

Grand Valley State University

PSY 304-01: Psychology and Education of the Exceptional Child

Fall 2025

Instructor: Kristen Schrauben, Ph.D. Course Time: Tu/Th – 1:00–2:15 PM
Pronouns: she/her/hers Course Location: 2302 ASH
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Email: schrakri@gvsu.edu (Best way to reach me)
Office Hours: Drop-in hours Tues 10-11am, or by appointment (in-person or Zoom)
Prerequisites: PSY 101; PSY 301 or 364

Course Summary

Psychology 304 is a survey course in the broad field of exceptionality. This course will introduce both a psychological and educational perspective to the study of exceptionality in children, and will cover topics ranging from disabilities to giftedness. Over the course of the semester, you will be exposed to various terminology and approaches used when working with exceptional children. In addition to reviewing different disabilities, this course will emphasize evidence-based practices, school-wide prevention models, and other current issues in the field of exceptionality.

Course Objectives

The following course objectives are from the syllabus of record and are therefore applicable for all sections of this course, regardless of the assigned instructor. Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Describe the purpose and goals of special education services.
- 2) Describe the term “exceptional children” and its relation to services in schools.
- 3) Compare and contrast different methods of assessment in schools.
- 4) Describe the diagnostic process in school settings.
- 5) Apply ethical and legal standards in Special Education to various scenarios.
- 6) Describe characteristics, contributing factors, and intervention strategies for a wide range of disabilities in school settings.
- 7) Critically evaluate research relevant to exceptional children.

Readings

- GVSU SAVE Program will provide required text (access via Blackboard): Heward, W. L., Alber-Morgan, S.R., & Konrad, M. (2022). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education*, 12th Edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson. Alternatively, you can opt-out and purchase a hard copy from on [Amazon](#) or [Pearson](#).
- Selected additional readings will be placed on Blackboard as PDF files.

Course Delivery

This course will be taught in a face-to-face format, with no option to complete the course online. Masks are optional for all face-to-face class sessions unless the university states otherwise. Recognize that some members of the campus community will choose to continue to wear face masks, and they should be supported for doing so.

Students should complete assigned readings prior to class. Class sessions will involve a combination of lecture, discussions, and activities. Note that there are two dates when the class will NOT be required to meet face-to-face to account for time spent watching classmates' recorded presentations (see schedule).

General Course Policies

This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Many students have visible or invisible disabilities and the university offers accommodations that allow them to be successful. If you have a documented disability or suspect you have an undocumented disability, please contact the Student Accessibility Resources office (215 The Blue Connection) by calling (331-2490) or emailing (access@gvsu.edu). If you need accommodations, please provide me with your memo from Student Accessibility Resources. In addition, it is often helpful to discuss together the support you will need to be successful; these discussions will remain confidential. Furthermore, if you think you will need assistance evacuating the classroom and/or building in an emergency, please contact me so I can develop a plan to assist you.

Attendance

Attendance at lectures is *highly* recommended, but not required. You are adults and I expect you to be motivated to learn by engaging in class sessions. I recommend all students attend, take notes, and actively participate. It is very likely that your exam performance will improve if you attend and engage in class sessions.

Please contact me *before* a class absence with a valid excuse if you would like a video lecture and to make up in-class activity points (by a deadline set by instructor via email). Students who contact me *after* an absence can still receive the video lectures, but can NOT make up activity points. If you miss any class session, it is always your responsibility to download the class presentation slides and obtain notes from a classmate.

If you know in advance that you cannot attend a class session for a university-defined "excused absence" (e.g., university sport, religious holiday, conference), please contact me *as soon as possible in advance* of the absence. Refer to this [page](#) for the complete list of excused absences.

Support & Communication

I am committed to creating a learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized and valued. As a class, we will approach discussions with respect and civility to build a culture based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. Debate is expected and welcomed, but personal attacks will not be tolerated. I strive to create an open and welcoming classroom for all students and if I ever miss the mark, please don't hesitate to come talk to me. We are learning together.

