

AUGUSTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Special Education  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

**SPED 6014**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES**  
3 SEMESTER HOURS

**SPED 6014** *Characteristics of Students with Severe Disabilities (3-0-3)*

**Professor:** Dr. Lori Anderson

**Class Time:** Wed., 5-8 p.m.  
8/17 to 10/5

**Office:** 302 University Hall

**Location:** UH 348

**Office Hours:** M, N-4 p.m. and T-W, 1-4 pm

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**Phone:** 706-792-2460

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An overview of the field of severe disabilities; includes historical, legal, philosophical, ethical, and programming issues; current trends and issues in the field. Students will have in-depth coverage of current issues in the field of severe disabilities (including autism spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injury, moderate to severe mental retardation, and orthopedic disabilities). Current perspectives in educational programming will be covered. 30 hours of field experience is required. *Prerequisite(s): admission to graduate program.*

**TEXTBOOK**

Heller, Forney, Alberto, Best, & Schwartzman (2009). *Understanding Physical, Health, and Multiple Disabilities* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Merrill/Pearson. Upper Saddle River, NJ. ISBN: 978-0-13-240273-6

**RECOMMENDED**

APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition

**LiveText**

All students admitted to degree programs in the College of Education are required to purchase *LiveText* software through the ASU bookstore. [LiveText](#) is an electronic, web-based data management service that allows students and faculty to create, store, and publish documents online using a word-processing format. All students will upload assignments, their portfolio, and other required documents into *LiveText*. *LiveText* works better with the Mozilla Firefox browser rather than Internet Explorer. Students may Google Mozilla Firefox and download it to their computers.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will meet a common core of knowledge and skills essential for special educators. Students will recognize the

following competencies in the research-based methodologies, teaching techniques, and learning strategies utilized to effectively instruct individuals with severe disabilities, noting different learning styles and adapting teaching and materials to these styles:

1. Cite (orally and in writing) various definitions (AAMR, IDEA) of severe disabilities, note common elements, and identify controversial issues concerning identification criteria, labeling issues, and current incidence.
2. Note various etiologies of condition affecting individuals who have severe disabilities.
3. Recognize major characteristics (academic, cognitive, vocational, adaptive, social, emotional, and behavioral) of individuals with severe disabilities.
4. Distinguish individuals who have various severe disabilities from one another as well as noting co-morbid characteristics.
5. Discuss the historical development of the area of severe disabilities as a field of study and name corresponding pioneers in each era as well as currently noted individuals in the field.
6. Explain the evolution of severe disabilities as they relate to the fields of medicine, psychology, behavioral sciences, and education.
7. Discuss theories and philosophies impacting the field of severe disabilities. Cite current research in the field of severe disabilities relevant to characteristics and etiologies.
8. Discuss the varying severity of severe disabilities and explain various service models and the rationale for each. Note the individual needs of students with severe disabilities at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels.
9. Access information on various characteristics of individuals with severe disabilities utilizing various technologies, organizations, and research.
10. Demonstrate proficiency in oral and written communication.

## **1. College of Education Conceptual Framework**

### Understanding for Teaching, Teaching for Understanding

The preparation of educators is the most critical of all professions, without educators there are no other professions. The professional educator is the key element in the learning process. Building on the key elements of the professional educator, the Conceptual Framework of the unit of Augusta State University consists of a vision and

mission with an overarching theme to produce **prepared, able, and responsive** professionals to teach diverse learners.

This vision and mission is a shared responsibility between campus colleagues, public school practitioners, and involved community agencies requiring the partnership of the entire education unit including the College of Education, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the local community educational system and the Partner School Network.

**Element: Prepared (PD)**

P1: Demonstrate strong content and pedagogical preparation in their respective subject area or professional field.

P3: Participate in graduate study to extend and refine the knowledge base of educators to build expertise.

P4: Possess an understanding of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) or their professional field of study and be able to create learning experiences that enable all students to learn.

P5: Understand how students learn and develop (intellectually, socially, and individually) and be able to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and support for these opportunities.

**Element: Able (AD)**

A3: Plan, guide, and support instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, the learners, the community, and curriculum goals.

A5: Ability to teach and work in authentic settings with diverse populations of learners

**Element: Responsive (RD)**

R1: A respect for the dignity of all persons. All children can learn and have the right to an opportunity to do so.

R2: Preparation in the subject area(s) to be taught or the professional field of study must be accompanied by the skill and dispositions to translate knowledge into creating and supporting meaningful experiences for diverse learners

R3: Understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning and demonstrate the commitment for meeting their educational needs in fair, caring, nondiscriminatory, and equitable manners.

R5: Fostering of relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support the learning and well-being of all students.

