

**Rutgers University  
Department of Educational Psychology**

15.293.522 Section 2    Spring 2017

Learning Disabilities

**Class Meets:** Monday 4.30 to 7.30 p.m. HH B6  
**Course Instructor:** Professor Colleen Belmonte  
**Office Location:** Room 324, Graduate School of Education  
**Office Hours:** Monday 4 p.m. or by appointment.  
**Contact Me:**  
    *by e-mail:* Colleen.Belmonte@gse.rutgers.edu

**Required Texts:**

Mercer, C. D., & Pullen, P. C. (2009). *Students with learning disabilities (7<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.  
Swanson, H. L., Harris, K. H., & Graham. S. (2013). *Handbook of learning disabilities (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. New York: Guilford Press.  
(available from the Barnes and Nobles bookstore).

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.

## 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 of 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.

## 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, student led (group) presentations on the readings, Website resource reviews and a series of homework assignments.

<i>Required Activities</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Points Available/% Grade</i>
Participation	weekly	15%
Group presentation related to the readings	TBA	20%
Homework assignments (4)		20%
Midterm	March 27	30%
Website reviews	April 24	15%

### **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. 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 course as those who were regularly in attendance. Attendance will be monitored by the professor as well as 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.

## **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. A student with special needs should contact the office of Disability Services at <https://ods.rutgers.edu>.

## **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. Each week, you should upload (in dropbox) 3 questions related to the readings the Sunday before class.
- 2. Readings:** There is a lot of reading in the course and some of it is difficult. I encourage you to form study/reading groups to assist one another with the reading and generate questions related to the readings. You should email me with any questions you have about the readings.
- 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. Groups (2-3 persons per group) will present one of the readings from the course. In the second week of classes, I will organize groups and determine the schedule of presentations.

Following a brief introduction in which the presenter states the topic and previews the main presentation content (1 min), the main content part of the presentation will last about 9 minutes followed by a 10 minute period in which the presenter(s) facilitate discussion by the class members. Students will sign up for topics in session # 2. The oral presentation should cover just the main concepts and major informational points from the selected reading. A rubric for scoring the presentation will be distributed. The student must prepare **THREE** things to accompany the presentations;

- A brief Powerpoint slide show for the presentation. Email me the PPT no later than the day before the scheduled presentation.
- Copies of 2-5 page detailed study guide handout for class members containing summary information.
- A list of 5-7 challenging questions for the class with probes in case of limited audience response.

- 4. Homework assignments.** Students will be assigned **FOUR (4)** graded homework assignments. The purpose of the homework is to help students bridge research to practice, especially connecting learning in prior assessment and methods

courses, practica/student teaching experiences, to more advanced knowledge of LD gained in this course. Due dates are posted on the schedule below. Students will receive a written guidance sheet for each homework assignment, which will be posted on SAKAI. Please submit the homework assignments in dropbox no later than 4pm on the due date.

5. **Website Review Sheets:** Students will review **FOUR (4)** selected LD and related special education resource Websites, filling out a review sheet on each Website (review sheets provided by Professor Belmonte). Students will complete the review sheets individually and **turn them in at class session #12**. Students are encouraged to begin these reviews early in the semester.
6. **Midterm:** This will consist of short answer and multiple choice questions and will be designed to last about an hour.

#### SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS AND CONTENT COVERAGE

SESSION #	CONTENT COVERAGE	READINGS
1 Jan 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Introduction/ Overview of LD</li> </ul>	Mercer and Pullen Chapter 1 Handbook of LD- Chapter 2: A brief history of the field of learning disabilities
2 Jan 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical aspects of LD</li> </ul>	Handbook of Neurodevelopmental and Genetic Disorders in Children- Chapter 6 Mercer and Pullen Chapter 2 Handbook of LD-Chapter 16: Behavioral Genetics, Learning Abilities, and Disabilities (skip past the more technical terms. Read for basic meaning and basic findings)
3 Feb 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Identification and Intervention</li> <li>• Assessment</li> </ul> <b>**HW # 1 assigned</b>	Mercer and Pullen Chapter 13 & 4 LD assessment – Speece and Hines (2007) Rethinking LD-Chapter 12 Miciak et al. (2014)
4 Feb 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges to Traditional Views: RTI and Evolving Views of LD</li> </ul>	<i>Redefining LD as Inadequate RTI</i> (2003) <i>RTI: Definitions, Evidence, and Implications</i> (2003) Fuchs & Deschler: What We Need to Know About RTI (2007) Reschly (2014) Response to intervention and specific learning disabilities Fuchs: Smart RTI
5 Feb 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with Families</li> <li>• Adolescents with LD</li> <li>• Transition Programming</li> </ul>	Mercer and Pullen Chapters 12 and 14 Transition: Why it does not work (2010) Handbook of LD Chapter 20: Reading Comprehension for Adolescents with Significant Reading Problems
6 Feb 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social-Emotional-Behavioral Issues</li> </ul> <b>**HW # 2 assigned</b>	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 11 Handbook of LD-Chapter 15: Social Cognition of Children and Adolescents with LD: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Perspectives Social-Emotional Learning and LD
7 Mar 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADHD</li> </ul>	Nigg & Barkley 2014 Pfiffner & DuPaul, 2014 Chapter 24 Rethinking ADHD and LD in DSM-5: Proposed Changes in Diagnostic Criteria Mercer & Pullen Chapter 3
Mar 13	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	

#### SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS AND CONTENT COVERAGE

SESSION #	CONTENT COVERAGE	READINGS
8 Mar 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory &amp; Practice Addressing LD</li> </ul>	Mercer & Pullen Chapters 5 & 6

	<b>**HW # 3 assigned</b>	Handbook of LD Chapter 26: Direct Instruction as Eo nomine and Contronym: Why the Right Words and the Details Matter Handbook of LD Chapter 27: Cooperative Learning for Students with Learning Disabilities: Advice and Caution Derived from the Evidence Handbook of LD Chapter 28: Data-Based Individualization as a Means of Providing Intensive Instruction to Students with Serious Learning Disorders
<b>9 March 27</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spoken Language</li> </ul> <p><b>Midterm (1 hour)</b></p>	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 7 Child and Adolescent Development for Educators Chapter 7 (Language Development) Early Language Development and Language Learning Disabilities Handbook of LD Chapter 14: Language Processes: Characterization and Prevention of Language-Learning Disabilities Handbook of LD Chapter 5: Linguistically Diverse Students' Reading Difficulties: Implications for Models of LD Identification and Effective Instruction
<b>10 April 3</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>	Mercer & Pullen, Chapter 10 Handbook of LD Chapter 13 Handbook of LD Chapter 21 Balancing perspectives on mathematics instruction
<b>11 Apr 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading</li> </ul> <p><b>**HW # 4 assigned</b></p>	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 8 Handbook of LD Chapter 10: Rapid Automatized Naming and Reading: A Review Handbook of LD Chapter 11: Basic Cognitive Processes and Reading Disabilities Handbook of LD Chapter 18: Word Identification Difficulties in Children and Adolescents with Reading Disabilities: Intervention Research Findings Handbook of LD Chapter 19: Developing a new intervention to teach text structure at the elementary level
<b>12 Apr 17</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing</li> </ul>	Mercer & Pullen Chapter 9 Handbook of LD 1 <sup>st</sup> edition Handwriting/spelling Want to Improve Children's Writing? Effective Writing Instruction Across the Grades Self-Regulated Strategy Development-Writing Instruction for Students with Disabilities
<b>13 Apr 24</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cognitive, Metacognitive, and Memory Issues with LD</li> </ul> <p><b>**Website Reviews are Due</b></p>	Handbook of LD-Chapter 12 ) Memory difficulties in children and adults with learning disabilities Handbook of Educational Psychology Chapter 12 Handbook of LD-Chapter 17 : Diagnosing and Treating Specific Learning Disabilities in Reference to the Brain's Working Memory System
<b>14 May 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to the general education curriculum</li> </ul>	Handbook of LD Chapter 30: Technology Applications for Improving Literacy: A Review of Research Strategies to Improve Access to the General Education Curriculum Universal Design for Learning –Delaware SKIM Checkpoints 1.1 to 9.3 (EXPLORE 1 link from each of 9 sections) <a href="http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/examples">http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/examples</a>