



**College of Education and Human Development
Division of Special Education and disAbility Research**

EDSE 744-6E5: *Current Issues in Special Education*

CRN: 80900, 3 - Credit(s)

Fall 2012

Instructor: Dr. Irene Meier	Meeting Dates: 09/13/12 - 11/15/12
Phone: 571-423-4104	Meeting Day(s): Thursday
E-Mail: imeier@gmu.edu	Meeting Times: 5:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Office Hours: By appointment	Meeting Location: Fairfax Ridge – C4

Course Description:

Helps students develop an understanding of the role of convergent research evidence in addressing current issues in special education practice and policy. Familiarizes students with current issues in special education and the group experimental, single subject, and qualitative research designs used to address these current issues. Students evaluate research studies in terms of their methodological strengths and weaknesses and their part in providing convergent bodies of evidence that can be used for defining practice and policy.

Prerequisite(s): None.

Advising Contact Information:

Please make sure that you are being advised on a regular basis as to your status and progress through your program. For assistance contact the Special Education Advising Office at (703)993-3145.

Nature of Course Delivery:

Learning activities include the following:

1. Class lecture and discussion
2. Application activities
3. Small group activities and assignments
4. Video and other media supports
5. Research and presentation activities
6. Electronic supplements and activities via Blackboard

Learner Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

- Identify current issues in special education.
- Explain the historical, educational, and philosophical roots of current issues.
- Explain the multiple perspectives on the topic.
- Propose implications for policy and practice.

Required Textbooks:

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual* (6th ed.). Washington, DC:
Author

Recommended Textbooks:

*Recommended means you do not need to have these to do well in the course, but if you'd like to have these as resources to use this semester and in the future, consider acquiring now. Because we will be discussing current issues in special education from a research and policy perspective, you need some understanding of basic research. The text by Boudah can be acquired directly from the publisher <http://www.sagepub.com/authorDetails.nav?contribID+631797>.

Boudah, D. H. (2011). *Conducting educational research: Guide to completing a major project*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Required Materials:**Additional Readings:**

Recent (2008-2012) additional readings will be required and the majority will be acquired by students in the course. Most readings will be original research articles from peer-reviewed journals. Numerous supporting documents (e.g. research articles, federal statutes and regulations, case studies, recent reports from organizations such as <http://www.projectforum.org/> will be posted on the class Blackboard site and/or otherwise assigned.

Course's Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organizations:

This course is part of the George Mason University, Graduate School of Education (GSE), Special Education Program for Special Education Leadership Graduate Certificate. This program complies with the standards for teacher licensure established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major special education professional organization. The CEC Standards are listed on the following website:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/> The CEC standard that will be addressed in this class is Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice. *NOTE: NCATE Assessments (in many but not all courses) may address additional CEC standards.

Policies (Attendance and Late Work Policies):

Attendance Policy:

Absences:

Understanding you are individuals with full and active lives, who have made the intellectual and financial commitment to regularly attend class, there may be an instance when you are not able to attend. If this unlikely event should occur, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain notes, handouts, and lecture details from another student (it is recommended that you have two colleagues in the course for this). Students who are absent are held responsible for the material covered and assignments due as if in attendance. Please be sure to notify the classmate(s) in sufficient time for them to be of assistance for you. Recommended, but not required, is that you notify the Instructor about absences in advance or within 24 hours after an absence. Be aware any points earned for participation in class activities, during a time of absence, will not be earned and cannot be made up.

If you need to miss, for any reason, more than two class sessions, contact the Instructor immediately (within 48 hours) with notification of when your course withdrawal will be completed. If you realize after the first class session that this course's requirements are not a match for you for this semester, process your withdrawal immediately (within 48 hours) and notify the Instructor.

Academic Integrity:

Students in this course are expected to exhibit academic integrity at all times. Be aware that plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. Whether the act is deliberate or unintentional is irrelevant. You must take great care to give credit to an author when you borrow either exact words or ideas. Generally, if you use 4 or more words in a row you should use quotation marks and a proper citation. Evidence of plagiarism or any other form of cheating in this class will result in a zero on that assignment and a report of the incident to the registrar. Remember that plagiarism is a very serious offense and can result in dismissal from the University. The instructor reserves the right to submit your work to turnitin or safeassign or similar plagiarism detection services, for an integrity assessment as needed.

Assignments and Readings and Due Dates:

For a satisfactory grade in the course, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, be prepared for class, demonstrate professional behavior (see Professional Disposition Criteria at <http://www.gse.gmu.edu> for a listing of these dispositions), and complete all assignments with professional quality in a timely manner. To successfully complete this course, students need to adhere to the due dates for specific readings and assignments to be completed.

