depth understanding of Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) professional standards and code of ethics for special education professionals.

Learning Goal 3: Further develop critical professional dispositions that help education professionals promote improvement in the lives of their students (commitment to ongoing professional development, using data-informed approaches, collaborative approaches, developing cultural competencies, etc.).

Learning Goal 4: Prepare to be professionals in special education or closely allied professional fields or to further advance in their professional work.

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

15:293:522 Learning Disabilities (3)   Origins of the concept of learning disabilities (LD). Cognitive and neuropsychological test patterns as LD indicators. Emphasis on cognitive characteristics that distinguish students with disabilities in the areas of reading, mathematics, attentional processes, organization for learning, and executive functioning. Influence of emotional and sociocultural factors on self-image and academic performance.

COURSE MATERIALS

- Mercer & Pullen (2009). *Students with learning disabilities* (7th edition). Merrill. ISBN 0132228424
- Other required readings available online in the eCollege course site.- assigned by and provided by the instructor

PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE

As current and future teaching and allied field professionals, students are expected to present themselves and act in the online class discussions as they would in a professional meeting in the school district where they work. This applies to several dimensions of professional conduct:

- Students are expected to be respectful of divergent beliefs and opinions that may be voiced in online class discussions, offering constructive questioning and feedback as appropriate.
- Except where otherwise customary (e.g., deaf community terminology), students are expected to use *person-first* language when speaking of students with disabilities (e.g., *student with a learning disability*, **NOT**, *LD student*), and never use demeaning terms such as *retard.* Students should avoid language that objectifies human beings as "things" of pity, such as, *wheelchair-bound*, *confined to a wheelchair*, or *suffers a disability.*

LATE ASSIGNMENTS POLICY

All assignments are expected on time. Late assignments will receive a reduced grade, generally, a flat reduction in grade equivalent to 10% of the total possible assignment grade per day late (or part thereof). Students with bona fide emergencies should contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss special arrangements in order to avoid grade penalties. The instructor will work constructively and collaboratively with students who **communicate early** regarding special problems completing assignments on time, with no grade penalties in special situations where advance communication takes place and the circumstances are deemed reasonable.

STUDENT CONDUCT and ACADEMIC HONESTY

The Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct can be accessed at:
http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/university-code-of-student-conduct
For information on the Rutgers University academic integrity policy, please go to:
http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity
Related policies and procedures may also be found in the Rutgers Graduate School of Education Catalog:
http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/gse_current/pg32.html
For any and all assignments and class activities, **no copying of any kind is allowed**, unless copied text is placed within quotations and author/source is appropriately cited. Excessive use of quoted material in essay assignments, quizzes, and tests is strongly discouraged and this will tend to result in lower grades (students need to express themselves using their own language).
Clear evidence of extensive plagiarism will likely result in a grade of F for the assignment AND course.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES: ACCOMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please

complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:
https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

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 (http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/) to ensure that they receive appropriate supports commensurate with their needs.

Organization of Course:

The course is offered as a internet course—this means that learners are expected to spend the same amount of time required for a "regular" class on the lesson and assignments. Students are required to respond to class lecture postings and all assignments in the time frame provided by the professor. The course will be guided by a series of lectures, on-line discussions, and analyses of relevant scenarios. The lectures will serve as launching pads from which discussions, individual and group activities, additional readings, and on-line work-sessions will eventuate. Sufficient time will be allotted for discussions and informal and task-oriented group sessions. Most importantly, the course will be organized to provide an informative and valuable educational experience for its participants. Self reflection forms a most integral part of this course. The instructor has provided additional information relating to how to succeed in the internet format in a separate document. Please read "Checklist for Internet Course Success" and "Ethics for Our Internet Course" which are included at the end of this document.

ASSESSMENT:

Responses are due when assigned by professor. Submit assignments in the course drop box. Even if a student completes all responses, if they are not on time, student will not receive full credit.

Attainment of the course objectives will be determined and assessed by the following:
COURSE GRADING PLAN

1. *Turn in* via drop box *weekly responses* (reflective questions and quizzes)to drop box- 10 points each x 13 weeks=130 points
2. *Complete midterm*=50 points
3. *Contribute three resources* (articles, books, Internet sites, etc.) through personal written summaries and commentaries for the class annotated bibliography of resources on learning disabilities. Due to professor via drop box and posted on threaded discussion for classmates. = 30 points
4. *Complete ,Research project* (topic and instructions provided by the professor). Due to professor via drop box and posted on threaded discussion for classmates.=40 points
5. *Complete book report* (list of suggested books and format for report provided by professor)=100 points
6. *Summarize* course through final=50 points
Course Grades: (out of 400 possible points)

GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A	93.00 – 100.0 %	**Point totals will be converted to percentages.**
B+	87.00 – 92.99 %	
B	81.00 – 86.99 %	**N.B. A grade of 86.99 earns a B, not a B+**
C+	77.00 – 80.99 %	
C	70.00 – 76.99 %	
F	Under 70 %	

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS AND CONTENT COVERAGE

This is a tentative schedule. Changes in assignments are possible as is the addition of readings/videos, etc.

