



Course Syllabus: Introduction to Individuals with Disabilities

Gordon T. & Ellen West College of Education
and Professional Studies
SPED 3523 Section X10
Fall 2025

Contact Information

Instructor: April Crutcher
Office: Bridwell 312
Office hours: Tues / Thurs 9:30 am – 11 am; Wed 1 – 3 pm; by appointment
Office phone: (940) 397-4816
E-mail: april.crutcher@msutexas.edu

Instructor Response Policy

The best way to contact me is via email. I will check my email daily between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm Monday – Friday. Every effort will be made to respond within 24 hours; however, this does not apply to weekends or holidays. I will be available during the office hours listed above or we can set up another time to meet either in person or virtually.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Heward, W. L., Alber-Morgan, S. R., & Konrad, M. (2022). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education* (12th ed.). Pearson.

Course Description

A pre-service course and content experience that provides an overview of schooling and classrooms from the perspectives of P-12 special populations with an emphasis on factors that facilitate learning. Course may not be used for students seeking teacher certification.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Course Competencies

The student:

1. Understands the differences that parents of children with disabilities face, including the effects on the family, and interventions for parents.
2. Understands and applies principles and strategies for communicating effectively in varied teaching and learning contexts.
 - a. Communicates directions, explanations and procedures effectively and uses strategies for adjusting communication to enhance student understanding (e.g., by providing examples, simplifying complex ideas, using appropriate communication tools). (TExES Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities EC-12 Domain 2, Competency 007C)
3. Understands and applies knowledge of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic diversity and the significance of individual diversity for evaluation, planning and instruction.
 - a. Demonstrate knowledge of issues related to the identification of disabilities in individuals from ethnically, culturally, linguistically and/or socioeconomically diverse backgrounds.
 - b. Recognize how the ethnic, cultural and environmental background of students and their families, including linguistic and socioeconomic diversity, may affect evaluation, planning and instruction.
 - c. Demonstrate awareness of issues related to the representation in special education of populations that are culturally and linguistically diverse.
4. Engaging in Professional understanding of students' instructional and behavioral needs. (CEC Initial Preparation Standard 7.0, Component 7.1)
5. Supporting Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Growth (CEC Initial Preparation Standard 6.0)

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

I am available to meet by appointment. Email me with any questions you have or to set up a time to meet in person or virtually. Responses/answers will be provided via email, or a time can be set up for a phone call or appointment.

Methods of Instruction

This course will be presented in a manner that will allow you to learn independently, through interaction with instructor via discussions, discussion board, email, and postings. While you may work somewhat at your own pace, I have found that most students appreciate the structure of due dates. Please adhere to the due dates and adjust your study schedule accordingly. Internet courses are a convenient and effective method of learning; however they require as much work and attention as traditional instruction. Please adhere to the following guidelines/suggestions to ensure success this semester: 1. Do not

think you can do this course in your spare time. Plan, plan, and plan some more. Schedule time each week to dedicate to this course. 2. Please adhere to all deadlines and due dates. You may complete assignments early but do not turn them in late. 3. Please read and re-read assignments. Get clarification as soon as possible (do not wait until the night before the assignment is due). Post questions on the public discussion board or email me.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.
[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Grading/Assessment

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignment	Points
Chapter Activities (11 at 25 pts each with lowest dropped)	250
Chapter Quizzes (12 at 20 pts each with lowest dropped)	220
Disability Category Presentation	100
Discussions (1 at 10 pts each)	10
Total	580

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	522-580
B	464-521
C	406-463
D	348-405
F	347 and below

Chapter Activities

There will be a chapter/weekly activity each week. Most weeks the activity will be related to the chapter covered that week. The activities vary from papers (approximately 1- 1.5 pages in length), IRIS Modules with assessments at the end, and an assortment of other assignments to hopefully keep things interesting and to provide an opportunity to build on the information provided in

each chapter. Some activities take longer than others, so be sure to look ahead and plan accordingly.

Quizzes

There will be a quiz over each chapters 1-12 in the text. The quizzes will be multiple choice and open book. The questions come from the book so will a little effort you should be able to do well on the quizzes.

Disability Category Presentation

For this course project, you will choose one disability category that was covered during the semester and create a recorded presentation focused on that category. You will decide which disability you would like to cover in your presentation. More specific instructions can be found in D2L.

Discussions

There is 1 discussion in the course. It is an introduction of yourself to me and the rest of the class.

Mid-Term Exam

There will not be a mid-term exam for this course.

Final Exam

There will not be a final exam for this course.

Extra Credit

Extra credit assignments will not be provided in this course.

Late Work

All assignments are expected to be submitted by the day they are due. You will be penalized five points for every day an assignment is late. Please contact me if extenuating circumstances arise that result in your inability to submit an assignment on time.

Make Up Work/Tests

Make up work will only be accepted in extreme circumstances (death in the family, illness, etc.). I must be contacted prior to the due date and appropriate documentation must be provided.

