University of St. Thomas  
School of Education  

EDUC 5320 – Fall 2015 (ECA)  
Exceptionality in Today’s Schools  
August 27 – October 10, 2015  
Thursdays, 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM  

SYLLABUS  

LOCATION:  
San Jacinto College North  
5800 Uvalde  
Houston, TX 77049  
Room N-1.159  

INSTRUCTOR:  
Valerie Morgan, Ph.D., LSSP  

PHONE:  
281-615-7707  

E-MAIL:  
morganv@stthom.edu  

OFFICE HOURS:  
By appointment via phone or email  

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS  

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS  
COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will provide an opportunity for students to study the characteristics, needs, and educational implications of the school-age population requiring special education services. Major topics will include:

- history of exceptional child education
- legal basis for services including IDEA and Section 504
- personnel and procedures of Special Education
- characteristics of IDEA eligibility categories of students with disabilities
- the continuum of placements
- evidence-based teaching strategies and appropriate accommodations and modifications
- individualized education program (IEP) development and meeting least restrictive environment (LRE) requirements
- collaboration skills
- assistive technology

COURSE OBJECTIVES/STUDENT COMPETENCIES
By completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand the philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education.
2. Be familiar with professional roles and responsibilities and adhere to legal and ethical requirements of the profession.
3. Understand the characteristics and needs of students with disabilities.
4. Understand procedures for managing the teaching and learning environment, including procedures related to the use of assistive technology and culturally responsive teaching.
5. Be familiar with strategies to promote students’ educational performance in all content areas by facilitating their achievement in a variety of settings and situations.
6. Understand transition issues and procedures across the life span.
7. Know how to communicate and collaborate effectively in a variety of professional settings.

STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS GUIDING THIS COURSE
This course is aligned to the Texas Administrative Code (TAC)/State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) Educational Diagnostician Standards as well as the National Council for Exceptional Children Advanced Standards and Advanced Knowledge and Skills Sets for Special Education Diagnostic Specialists. Below are the links to those standards.

Link to Texas Educational Diagnostician Standards:
- 19 TAC §239.83
Link to National CEC Advanced Standards for Special Education Diagnostic Specialists:


SOCIAL JUSTICE TENETS
As educators, the tenets of social justice should play a pivotal role in decision-making strategies in Catholic, private, and public schools of all levels. The School of Education at University of St. Thomas uses three (3) of the social justice teachings of the Catholic Church to drive instruction and decision making:

- **Subsidiarity**: Educational institutions should be organized and governed as much as possible by the community being served; education should only be controlled at higher levels of society when it cannot be done effectively locally.
- **Dignity and rights of children**: Children possess full human dignity and are bearers of rights which should be recognized and upheld in the educational process.
- **People have a right to an education**: All people have a responsibility, for the good of society, to contribute to and foster education.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS ( ) = Percent of Final Grade

(10%) **Attendance and Participation/In-Class Activities**
Students are expected to actively participate in a professional manner in in-class activities and in on-line activities to demonstrate that the student has completed assignments (readings, projects, class preparation).

Expected participation includes:

- Attending class weekly
- Reading Blackboard Announcements
- Reviewing readings of course documents and links posted on Blackboard at http://www.stthom.edu
- Completing assigned readings prior to class
- Completing any in-class activities

Grading Guidelines for Attendance and Participation:

- Attendance/In-Class Participation is worth approximately 1.5 points per class
- The Attendance/Participation grade is based solely on actual attendance and participation in class. Absences (even for illness or school events, with rare exceptions), while understandable and sometimes unavoidable, are not
‘excused’ as far as earning attendance/participation credit goes. As a rule, a graduated scale for absence penalties will be applied as follows: 1 absence=1 point penalty; 2 absences=2 point penalty per absence (4 points total); 3 absences=3 point penalty per absence (9 points total), etc.

(20%) Interview Project (due October 1st)
Choose one of the following two options:

1. Conduct a First Person Life History: For this assignment you will interview a school age child or adolescent with a disability who is receiving Special Education services. All information included in your life history should be from the student’s perspective. The goal of the assignment is for you to understand the student’s point of view—to put yourself in his or her shoes. As the listener, your role is to abandon any assumptions that you have and to work at comprehending the subjective reality of your student’s life. Your write-up of the interview should be 4 - 7 pages (double-spaced) in length. Further guidelines and grading criteria for the assignment can be found in the “First Person Life History Project Guidelines” handout. This assignment is worth a possible 20 points.

