

**Educational Studies 737**  
**Research Issues in Special Education**  
**Winter 2002**  
**Thursday 1:00-4:00**

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## **DESCRIPTION**

This course provides an analysis of historical and contemporary trends in theory and research in the field of special education, with particular emphasis on language and learning disabilities. Students are encouraged to evaluate alternative theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing atypical children and to engage in the analytic reading of research in the field of special education. The major topics covered will be: alternative theoretical perspectives on 'high incidence' disabilities; general methodological issues in the study of atypical children; and an introduction to the history of research on atypical patterns of development of oral language, reading, written language, math, and social behavior. Within each area, history and trends in the field will be outlined, specific research design and measurement issues will be addressed, theoretical and methodological controversies will be highlighted, and selected empirical studies will be critically examined. Students will be expected to produce three papers: a brief critique of an individual research article, a comparative critique of two related research studies, and a critical review of the research literature addressing a specific substantive issue in the field of special education. In addition, students will give an oral presentation based on their final paper.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

Two article critiques (20% of grade), a term paper (30%), a class presentation (15%), and participation in class discussion (35%).

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To appreciate the sociohistorical context of the field of Special Education, with an eye to contextualizing past, present, and future trends in the field.
2. To identify and discuss major theoretical and empirical issues in the study of language and learning disabilities, both historically and currently;
3. To refine skills for analyzing research studies in the area on both conceptual and methodological grounds;
4. To develop critical thinking and effective scholarly communication—both oral and written.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Required Readings**

Individual chapters and research articles.

## **Recommended Resources**

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). (2001).  
Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.  
A recent text on research design (see me if interested).

## **Article Critiques**

Students will write two short papers in which they provide a detailed summary and analysis of research studies. The first paper (approx. 3 to 4 pages) will focus on a single study, while the second paper (approx. 5 to 6 pages) will provide a comparative critique of two related studies. Each study should be described in enough detail so that a naive reader could understand the hypotheses, methodology, findings, and conclusions presented. Following this summary, you should provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the study, concentrating on the clarity and significance of the research question(s), the adequacy of the subject selection and description, the appropriateness of the tasks and procedures, and the interpretation of results. In the case of the comparative paper, each of the articles should be summarized briefly, but the heart of the paper will be a critical evaluation of the articles, both internally and in comparison with each other. The target articles for both papers should be approved in advance, and you should turn in a copy of the articles along with your paper.

## **Research Review Paper and Presentation**

Students will complete one longer paper (approximately 15-20 pages) and conduct a one-hour class session on the topic. The paper will consist of an analytic review of theory and research related to a topic of relevance to the field of language or learning disabilities. Prior to your class session, you should identify a key paper (theoretical or empirical) that all students will read in advance. The class session will involve the coordination of a group discussion about the issues raised in the target paper and in your broader review.

A draft of the final paper will be due two weeks in advance of the final deadline. The draft will be returned with comments and suggestions for revision. You will then incorporate that feedback into the final version of the paper.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS AND ASSOCIATED READINGS

### Topic 1: Historical and Conceptual Issues

- Deschenes, S., Cuban, L., & Tyack, D. (2001). Mismatch: Historical perspectives on schools and students who don't fit them. *Teachers College Record*, 103, 525-547.
- Kalyanpur, M. & Harry, B. (1999). *Culture in special education*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes. Chapter 2: Legal and epistemological underpinnings of the construction of disability.
- Hallahan, D. P., & Mercer, C. D. (2001). Learning disabilities: Historical perspectives. Paper presented at the Learning Disabilities Summit. Washington, DC, August 2001.
- Torgesen, J. K. (1998). Learning disabilities: An historical and conceptual overview. In B. Y. L. Wong (Ed.), *Learning about learning disabilities*, 2nd ed. (pp. 3-34). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Kavale, K. A., & Forness, S. R. (2000). What definitions of learning disability say and don't say: A critical analysis. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 33, 239-256.

### Topic 2: General Theoretical Issues

- Kavale, K. A., & Forness, S. R. (1994). Models and theories: Their influence on research in learning disabilities. In S. Vaughn & C. Bos (Eds.), *Research issues in learning disabilities: Theory, methodology, assessment, and ethics* (pp. 38-65). New York: Springer Verlag.
- Torgesen, J. K. (1993). Variations on theory in learning disabilities. In G. R. Lyon et al (Eds.), *Better understanding learning disabilities* (pp. 153-170). Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes Publishing.
- Feagans, L. V., & McKinney, J. D. (1991). Subtypes of learning disabilities: A review. In L. V. Feagans, E. J. Short, & L. J. Meltzer (Eds.), *Subtypes of learning disabilities: Theoretical perspectives and research* (pp. 3-31). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Anzul, M., Evans, J. F., King, R., & Tellier-Robinson, D. (2001). Moving beyond a deficit perspective with qualitative methods. *Exceptional Children*, 67, 235-249.