Week #	Objectives-Essential Questions	READINGS (by informal, shortened name)
1 **9/4**	What will I learn in this course? What is required of me in this course? How do significant historical trends related to current issues in the field of learning disabilities?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 1 Handbook of Ld- Chapter 2
2 **9/11**	Who are the students we teach? How are the federal and state definitions of learning disability compare/contrast? What are the basic medical aspects that relate to learning disability?	• Mercer & Pullen – Chapter 2 Handbook of LD- Chapters 8 and 34 Responses from 9/4 due to professor via drop box

3 9/18	What are the issues regarding assessment and eligibility decisions for students with learning disabilities? What is the rationale for early identification and intervention? What are the primary purposes of assessment?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 13 & 4 Responses from 9/11 due to professor via drop box
4 9/25	What is RTI? What is the relationship between RTI and teaching students with learning disabilities?	Readings provided by professor Handbook of LD- Chapter 8 Responses from 9/18 due to professor via drop box Article summaries and critiques due
5 10/2	How can schools and parents for positive relationships? What are characteristics of adolescents with learning disabilities in the areas of academic needs, cognitive and metacognitive needs, social interaction needs, and motivation needs?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapters 12 & 14 Handbook of LD-Chapter 20 Responses from 9/25 due to professor via drop box
6 10/9	What are the social/emotional aspects relative learners with learning disabilities? How should educators promote social, emotional , and behavior development for students with learning disabilities?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 11 Handbook of LD- Chapter 15 Responses from 10/2 due to professor via drop box
7 10/16	What are the characteristics of an individual with ADHD? How has the definition of ADHD changed over	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 3 Responses from 10/10 due to professor via drop box

	time?	
8 **10/23**	What are educational service alternatives for students with learning disabilities? How do teachers of students with learning disabilities utilize teaching theories and practices? What are the current educational approaches in the field of learning disabilities?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapters 5 & 6 Handbook of LD- Chapters 26, 27, 28 Responses from 10/16 due to professor via drop box Midterm due
9 **10/30**	What is a language learning disability? What instructional strategies are effective for students with language learning disabilities?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 7 Handbook of LD-Chapter 14 Responses from 10/23 due to professor via drop box
10 **11/6**	What factors have been identified as predictors of reading disability? What reading teaching strategies are effective for students with learning disabilities?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 8 Handbook of LD-Chapter 12 Responses from 10/30 due to professor via drop box Research project due
11 **11/13**	What methods are appropriate for assessing, developing, and teaching handwriting skills, spelling skills, and writing development? How does one develop an IEP individual education plan for students with learning disabilities?	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 9 Handbook of LD-Chapters 10, 11, 18, 19 Responses from 11/6 due to professor via drop box
12	What are the skill areas in	• Mercer & Pullen - Chapter 10

11/20	mathematics competence and common math needs associated with learning disabilities? What specific strategies and interventions are effective for students with mathematics needs?	Handbook of LD- Chapter 22 Responses due from 11/13 due to professor via drop box
13 11/25 (see revised Rutgers Graduate calendar)	What are the latest research findings with regard to students with learning disabilities?	• Handbook of LD- Chapters 13,21 Reading provided by professor Responses from 11/20 due to professor via drop box Book report due
14 12/4	What are the strategies to improve access for students with learning disabilities to the general education curriculum?	• Readings provided by professor Handbook of LD- Chapter 30 Responses from 11/25 due to professor via drop box
15 12/11	What have I learned?	Final exam due

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS ON-LINE COURSE:

Welcome to a most exciting adventure—our on-line course –

Here are some of the ideas and tips that I have to offer to you to help you embark and succeed on this on-line adventure:
1) Students report to me that in an on-line course they have to be able to interact with others in multiple ways and this requires more time, dedication, and time-management than does a traditional face-to-face class.
2) In an on-line course, reading and writing are more important than in a traditional class. You have to be able to read and understand the writing of others—your instructor and your fellow learners. You must be able to comprehend written directions so that you can complete assignments. You need to be able to compose clear questions to your instructor when you are confused or need clarification. As for your own writing, you need to answer questions completely and concisely with attention paid to spelling and grammar.
3) You need to be comfortable working with a computer and using the Internet. You need to know how to log into the course, send responses to your professor, work in on-line groups, and respond in the discussion board format.

4) You need to be able to manage your time well so that assignments are emailed to your professor on time and that you collaborate with your peers so that group assignments can be handed in when they are due. You should expect to login it the course at least three times a week and spend at least two to three hours doing your on-line lessons.

5) An on-line course places significantly less emphasis on lecturing by the professor. You are required to be a more critical and creative thinker who can make personal "sense" of what you are to do to succeed in this course.

Checklist for On-Line Course Success

o Keep up with all deadlines—on-line class and required graded assignments. Work can be turned in through the course drop box or emailed to me directly.
o Learn the on-line Rutgers course system during the first week of the class.
o Log into the course frequently.
o Discover when and where you work best on-line. Create a schedule for yourself.
o Be patient with yourself , your computer, and the Internet
o Download and print documents/lessons you want to study or consider in depth.
o Save your work in more than one place.
o Find a friend or buddy who can help you achieve.
o Work hard.
o ASK QUESTIONS—of each other and of me. I LOVE to hear from you and no question or comment is insignificant to me. So please interact with me through my email or phone numbers. Or even stop in to see me if you feel comfortable. I live in Hunterdon County.
o Enjoy!

Ethics for Our On-line Course

The same standards of conduct and courtesy apply on-line as in a regular classroom. However, it is important to remember that you must pay even more attention to these standards when you study and learn on-line. Here are some suggestions:

1. Participate and share.

2. Think BEFORE you hit SEND. How will the person reading this message interpret it? No one can see your smile if you are being sarcastic! No one can read what you don't write. So be sure to explain fully what you mean.

3. I always hope that I don't really need to include this but please, please remember to be kind and polite to each other and to me. Derogatory or inappropriate comments are unacceptable and subject to the same disciplinary action as they would have if they occurred in a traditional classroom.

4. Ask questions and respond to others so that we can help each other learn and grow as teachers and people.