I want to hear from you! If you email me and don't hear back within 36 hours, please send a follow-up email. I am here to support your learning, but I may not know how to best support you if you fail to communicate. For example, if you run into challenges balancing work or family obligations or have unforeseen personal difficulties that are impacting your ability to be successful, please reach out to me so we can work together to form a plan.

If I cannot personally provide the support you need, I may direct you to some of the valuable campus resources. I also encourage you to be proactive and utilize these supports on your own. Most students access resources as some point at GVSU. Resources include:

- Psych Friends Peer Mentoring: <https://www.gvsu.edu/psychology/psych-friends-477.htm>
- Tutoring & Reading Center: <https://www.gvsu.edu/trc/>
- University Counseling Center: <https://www.gvsu.edu/counsel/>
- LGBT Resource Center: <https://www.gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/>
- Financial Hardship: <https://www.gvsu.edu/financialaid/financial-hardship-requests-226.htm>

Canceled Classes

If classes are canceled at the university, I will contact you regarding plans for the course and any updates to the course schedule.

Technology Requirements & Assistance

You will need a laptop or tablet with internet access to use during a few class sessions. However, the use of technology for personal reasons (e.g., checking email or using social media) during class is inappropriate and disrespectful to other students and myself. Please silence and put away all cellphones during class unless directed to use it for an activity. However, if there is a specific reason you must have access to your phone during class, please speak with me. I will use my discretion in reducing grades for those students who are using computers or other technology in a disrespectful manner during class.

In addition, you will need access to the following to complete remaining course requirements:

- High-speed internet access
- Computer with ability to watch videos; Google chrome is the recommended browser
- Microsoft Word & program to read pdf files
- Video camera & microphone (built into computer or external)

While tablets, smartphones and other mobile devices may allow for the completion of some coursework, they are not guaranteed to work in all areas. Please ensure you have a Windows or Mac based computer available to complete coursework. This computer must have programs to read PDF and Microsoft Word documents. Please submit any assignments as Microsoft Word files as I will not accept incompatible programs. As a GVSU student, you have access to Microsoft Office 365 for free (<https://www.gvsu.edu/it/downloading-office-365-from-microsoft-223.htm>).

To access Blackboard Ultra, go to <https://lms.gvsu.edu/ultra/> and enter your log in and password. Use of Blackboard Ultra is integral to this course. If you experience technical problems with Blackboard Ultra, contact the IT (it@gvsu.edu or 616-331-2101). The help website is <https://www.gvsu.edu/it/>.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The materials presented in this class are copyright protected and may not be used without my prior consent. Intentional misuse of the intellectual property of another may subject the user to penalties up to and including dismissal. You are responsible for making yourself aware of and for understanding the policies and procedures that pertain to academic integrity including GVSU Student Code. It is your responsibility as a student to maintain academic integrity and not give any appearance of a violation.

Specifically:

1. No student shall knowingly, without authorization, procure, provide, or accept any materials which contain questions or answers to any examination or assignment.
2. No student shall, without authorization, complete, in part or in total, any examination or assignment for another person.
3. No student shall, without authorization, allow any examination or assignment to be completed, in part or in total, by another person.
4. No student shall knowingly plagiarize or copy the work of another person and submit it as his or her own.
5. No student shall submit work that has been previously graded or is being submitted concurrently to more than one course without authorization from the instructor(s) of the class(es) to which the student wishes to submit it.

GVSU is dedicated to advancing artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in a manner that is ethical, responsible, and aligned with our academic and community values. Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can be extremely helpful when used thoughtfully and ethically. However, I also want to ensure you are learning the necessary course content and developing your critical thinking skills independent of these technologies. As a result, I have restrictions on the use of AI tools for our class as follows:

- Acceptable AI Uses:
 - Helping you study (e.g., developing questions or aids to test yourself; explaining complex concepts in a simpler or different way to aid understanding)
 - Checking grammar or clarity in your own writing
 - Completing Part 2 of the Research Summary Paper
- Unacceptable AI Uses:
 - Submitting AI-generated text as your own work (i.e., copying full sentences)
 - Completing exams or activities (in-class or make-ups)
 - Replacing engagement with reading or lectures
 - Completing Part 1 of the Research Summary Paper (i.e., summarizing your article)

Note: If unacceptable use of AI is suspected, a one-on-one conversation will be scheduled to discuss the issue. Further misuse of AI will be treated as academic misconduct.
- Other AI Uses: If you are unsure whether you can use AI for a purpose not outlined above, just ask! I will consider approving AI for other purposes *with prior permission*. You should discuss what you want to use, why you want to use it, and how you plan to acknowledge its use *before* use. Using AI for other purposes without prior approval will be considered unacceptable use.