### Topic 3: Behavioral and Neuropsychological Perspectives on Disability

- Koorland, M. A. (1986). Applied behavior analysis and the correction of learning disabilities. In J. K. Torgesen & B. Y. L. Wong (Eds.), *Psychological and educational perspectives on learning disabilities* (pp. 297-328). Orlando: Academic Press.
- Obrzut, J. E., & Uecker, A. (1994). Neuropsychological theories associated with learning disorders. In S. Vaughn & C. Bos (Eds.), *Research issues in learning disabilities: theory, methodology, assessment, and ethics* (pp. 22-37). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- McDougall, D. M., & Brady, M. P. (1998). Initiating and fading self-management interventions to increase math fluency in general education classes. *Exceptional Children*, 64, 151-166.
- Gilger, J. W., Ho, H., Shipple, A. D., & Spitz, R. (2001). Genotype-environment correlations for language-related abilities: Implications for typical and atypical learners. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 34, 492-502.

### Topic 4: Information Processing and Constructivist Perspectives on Disability

- Reid, D. K. (1996). Learning disorders: Theoretical and research perspectives. In D. K. Reid, W. P. Hresko, & H. L. Swanson (Eds.), *Cognitive approaches to learning disabilities* (3rd ed.) (pp. 213-247). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

- Swanson, H. L. (1993). Learning disabilities from the perspective of cognitive psychology. In G. R. Lyon et al (Eds.), *Better understanding learning disabilities* (pp. 199-228). Baltimore: Paul Brookes.
- Ashbaker, M. H., & Swanson, H. L. (1996). Short-term memory and working memory operations and their contribution to reading in adolescents with and without learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 11*, 206-213.
- Englert, C. S., Berry, R., & Dunsmore, K. (2001). A case study of the apprenticeship process: Another perspective on the apprentice and the scaffolding metaphor. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 34*, 152-171.

### **Topic 5: General Methodological Issues**

- Durrant, J. E. (1994). A decade of research on learning disabilities: A report card on the state of the literature. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 27*, 25-33.
- MacMillan, D.L. & Speece, D. L. (1999). Utility of current diagnostic categories for research and practice. In R. Gallimore et al. (Eds.), *Developmental perspectives on children with high-incidence disabilities* (pp. 111-133). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- CLD Research Committee (1992). Minimum standards for the description of participants in LD research. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 15*, 650-670.
- Morris R., et al. (1994). Editorial: Proposed guidelines and criteria for describing samples of persons with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 17*, 106-109.
- Walery M., Ezell, H. K. (1993). Subject descriptions and single-subject research. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 26*, 642-647.
- Goswami, J., & Bryant, P. (1989). The interpretation of studies using the reading level design. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 21*, 413-424.
- Cole, M., & Means, B. (1982). *Comparative studies of how people think* (Chapter 3). Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

### **Topic 6: Oral Language Disorders**

- Hresko, W. P. (1996). Oral language. In D. K. Reid, H. P. Hresko, & H. L. Swanson (Eds.), *Cognitive approaches to learning disabilities* (3rd ed.) (pp. 433-496). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Leonard, L. B. (1998). Chapter 1: Introduction. In *Children with specific language impairment* (pp. 3-25). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Watkins, R. V. (1994). Specific language impairments in children: An introduction. In R. V. Watkins & M. L. Rice (Eds.), *Specific language impairments in children* (pp. 1-15). Baltimore: Paul Brookes.
- Roth, F. P., Spekman, N. J., & Fye, E. C. (1995). Reference cohesion in the oral narratives of students with learning disabilities and normally achieving students. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 18*, 25-40.
- Leonard, L. B., McGregor, K. K., & Allen, G. D. (1992). Grammatical morphology and speech perception in children with specific language impairment. *Journal of Speech & Hearing Research, 35*, 1076-1085.

### **Article Critique #1 Due**

### **Topic 7: Reading Disabilities**

- Clark, D. B., & Uhry, J. K. (1995). *Dyslexia: Theory and practice of remedial instruction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.. Baltimore: York Press. Chapter 2: The nature of dyslexia, pp. 19-46.
- Oakhill, J., & Yuill, N. (1996). Higher order factors in comprehension disability: Processes and remediation. In C. Cornoldi & J. Oakhill (Eds.) *Reading comprehension difficulties: Processes and intervention* (pp. 69-92). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assocs.
- Robertson, J. (2000). Neuropsychological intervention in dyslexia: Two studies of British pupils. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 33, 137-148.
- Mauer, D. M., & Kamhi, A. G. (1996). Factors that influence phoneme-grapheme correspondence learning. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29, 259-270.

