Course Descriptions

SPED 791 - Nature of Autism Spectrum (3 Units) Offered fall and spring semesters
This introductory seminar provides a thorough conceptual foundation for supporting diverse learners identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) across education, therapy, community and family settings. Grounded in current theory, research and practice, the focus is on understanding the complex nature and multifaceted issues people on the autism spectrum face in their learning, development and sociocultural experiences. The course offers a cross-disciplinary perspective drawing from a variety of sources in the field including: education, developmental psychology, speech, language and communication, sociocultural anthropology, biomedical and neuroscience. Session highlights include: historical and theoretical underpinnings; etiology; definitions; characteristics; developmental and learning profiles; assessment frameworks and procedures; current and emerging practices; individualized educational and therapeutic supports and service delivery models. This course includes a 25-hour field experience (required for candidates in Autism Spectrum Graduate Certificate program – alternative arrangements for other students may be made on a case-by-case basis).

SPED 825 – Communication, Behavior and Instruction: Autism (3 Units) Offered fall semester
This course offers preparation in the design and delivery of communication, behavior and instructional supports for diverse learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). A major focus is on identifying and applying a wide range of assessment and intervention strategies while highlighting key approaches that are grounded in empirically validated research and evidence-based practices including: data-based assessment and intervention; functional communication, Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC); environmental supports; structured teaching; differentiated instruction; Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), cognitive, developmental and sensory-based approaches. This course includes a 25-hour field experience (required for candidates in Autism Spectrum Graduate Certificate program – alternative arrangements for other students may be made on a case-by-case basis).

SPED 794 – Socialization and Imagination: Autism (3 Units) Offered spring semester
*Prerequisite – SPED 791
This advanced seminar is designed to prepare professionals in methods that support the socialization and imagination of diverse learners on the autism spectrum in meaningful socio-cultural contexts. While embracing neurodiversity and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the focus is on providing the access and means for people across the spectrum to derive the joy and benefits of social inclusion with peers in play, recreation and other culturally valued experiences (adapted from Autism Institute on Peer Socialization and Play). Emphasis will be placed on merging our theoretical understanding with the design and implementation of humanistic practices that apply to individuals with autism representing diverse ages, abilities, languages, cultures, social and economic experiences. Topics to be highlighted include: developmental, sociocultural and human rights perspectives on the essential role of inclusive play, recreation and cultural experiences for people with autism; autism demystification to enhance social inclusion; assessing developmental variations across social and symbolic domains; child-centered practices (developmental, relationship-based, sociocultural); adult-directed practices (applied behavior analysis, social-cognitive); infusing special interests in creative arts and other culturally valued activities as educational, vocational and therapeutic experiences. The course will be student-centered with a project-based field experience (25 hours required for candidates in the Autism Spectrum Graduate Certificate program).

Elective (3 unit) Graduate-level seminar with faculty approval (may be in special education or any related field)
*Course must include autism related paper, project or exam
Possible options in special education include:
- SPED 743: Issues in Augmentative & Alternative Communication
- SPED 793: Atypical Cognitive Development
- SPED 796 Transition and Transition Planning
- SPED 779 Family Systems & Services for Young Disabled Children
- SPED 788 Advanced Literacy and Instruction
- SPED 801 Development, Diversity & ELL: Special Education

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