You are capable of meeting expectations for this course. If you are concerned about how you are performing in the course, please come speak with me instead of considering academic misconduct. If you are uncertain about plagiarism or the appropriate use of AI prior to submission of an assignment, project, or exam, come speak with me so I can assist you. There is no harm in asking if you are not sure if you are plagiarizing or if you can use AI. There *is* harm in plagiarizing and then telling me afterwards that you did not know you did anything wrong. There *is* harm in using AI for an exam or assignment when it is unacceptable.

Grading

<u>Coursework:</u>	<u>Points:</u>	<u>Grading Scale</u>	
Exam #1	100	94 above	A
Exam #2	100	90-93	A-
Exam #3	100	87-89	B+
Critical Issue Group Presentation	50	83-86	B
Research Summary Paper	50	80-82	B-
Final Video Reflection	10	77-79	C+
Activities (BB shows running total)	60	73-76	C
Total Points:	470	70-72	C-
		67-69	D+
		60-66	D
		59 & below	F

To calculate your final grade, add up the points you have earned (and those you expect to earn), divide by total points, multiply by 100, and compare to the grading scale.

Exams (3 exams, 100 points each = 300 points)

- Exam format - There will be three exams for this course. The final exam will be partially cumulative, with the majority of material selected from the final weeks of lectures. Exams will consist of a combination of multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, and short-answer questions drawn from the textbook, other readings, but primarily from information provided during lectures. A study guide will be provided prior to each exam to provide students with more information and help them prepare. I am interested in your learning and understanding of course content so feel free to ask questions as you prepare or following an exam to help you better prepare for a subsequent exam.
- Make-up exams – All students are expected to take exams at the scheduled times. If you miss an exam due to illness, you must provide a doctor's excuse within 24 hours following the scheduled exam time. If you must miss an exam for any reason other than illness, you MUST email me with a valid excuse at least 24 hours in advance to schedule a make-up exam. Failure to notify me in advance will result in a zero on the exam. Please note that make-up exams must be completed outside of regular class time.

Critical Issue Group Presentation (50 points)

- Description - The critical issue group presentation requires that your small group work together to research and present on a critical issue in the field. As a group, you will research your topic as well as identify and integrate two internet-based resources and two research articles on the topic. Together you will write a script for the presentation and 1+ group members will record the presentation using Panopto (<https://www.gvsu.edu/elearn/help/panopto-68.htm>). You will also create two multiple-choice exam questions based on your presentation. Due dates vary based on topic. More information about this assignment is available on Blackboard.
- Plagiarism – Please refer to the “Academic Integrity” section summarized previously in the syllabus.
- Submitting Assignment – Each group member will be responsible for submitting a copy of the presentation and exam questions, the link(s) to the Panopto presentation(s), and a completed group rating form by your group's deadline (see schedule).

Research Summary Paper (50 points)

- Description – There will be one paper for this course. This paper will be a summary of a research study of classroom intervention for children with disabilities. You will be responsible for finding a study that meets specific criteria. Length often varies by writing style and article complexity. Further details about this paper will be available on Blackboard.

- Plagiarism – Please refer to the “Academic Integrity” section summarized previously in the syllabus. I have the right to fail you on an assignment or fail you for the course for academic misconduct.
- Submitting Assignments – Paper MUST be double-spaced and typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins on all sides. Reference should follow APA style. Paper is due Thursday October 30th at 1:00pm and must be turned in as a Microsoft Word document on Blackboard. Papers turned in after the start of class will be considered late. Late assignments will be accepted up to 3 days beyond the due date with a 25% deduction in points (i.e., if the deadline is Thursday, work will be accepted through Sunday. Late assignments must still be submitted on Blackboard.