### **Topic 8: Writing Disabilities**

- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Schwartz, S. (1991). Writing and writing instruction for students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 14, 89-114.
- Moats, L.C. (1983) A comparison of the spelling errors of older dyslexic and second-grade normal children. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 33, 121-140.
- De la Paz, S., & Graham, S. (1997). Strategy instruction in planning: Effects on the writing performance and behavior of students with learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 167-181.

### **Article Critique #2 Due**

### **Topic 9: Math Disabilities**

- Rivera, D. P. (1997). Mathematics education and students with learning disabilities: Introduction to the Special Series. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 30, 2-19.
- Geary, D. C., & Brown, S. C. (1991). Cognitive addition: Strategy choice and speed-of-processing differences in gifted, normal, and mathematically disabled children. *Developmental Psychology*, 27, 398-406.
- Mazzocco, M. M. M. (2001). Math learning disability and math LD subtypes: Evidence from studies of Turner Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome, and Neurofibromatosis Type I. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 34, 520-533.

### **Topic 10: Social Factors in Language/Learning Disabilities**

- Bryan, T. (1998). Social competence of students with LD. In B. Y. L. Wong (Ed.), *Learning about learning disabilities*, 2nd ed. (pp. 237-275). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Voeller, K. K. S. (1994). Techniques for measuring social competence in children. In g. R. Lyon (Ed.), *Frames of reference for the assessment of learning disabilities* (pp. 523-554). Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Company. **(Read 523-531 only)**
- Rothman, H. L., & Cosden, M. (1995). The relationship between self-perception of a learning disability and achievement, self-concept, and social support. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 18, 203-212.
- Loveland, K. A., Fletcher, J. M., & Bailey, V. (1990). Verbal and nonverbal communication of event in learning-disability subtypes. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology*, 12, 433-447..

### **Outline of Term Paper Due**

### **Topic 11: Current Issues/Controversies: Identification and Assessment**

- Lyon, G. R., et al. (2001). Rethinking learning disabilities. In Finn, C. E., Rotherham, A. J., & Hokanson, c. R. (Eds.), *Rethinking special education for a new century* (pp. 259-288). Washington, DC: Thomas Fordham Foundation.
- Vellutino, F. R., Scanlon, D. M., & Lyon G. R. (2000). Differentiating between difficult-to-remediate and readily remediated poor readers. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 33*, 223-238.
- Wadsworth, S.J., Olson, R.K., Pennington, B.F., & Deries, J.C. (2000). Differential genetic etiology of reading disability as a function of IQ. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 33*, 192-199.
- Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (1998). Treatment validity: A unifying concept for reconceptualizing the identification of learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 13*, 204-219.

### **Draft of Term Paper Due**

### **Topic 12: Current Issues/Controversies: Service Delivery Models**

- Crochett, J. B., & Kauffman, J. M. (1998). Classrooms for students with LD: Realities, dilemmas, and recommendations for service delivery. In B. Y. L. Wong(Ed.), *Learning about learning disabilities, 2nd ed.* (pp. 489-525). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Vaughn, S., Elbaum, B. E., Schumm, J. S., & Hughes, M. T. (1998). Social outcomes for students with and without learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 31*, 428-436.
- Fuchs, D. et al. (1996). Reintegrating students with learning disabilities into the mainstream: A two-year study. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 11*, 214-229.
- Foorman, B R., & Torgesen, J. (2001). Critical elements of classroom and small-group instruction promote reading success in all children. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 16*, 203-212.

### **Topic 13: Current Issues/Controversies: Reforming the System?**

- Andrews, J. E., et al. (2000). Bridging the special education divide. *Remedial and Special Education, 21*, 258-260, 267.
- Trent, S. C., Artiles, A. J., & Englert, C. S. (1998). From deficit thinking to social constructivism: A review of theory, research, and practice in special education. *Review of Research in Education, 23*, 277-307.
- Dudley-Marling, C., & Dippo, D. (1996). What learning disability does: Sustaining the ideology of schooling. In M. S. Poplin & P. T. Cousin (Eds.), *Alternative views of learning disabilities: Issues for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (pp. 45-57). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Finn, C. E., Rotherham, A. J., & Hodanson, C. R. (2001). Conclusions and principles for reform. In C. E. Finn, A. J. Rotherham, & C. R. Hokanson (Eds.), *Rethinking special education for a new century* (pp. 335-347). Washington, DC: Progressive Policy Institute/Thomas B. Ford Foundation.
- Selected chapters from *Rethinking special education for a new century*.

### **Final Paper due**