2. Interview Personnel of Special Education: For this assignment, you will interview 3 school personnel currently working in Special Education. One of the interviews should be with an Educational Diagnostician. For the remaining interviews, choose any 2 of the following: Speech Language Pathologist, Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Adaptive P.E. Teacher, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Teacher for the Visually Impaired, Teacher for the Auditory Impaired, Orientation & Mobility Specialist. The goal of the assignment is to gain a better understanding of the roles and perspectives of the diverse personnel of Special Education. Your write-up of the interview should be 4 – 7 pages (double-spaced) in length. Further guidelines and grading criteria for this assignment can be found in the “Personnel of Special Education Interview Guidelines” handout. This assignment is worth a possible 20 points.

(20%) Presentation Project (due September 24th, October 1st, or October 8th)
Choose one of the following two options:

1. Media Project: For this assignment, you will create a PowerPoint presentation on how movies or literature have portrayed disabilities throughout history, then give a 15 – 20 minute oral presentation of your project to the class. A handout should accompany the presentation. This assignment will require you to research how persons with disabilities have been portrayed in movies or literature over time—at least the past 50 years. For this assignment, you will need to review at least 5 movies or books involving persons
2. **Assistive Technology Project:** For this assignment, you will research 2 Assistive Technology devices or tools of your choice, then present your findings to the class in a 15 - 20 minute oral presentation. The presentation should include a visual component (e.g., PowerPoint presentation) and handout. In your presentation, you should describe the device or tool to the class, discuss its purpose and uses, and provide a demonstration (in person or through a video clip) of the device/tool in use. Some questions to address about each AT device/tool in your presentation are: What is it? How does it work? What is its purpose? What types of students typically use this device/tool? How much does it cost? What is the process in your district for accessing a tool such as this? What are the pros and cons of this particular tool/device? This assignment will be graded based on adhering to the above requirements (25%), originality, attractiveness, and delivery of your presentation (25%), and the accuracy, validity, and thoughtfulness of your content (50%). This assignment is worth a possible 20 points. *In order to prevent duplications across presentations, there will be a sign-up form on Blackboard for this Project. Please use this form to indicate which AT devices you will be researching. If another student has already posted that they are researching a device, please select a different one.*

(30%) **Discussion Boards and Online Assignments**
Discussion Boards and/or Online Assignments on a variety of topics will be assigned most weeks. These activities will be completed online through UST Blackboard.

**Discussion Board:** You will read and respond to the postings on the Blackboard Discussion Board. For each assigned topic/thread, you will post an original response, then respond to at least two peers’ posts. Discussion Boards are intended to be a true online discussion of class-related topics. To this end, original posts and responses should reflect your active participation in the discussion, as well as demonstrate reflective thought and understanding of the material. Posts should be as long as necessary to achieve these goals—typically a minimum of 10 lines for the original post and a minimum of 4 lines for each response to peers. To receive full credit, your posts and responses must be submitted within the stated timelines (Timelines: Original posts must be posted Thursday – Saturday; Responses to peers must be posted Sunday – Thursday by 5:00 p.m.) Each Discussion Board assignment is worth a total of 3 points (1 point for each required post and response). Grading penalties for posting outside the timelines are discussed in the “Evaluation Process” section of this Syllabus.

**Online Assignments:** Directions for Online Assignments will be posted on Blackboard. You must submit your completed assignment on Blackboard through the appropriate link. Online
Assignments will be posted on Wednesdays nights and are due the following Wednesday (no later than 11:00 p.m.). Each Online Assignment is worth 5 points. Grading for Online Assignments will be based on the following criteria:

1) **Format:** Provide at least three distinct points, comments, or ideas (labeling them #1, #2, and #3 and putting them in separate paragraphs). Each point should include a description of the factual/logical basis for your statement or position.

2) **References:** For at least two of your three comments, reference to course readings by page number (e.g., Friend, p. 84).