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS COURSE**

**CEC Standard #1: Foundations**

ICC1K5 Issues in definition and identification of individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

GC1K1 Definitions and issues related to the identification of individuals with disabilities

- GC1K3 Historical foundations, classic studies, major contributors, major legislations, and current issues related to knowledge and practice.
- GC1K5 Continuum of placement and services available for individuals with disabilities
- GC1K6 Laws and policies related to provision of specialized health care in educational settings

**CEC Standard #2: Development and Characteristics of Learners**

- ICC2K1 Typical and atypical human growth and development
- ICC2K6 Similarities and differences among individuals with exceptional learning needs
- GC2K2 Impact of sensory impairments, physical and health disabilities on individuals, families and society
- GC2K3 Etiologies and medical aspects of conditions affecting individuals with disabilities
- GC2K5 Common etiologies and the impact of sensory disabilities on learning and experience

**CEC Standard #4: Instructional Strategies**

- GC4S78 Resources, and techniques use to transition individuals with disabilities into and out of school and post-school environments

**CEC Standard #5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions**

- ICC5S3 Identify supports needed for integration into various program placements
- ICC5S16 Barriers to accessibility and acceptance of individuals with disabilities
- GC5S3 Plan instruction in a variety of educational settings

**CEC Standard #6: Communication**

- ICC6K4 Augmentative and assistive communication strategies

**CEC Standard #9: Professional and Ethical Practice**

- ICC9S10 Access information on exceptionalities
- GC9S2 Ethical responsibility to advocate for appropriate services for individuals with disabilities

**CEC Standard #10: Collaboration**

- GC10S1 Use local community, state and provincial resources to assist in programming with individuals with disabilities

**METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:**

**FIELD EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS**

This course requires 30 hours of direct contact with students with severe disabilities. Specific assignments will be explained by the professor each semester and may include the following: observations of classrooms for students with severe disabilities: use of

ecological assessment to note organization, teaching methods, and modifications/accommodations implemented in the classroom (general or specific education); in depth description of one student with severe disabilities, including specific observed strengths and needs according to alternative forms of assessment.

Session	Day/Date	Topic/Chapters	Assign. Due
1	W 8/19	Course Requirements & Part I <i>Implications</i> (chaps 1-4)	
2	W 8/26	Part II <i>Neuromotor</i> (chaps 5-8)	Obs. Report
3	W 9/2	Part III <i>Orthopedic, Musculoskeletal, &amp; Sensory</i> (chaps 9-12)	
4	W 9/9	Part IV <i>Degenerative &amp; Terminal</i> (chaps 13-16)	Research Paper & Presentation
5	W 9/16	Part V <i>Major Health Impairments</i> (chaps 17-20)	Midterm Due
6	W 9/23	Part VI <i>Infectious Diseases</i> (chaps 21-23)	Handbook
7	W 9/30	Final Review	Final Exam Handed out (Due 10/5)

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Observation Report (100 points)**

**Due Date: October 5<sup>th</sup>**

You will use your experience and observation in classrooms for students with severe disabilities, readings, and class discussions as the basis for completing the written fieldwork assignment. This should comprise a minimum of 2 direct contact hours. The observed classroom may be self-contained, resource, or inclusive. Please assure the classroom teacher and the school administrator that confidentiality will be strictly honored. Do not use real names or identifiers in your reports. List the date and time observed for each section. Include a title page, an abstract and a reference page. Cite 3-5 peer-reviewed references. This report will contain the three sections as described below.

#### **A. Educational Environment**

Write 2 pages summarizing your observations. Comment on the following: classroom environment, school-wide environment, scheduling, and behavior management. Comment on the effectiveness of the environmental arrangement and teacher/classroom management techniques. In your opinion, were the needs of the students being met in this classroom? Why or why not? Include a sketch of the classroom and posted class rules and procedures.

#### **B. Characteristics of students with severe disabilities, their peers, and their teachers**

Examine the characteristics of students with low incidence disabilities, their peers, and their teachers. Write 2 pages summarizing your observations. Comment on the following: observed characteristics of severe disabilities; learning behaviors and interactions with peers and teachers; teacher behavior and interactions with students without low incidence disabilities; interactions of other personnel with students and classroom teachers; positive and negative exchanges in different settings (i.e., academic, free time, lunch, transitions between classes, etc.).

### **C. Academic Activities**

Examine activities within the classroom. Write 2 pages summarizing your observations. Comment on the following: scheduling, grouping for academics, instructional methods, instructional levels, assessment, modifications, and curriculum. You may choose to report in depth on one content area, or give an overview of several subjects, depending on the age group and setting. Also, how are the functional activities integrated? Are adaptive weaknesses addressed? How?