TaskStream Electronic Portfolio Submission of Signature Assignments:

Every student registered for any EDSE course as of the Fall 2007 semester is required to submit signature assignments to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one-time course or part of an undergraduate minor). TaskStream information is available at <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/sped/>. Failure to submit the assignment to TaskStream will result in reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed, upon completion and adequate time for the Instructor to score the required submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Grading Scale:

95 - 100% = A

90 - 94% = A-

80 - 89% = B

70 - 79% = C

<70% = F

Schedule:

Performance-Based Assessment	Possible Points
Blackboard Interactions/Discussions/Webinars (points vary)	6.0 points
Synthesis Papers (3 @ 5.5 points each)	16.5 points
Class Presentation	35.0 points
Controversial Issue	35.0 points
Class Participation (15 @ .5 points per class session)	7.5 points
Total	100.0 points

Blackboard Discussions, Interactions, and Webinars (6 points)

Performance-Based Assignments

On about six occasions across the semester, questions or points-of-view or a brief reading or a webinar will be posted on Bb for you to discuss. Specific directions for what you need to do will be posted on Bb. Follow the directions for each Bb posting to earn the maximum points available for that Bb assignment.

Evaluation Criteria:

The timeliness and quality of your postings (i.e., avoid general comments like "good idea" or "neat") will be assessed along with their regularity. Quality criteria will include your contributions of new and

meaningful ideas, coherence of your messages, and the relevance of your replies to other messages as they build on other messages to elaborate, contradict, modify, or explain ideas.

Synthesis Papers on Current Research Topics (5.5 points each)

Performance-Based Assignment

For each of three topics identified as a current issue in special education, select a minimum of two (EDSE 744) or three (EDSE 844) recent (2008 or later) research articles published in peer-reviewed journals on that topic. On no more than three pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12-point font), synthesize the three research studies. Each person may be choosing different articles, or if the same articles are selected, the way in which each person synthesizes can vary.

Caution: This assignment is not about summarizing, it is about synthesizing. Think in terms of analyzing the content of the studies, determine how you want to approach a synthesis, and focus on that synthesis for a maximum of three pages.

Follow this format:

1st page: Cover sheet

2nd, 3rd, and 4th pages: Your Synthesis (use headings as appropriate, but be judicious)

5th page: References (there should be only three references)

EDSE 744 graduate students select TWO recent research articles.

EDSE 844 doctoral students select THREE recent research articles.

Evaluation Criteria:

Synthesis Assignment's Scoring Rubric Synthesis

Paper # ____	Points Possible
1. Directions are followed.	/0.25
2. The synthesis of the three research articles makes it clear which areas are being synthesized. Written language is excellent.	/4.75
3. Technical APA (e.g., citations in the assignment, Reference section, headings/subheadings) is completely accurate	/0.5
TOTAL points earned*	/5.5

Class Presentation (35 points)

Performance-Based Assignment

Select one current issue in special education on which to conduct a literature review, develop a class presentation, and lead an in-class and/or on-line discussion.

Develop a 20-minute presentation that synthesizes the most current research and/or policies (as appropriate) related to the topic. Prepare a handout that goes with your presentation, and include a Reference page with all sources cited accurately in APA style.

At least two weeks before your Class Presentation, submit the recent research articles that all will read prior to your Class Presentation to the instructor (to ensure criteria for articles have been followed). The instructor will post your articles on the Bb site at least two (EDSE 744) or three (EDSE 844) recent research articles for class colleagues to read in advance of your presentation. Build into your presentation at least one way to *briefly* (two minutes maximum) engage class colleagues in a discussion related to these articles during your presentation. Additionally, *at the conclusion* of your presentation, identify an open-ended question or thought that leads to a brief class discussion, and elicit / answer questions regarding the issue.

EDSE 744 graduate students submit at least TWO recent research articles.
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EDSE 844 doctoral students submit at least THREE recent research articles.
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Evaluation Criteria:

Scoring Rubric for Class Presentation	Points Possible
1. Issue and articles' choices are appropriate. Articles submitted to instructor at least two weeks in advance of individual's presentation.	/2.0
2. Quality of presentation content is excellent, including handout. The clarity of information presented (on the PPT) and its importance to the field of special education is excellent.	/25.5
3. Interactions with class colleagues are well-planned, high-level, and stay within the time limit.	/3.0
4. The individual's presentation style and interactions with the audience are professional.	/4.0
5. Reference page and all use of APA (technical and written language) is excellent / completely accurate.	/0.5
Questions: Did the presenter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep within the time limits? • Reflect poise, clarity, knowledge, and interest in the content being presented? • Make effective use of visuals (i.e., PPT)? • Describe, and stay focused on, the research as it relates to the topic being presented? • Keep the audience's attention? 	/35.0
TOTAL points earned	
Comments from instructor:	

Controversial Current Issue (35 points)

Performance-Based Assignment

Identify one controversial issue in special education. Briefly describe the history of the issue, then use research and other types of professional sources to describe what the controversy is about. Focus on at least two advantages/positives/pros and two disadvantages/negatives/cons of the issue. Use a minimum of six (EDSE 744) or eight (EDSE 844) sources; more if necessary.