Instructor Use of Generative AI

I integrate generative AI into my teaching to enhance—not replace—human learning, creativity, and critical thinking. I use AI applications as collaborative partners for ideation, drafting, feedback, and the refinement of teaching materials, while maintaining full responsibility for content and accuracy. I do not use this technology to assess student work. I do not input other people's work or personally identifiable information into AI tools. My approach emphasizes ethical, transparent use aligned with academic integrity, equity, and the development of transferable skills. I also aim to model responsible engagement with emerging technologies, emphasizing thoughtful boundaries rather than rigid prohibitions. I strive for transparency around AI use by adding AI disclosure statements and/or citations to all work generated for this course in collaboration with AI tools.

Student Use of Generative AI

The use of artificial intelligence applications, including but not limited to ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, DALL·E, Grammarly, or similar applications, may be used for planning activities such as brainstorming, outlining, and idea development. However, all final submissions should show evidence that students have developed and refined these ideas on their own without additional generative AI use. Students are expected to apply what they are learning in this course to produce work for this class, drawing on their developing knowledge, understanding, and skills. When using generative AI in permitted contexts as outlined in the syllabus or explicitly permitted by the instructor, you are responsible for ensuring that AI-generated content is properly cited, accurate, ethical, and free of misinformation or intellectual property violations. AI-generated content must never be submitted as your own work. Doing so may constitute a violation of academic integrity and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Please contact me if you have questions regarding this course policy.

Any generative AI use should be cited *AND* clearly disclosed according to the instructions in this syllabus. An example of an APA citation (7th ed. format) is seen here: OpenAI. (2025). ChatGPT (May 2024 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: February 2nd

Deadline to file for graduation: February 16th

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" April 29th at 4:00 PM

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you

experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. **Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world that is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into D2L.

Inclement Weather

In the case of campus closure due to inclement weather, this course will continue as scheduled. However, if assignment deadlines coincide with the closure dates, the deadline will be delayed until after the campus reopens.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exists in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#) or email disabilityservices@msutexas.edu.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU TEXAS. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "*Run. Hide. Fight.*" which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: "*Run. Hide. Fight.*"

Obligation to Report Sex Discrimination under State and Federal Law

Midwestern State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. State and federal law require University employees to report sex discrimination and sexual misconduct to the University's Office of Title IX. As a faculty member, I am required to report to the Title IX Coordinator any allegations, personally observed behavior, or other direct or indirect knowledge of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, or stalking, involving a student or employee. After a report is made, the office of Title IX will reach out to the affected student or employee in an effort to connect such person(s) with resources and options in addressing the allegations made in the report. You are also encouraged to report any incidents to the office of Title IX. You may do so by contacting:

Laura Hetrick
Title IX Coordinator
Sunwatcher Village Clubhouse
940-397-4213
laura.hetrick@msutexas.edu

You may also file an online report 24/7 at [Online Reporting Form](#)

Should you wish to visit with someone about your experience in confidence, you may contact the MSU Counseling Center at 940-397-4618. For more information on the University's policy on Title IX or sexual misconduct, please visit [Title IX Website](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Week	Topics for the Week	Weekly Activities - Due on Mondays at Midnight
Week 1 – Jan 19	Class Introduction and People First Language	Discussion and People First Language Activity – Due 1/26
Week 2 – Jan 26	Chapter 1 – The Purpose and Promise of Special Education	Chapter 1 Quiz and Activity – Due 2/2
Week 3 – Feb 2	Chapter 2 – Planning and Providing Special Education	Chapter 2 Quiz and Activity – Due 2/9
Week 4 – Feb 9	Chapter 3 – Collaborating with Families	Chapter 3 Quiz and Activity – Due 2/16
Week 5 – Feb 16	Chapter 4 – Intellectual Disabilities	Chapter 4 Quiz and Activity – Due 2/23
Week 6 – Feb 23	Chapter 5 – Learning Disabilities	Chapter 5 Quiz and Activity – Due 3/2
Week 7 – Mar 2	Chapter 6 – Emotional or Behavioral Disorders	Chapter 6 Quiz and Activity – Due 3/9
Week 8 – Mar 9	Spring Break	Nothing due this week
Week 9 – Mar 16	Chapter 7 – Autism Spectrum Disorders	Chapter 7 Quiz and Activity – Due 3/23
Week 10 – Mar 23	Chapter 8 – Communication Disorders	Chapter 8 Quiz and Activity – Due 3/30
Week 11 – Mar 30	Chapter 9 – Deafness and Hearing Loss	Chapter 9 Quiz and Activity – Due 4/6
Week 12 – Apr 6	Chapter 10 – Blindness and Low Vision	Chapter 10 Quiz – Due 4/13

Week	Topics for the Week	Weekly Activities - Due on Mondays at Midnight
Week 13 – Apr 13	Chapter 11 – Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Health Impairments, and Physical Disabilities	Chapter 11 Quiz and Activity – Due 4/20
Week 14 – Apr 20	Chapter 12 – Low-Incidence Disabilities: Multiple Disabilities, Deaf-Blindness, and Traumatic Brain Injury	Chapter 12 Quiz– Due 4/27
Week 15 – Apr 27	Work on Disability Category Presentation	Disability Category Presentation -Due 5/4
Week 16- May 4		Nothing due – all course work completed