### **Research Paper (100pts) and Oral Presentation (100 pts)**

1. Choose an important topic or influential leader in the field of severe disabilities from the past 50 years.
2. You will write a 5-10 page report summarizing the topic and its significance regarding the field of severe disabilities. Include a title page, an abstract, a reference page, and 3-5 peer-reviewed references.
3. You will share your finding and insights with your colleagues in a **10 minute** oral presentation (Powerpoint required) followed by a brief 10 minute discussion of this topic. You will provide thoughtful questions and discussion starters on the importance and relevance of this topic and its usefulness for practitioners today. You will also provide a 1 page overview of your findings in **outline form** to be used during note-taking. At the bottom of the outline, include at least 3 thought-provoking questions that can serve as discussion starters.

### **In-Service Handbook -100 points**

In a 1" binder, prepare an easy-to-read, jargon-free 15-20 page handbook on Characteristics of Severe Disabilities for parents and/or general educators. This is an introduction to low incidence disabilities, not a methods' handbook. Include important information for your target audience. Define the Georgia definition in simple language. Include a reference section with (a) local advocacy groups, (b) community resources, (c) websites, and (d) special education acronyms. In preparing for this project, ask yourself the following questions:  
Who is my target audience?

Who do they already know about low incidence disabilities? Misconceptions?

What do they need to know about characteristics, developmental delay, at-risk behaviors, getting special education services and other help (related services), terms, regulations related to severe disabilities, and adaptive behavior?

Focus topics must be pertinent to the target audience and should include:

Educational definition and related terms associated with severe disabilities

Overview of laws and regulations relative to severe disabilities (only include most relevant features)

Summary of NCLB and IDEA that specifically relates to students with low incidence disabilities

Common characteristics of students with severe disabilities and related disorders

Academic areas affected by severe disabilities;

Appropriate curriculum for lower functioning students

Steps parents and general educators may take to facilitate identification and services

### **Rubric:**

**Will follow COE format provided on LiveText**

## **Grades:**

### **Total Points (600 points)**

Exams	(100 points each)
Observation Report	(100 points)
Research Report	(100 points)
Oral Presentation	(100 points)
In-Service Handbook	(100 points)

**Grading is on a 10% scale: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69,  
F = below 60**

### **Other Important Information:**

**Attendance: Anyone who misses more than 10% of the class sessions will be dropped from the class (ASU 2009-2010 catalog)**

### **Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to read and strictly adhere to the entire Academic Honesty policy found in the 2009–10 *Augusta State University Catalog*. In part, the policy reads:

Academic honesty requires the presentation for evaluation and credit of one's own work, not the work of others...Plagiarism is the failure to acknowledge indebtedness. It is always assumed that the written work offered for evaluation and credit is the student's own unless otherwise acknowledged. Such acknowledgement should occur whenever one quotes another person's actual works, whenever one appropriates another person's ideas, opinions, or theories, even if they are paraphrased, and whenever one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials unless the information is common knowledge.  
(p.43)

### **Pipeline Account**

Students are encouraged to check their Pipeline account daily. Students are responsible for any assignments or deadlines sent to them via Pipeline. If you have trouble accessing your Pipeline account, you should contact Information Technology Services at 737-1676. Computers and printers are available free of charge in computer labs throughout campus as well as the library and campus Internet cafes for students who do not have access from a home computer.

## **Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Special Education Website**

Students are invited to visit the departmental website at: <http://www.aug.edu/clinical> A variety of forms, some interactive, may be downloaded from the website. There are also newsletters, registration information and announcements which students will find useful. Most forms are in Adobe Acrobat. All campus computers have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed and students can download Adobe Acrobat Reader for their home computer at no charge from: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/>

### **Writing Center**

You may contact the ASU Writing Center (737-1402) for help with developing and improving composition skills. If you would like additional help with writing or with learning APA style, inform the class instructor.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who are registered with the Office of Disability Services should schedule an appointment with the instructor before the third week of class to discuss academic accommodations. If the student does not initiate this meeting, it is assumed no special accommodations or modifications will be necessary to meet the requirements of this course. You may make an appointment by calling the Counseling and Testing Center (706) 737-1471 or visit their office located in the Quadrangle, next to Fanning Hall (Business Office).

### **Student Safety**

Student safety is of primary importance. Students leaving classes late in the evening are encouraged to stay in groups of two or more and to report all suspicious behavior or persons to the ASU Office of Public Safety (emergency number 706-729-2911; non-emergency 706-737-1401). Emergency telephones are located in the University Hall parking lot and various other locations on campus.

### **Cell Phones**

The use of cell phones for calls, text messaging, or other tasks is prohibited in class.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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