Because you are identifying this as a current issue, ensure some (at least two) of your sources are current (2010, 2011, 2012). As with the Synthesis Papers you wrote for this course, aim your focus in writing more on integrating, analyzing, and synthesizing than on identifying and describing (although you will be identifying and describing to some extent). Follow this format:

- 1st page: Cover sheet
- Body of the Paper (use these as your major headings):
 - History of Issue (to include cause of controversy) [1 page*]
 - Advantages (or Positives, or People in Favor of) of the Issue [3 pages*]
 - Disadvantages (or Negatives, or People Opposed to) of the Issue [3* pages]
 - Conclusion (to include both a summary and implications, such as for practice or policy) [2* pages]
- Last page: References

*page numbers are approximate; more important than quantity of pages is the quality of the messages

EDSE 744 graduate students select SIX recent research articles.
EDSE 844 doctoral students select EIGHT recent research articles.

Evaluation Criteria:

Scoring Rubric for Controversial Current Issue	Points Possible
1. History of the current issue is clearly described. Written language is excellent.	/4
2. One side of the issue is well-developed with at least two advantages, clearly written, well-supported by research or literature, and logically evolves from the available data and history of the controversy. Written language is excellent.	/10
3. The other side of the issue is well-developed with at least two disadvantages, well-supported by research or literature, clearly written, and logically evolves from the available data and history of the controversy. Written language is excellent.	/10
4. The conclusion's summary is well-developed and clearly written. Implications for practice or policy (as applicable) are logically connected to the issue and clearly written. Written language is excellent.	/8
5. Technical APA (e.g., citations in the assignment, Reference section, headings/subheadings) is completely accurate	/3
TOTAL points earned*	/35.0

*Full earned credit for assignments turned in on time.

GENERAL RUBRIC and EVALUATION CRITERIA for all Assignments

(when applicable; use these as a guide to accompany the point rubric)

Evaluation Standards	Exceeds Expectations 3	Meets Expectations 2	Does Not Meet Expectations 1
Paper	Synthesis goes beyond the obvious. Suggestions are creative and realistic. Minimal writing errors.	Includes background information on the issue, explanation of the controversy, summary of pros/cons, and suggestions for policy/practice. Writes in an organized style using APA.	Fails to meet all elements of the stated expectations. Writing is mechanically unsound.
Presentation	Articulates novel implications for practitioners.	Presents a broad, interesting background. Summarizes and analyzes differing views. Presents in an organized style.	Presentation is disorganized or lacking key information.
Face-to-Face Discussion	Encourages dialogue and novel thinking.	Proposes thought-provoking questions or discussion points. Clearly communicates key ideas.	Minimal efforts to engage the audience are made.
Online Discussion	Encourages dialogue and novel thinking.	Proposes thought-provoking questions or discussion points.	Minimal efforts to engage the audience are made.
Link to CEC Standard 9	Clear reflection of professional and ethical desire to embrace ongoing learning and evidence-based practices.	Efforts to engage in an active learning community. Offers reflective ideas showing a desire to learn.	Minimal efforts to engage in learning demonstrated.
Overall Critical Issues Project	The project meets expectations and generates insightful suggestions for how special needs might be better met.	The project clearly identifies a significant issue AND provides clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.	This project fails to clearly identify a significant issue OR fails to provide clear connections to a need for lifelong learning.

Class # and Date	Topics	Readings and
Class # 1 9/13	<p>Introductions Overview of Course Content of Syllabus Assignment Review Group Suggestions for Current Issues and Controversies</p> <p>Individual students target their (a) Issue Topic and (b) Class Presentation Topic. For each, students gather recent research for all to read.</p> <p><i>Perusing peer-reviewed journals</i> <i>Using the GMU online library</i></p>	
Class # 2 9/20	<p>Historical Perspectives Overview of Research</p> <p>Summarizing vs. Synthesizing Information Practice Exercises on Synthesizing Presentations will be scheduled for next 5 class sessions</p>	Historical readings
Class # 3 9/27	<p>Current Issues Presentations /Class Discussions</p> <p>Summary Activity</p> <p>Review of Synthesis Activity</p>	Readings on Current Issues
Class # 4 10/4	<p>Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions</p> <p>Summary Activity</p>	Readings on Current Issues Synthesis # 1 Due
Class # 5 10/11	<p>Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions</p> <p>Summary Activity</p>	Readings on Current Issues
Class # 6 10/18	<p>Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions</p> <p>Summary Activity</p>	Readings on Current Issues Synthesis # 2 Due
Class # 7 10/25	<p>Current Issues Presentations/Class Discussions</p> <p>Summary Activity</p>	
Class # 8 11/1	Online Class	Synthesis # 3 Due
Class # 9 11/8	<p>Current Policies and Impact on Education</p> <p>Course Evaluation</p>	Readings on Policy Issues
Class # 10 11/15	Final Course Meeting	Controversial Current Issue Due

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:

- a.* Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- b.* Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- c.* Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- d.* The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- e.* Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- f.* Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- g.* The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. [http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/Revised 06/25/12](http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/Revised%2006/25/12)

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

Note: *This syllabus may change according to class needs. Students will be advised of any changes immediately through George Mason e-mail and/or through Blackboard.*