3) **Length:** Online Assignments should be of sufficient length to reflect clear, relevant, and thoughtful responses. (Approximately 300 – 500 words)

**(20%) Final Exam (October 9 – 10)**
The final exam will be comprehensive and include content from the textbook, lecture, and class activities. The exam format will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer essay questions. The final exam will be worth a possible 20 points.

**EVALUATION PROCESS**
Students will be evaluated by means of punctual class attendance and professional participation in-class and online, Discussion Boards and Online Assignments, assigned Projects, and Final Exam.

Due dates for assignments are firm and work is expected to be turned in on time. It is the student’s responsibility to be sure that he or she understands all deadlines and other course requirements/policies (see “STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES” section below).

In the event that a deadline is not met, the following late work penalties will be applied:

- **Discussion Board:** A ½ point deduction will automatically be made for each post made out of the timeline window. (Note: the deduction applies to both early and late submissions.)
- **Online Assignments:** Submissions made after the stated deadline will receive an automatic deduction of 1 point.
- **Interview Project:** Due in-class on October 1st. At the discretion of the instructor, late assignments may not necessarily be accepted. A minimum of 5 points will be deducted from any Interview Project submitted after October 1st.
- **Presentation Project:** Because it affects the class schedule, **Class Presentations must be completed on the assigned day.** If any conflicts or extenuating circumstances arise, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor well in advance of the assigned presentation date. At the discretion of the instructor, late presentations may not
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necessarily be accepted. A minimum of 5 points will be deducted from any Presentation not delivered on the assigned date.

Point Values for Course Assignments:
Attendance/Participation = 10 points  
Interview Project = 20 points  
Presentation Project = 20 points  
5 Discussion Boards (3 points each) = 15 points  
3 Online Assignments (5 points each) = 15 points  
Final Exam = 20 points  
Final Grade = Total Points Earned/100

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<tr>
<th>Point Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95-100</td>
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<td>90-94</td>
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<td>87-89</td>
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<td>84-86</td>
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<td>59 or lower</td>
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Note: Though grades for some or all coursework may be posted on Blackboard, only the grade posted for you through the UST Registrar’s office qualifies as your official course grade.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES
Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and adhering to all requirements and policies listed in the course Syllabus. It is the student’s responsibility to proactively keep the course instructor informed of any events or circumstances that may impact the student’s ability to adhere to course requirements and policies, and to remain in close contact with the instructor about those circumstances until they are resolved.

Students are also responsible for checking email (University of St. Thomas, stthom.edu, account) on a daily basis to ensure that they are up to date on the most recent information for the course. Emails sent by the instructor via the stthom.edu account are part of the official communication system of the course. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his or her email account is in good working order and that emails from the course instructor’s email address are being received without incident. The instructor expects that students will continue to check email on a daily basis until all course requirements are fulfilled (i.e., the student has officially completed the course).

If the student is unclear about any aspect of the Syllabus, or any other information provided by the instructor, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the course instructor immediately in order to ask needed questions and gain clarity.
ATTENDANCE POLICY AND ACADEMIC ETHICAL STANDARDS
Per UST procedure, a student may be administratively withdrawn from a class if he/she misses three consecutive classes. In a condensed course, one class meeting is equivalent to three classes during a regular semester.

It is the student’s responsibility to know what constitutes academic dishonesty and plagiarism and apply academic integrity in all assignments. In general, taking credit for any thought, idea, or work that is not your own is plagiarism. See UST catalogue for further information. Any instance of academic dishonesty will be documented and reported to the Dean of the School of Education. Students will be informed of this action and must submit a written response to the charge. The instructor has the right to fail the student for the specific project or the entire course. When writing any paper, reference any information, websites, books, etc. that is not your own. Be sure you cite properly and accordingly. Please refer to the APA manual or its website to cite accordingly. Always use 12 point font, Times New Roman, double space, left justified.

Each student is expected to read and sign the “Academic Integrity and Honor Code Agreement” provided by the instructor at the beginning of the course.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS
Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact UST Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. Their offices can be reached at (713) 525-6953 or 2169. Please let the instructor know if you have made an assistance request through the UST Counseling and Disability Services office, and also contact the instructor directly to discuss your needs.