Final Video Reflection (10 points)

- Description – As the course concludes, you will submit a short video reflecting on your learning in the course and how you can utilize what you have learned in the future. Further details about this video reflection will be available on Blackboard.
- Submitting Assignment – Videos will be recorded and submitted via an online platform and will only be viewable by me.

Activities (14 activities, 5 points each = 60 points + 10 possible extra credit points)

- Description – Throughout the semester I will conduct activities to stimulate class discussion and clarify information related to course topics. These may include brief written responses, video follow-up questions, or small group activities. Activities and any necessary resources will be provided during class sessions. Sometimes the dates of these activities are announced in advance, and other times they are not. There will be 70 points available across the semester, but you are only graded out of 60 which means you have the opportunity to earn 10 bonus points. If you contact me in advance of an absence, you can have the opportunity to make-up activity points by a deadline I set. You can keep track of the points you have earned by looking on Blackboard. The grade on Blackboard is a *running* total of the points you have earned thus far; I will add points to your Blackboard grade as activities are completed throughout the semester.

Course Schedule

Schedule is subject to change. An updated course schedule will be provided if changes are made.

(Week) Date	To Do BEFORE Class	Class Session Topic
(1) 8/26	Complete introductory survey	Syllabus; Course Introduction
(1) 8/28	Read Chapter 1	Foundations
(2) 9/2	Read Chapter 2 Review Critical Issue Group Presentation directions/video	Foundations Introduce Critical Issue Group Presentation
(2) 9/4	Review Chapters 1 & 2	Foundations
(3) 9/9	Read Chapter 3	Foundations
(3) 9/11	Read pdf reading on Blackboard Review Research Summary paper directions/video	MTSS & Research Introduce Research Summary Paper
(4) 9/16	Read pdf reading on Blackboard	Assessment
(4) 9/18	Not applicable	Assessment
(5) 9/23	Read Chapter 14	Early Childhood Special Education
(5) 9/25	Email possible Research Summary article to professor for review Turn in Critical Issue Group Presentation (Groups 1-2)	Early Childhood Special Education
(6) 9/30	Watch group presentations Study for Exam 1	<u>OPTIONAL CLASS</u> for Exam questions & help finding article for paper Watch group presentations
(6) 10/2	Watch group presentations Study for Exam 1	EXAM 1
(7) 10/7	Read Chapter 5	Learning Problems (Specific Learning Disabilities)
(7) 10/9	Not applicable	Learning Problems (Specific Learning Disabilities)
(8) 10/14	Read Chapter 4	Intellectual Disabilities
(8) 10/16	Turn in Critical Issue Group Presentation (Groups 3-4)	Intellectual Disabilities

(Week) Date	To Do BEFORE Class	Class Session Topic/Activity
(9) 10/21	Not applicable	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK
(9) 10/23	Watch group presentations	NO CLASS – PROFESSOR AT CONFERENCE
(10) 10/28	Read Chapter 6	Behavior Problems (Emotional Impairments)
(10) 10/30	Turn in Research Summary Paper	Behavior Problems (Emotional Impairments)
(11) 11/4	Read Chapter 8	Communication Disorders (Speech/Language Impairments)
(11) 11/6	Not applicable	Communication Disorders (Speech/Language Impairments)
(12) 11/11	Study for Exam 2	EXAM 2
(12) 11/13	Read section of Chapter 11 (ADHD)	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
(13) 11/18	Turn in Critical Issue Group Presentation (Groups 5-6)	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
(13) 11/20	Reach Chapter 7	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
(14) 11/25	Watch group presentations	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
(14) 11/27	Not applicable	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS
(15) 12/2	Read Chapter 13	Gifted & Talented
(15) 12/4	Turn in Final Video Reflection Organize Exam 3 questions Watch group presentations	Gifted & Talented Exam 3 review time
(Exam Week) 12/9	Study for Exam 3 Watch group presentations	EXAM 3 Tuesday 12/9 12:00-1:50 PM