

**Grand Valley State University**  
**Autism Endorsement Program**

**Psy 540-02: Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder**  
**Spring/Summer 2025**

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**Meeting location:** Online through Blackboard

**Office hours:** Email or by appointment  
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**Course Description**

This course addresses characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including diagnosis and special education eligibility. A specific emphasis is placed on using intervention approaches that address the unique learning and social needs of children with ASD. Various evidence-based interventions that promote inclusive opportunities and improved outcomes are covered.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completing this course, the student will:

1. Examine how the characteristics of autism spectrum disorder manifest as a spectrum.
2. Discuss diagnostic criteria and eligibility determination practices and issues.
3. Demonstrate how different perspectives of ASD change beliefs and improve programming for individuals with ASD.
4. Show how an inclusive approach with high expectations influences families and the educational community.
5. Describe how inclusive and evidence-based practices impact progress and outcome.
6. Apply evidence-based practice process to decisions about educational programming.
7. Demonstrate the use of evidence-based practices in educational programming.
8. Describe strategies to improve adult support in classroom environments.

**READINGS**

Notbohm, E. (2019). *Ten things every child with autism wishes you knew (3rd ed.)*. Future Horizons.  
(Purchase from an online bookseller - check for the correct edition).

See reading list in the syllabus. These readings will be available on the Blackboard site.

**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Required Equipment (owned or accessible)**

- High-speed internet access
- Operating system that meets current Blackboard browser requirements (see below)
- Computer with a sound card and speakers
- Microphone (built in or external)
- Computer camera for synchronous meetings (most laptops have a camera)

## **Blackboard Ultra is the Course Management System**

This course utilizes Blackboard Ultra, GVSU's online course management system. GVSU's I.T. Department has compiled [Student resources related to Blackboard Ultra](#) which may help you find answers to some of your questions about using the Ultra system, including an orientation.

Use of Blackboard is integral to this course and students must log on a few times each week to complete course requirements, receive important announcements and updates, and communicate with instructors and other students about course content.

Check the current [technical requirements](#) to use Blackboard.

If you experience technical problems with Blackboard, contact the help desk by email or phone: [helpdesk@gvsu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@gvsu.edu) or 616-331-3513. The help website is <https://www.gvsu.edu/it/>.

For additional information about online learning, go to the [GVSU Online Learning](#) webpage.

## **Accessing the Library**

Many of GVSU's library resources can be accessed online through [Distance and Off-Campus Learning Services](#), including many journal articles available on demand. You must have an active GVSU student account to take advantage of the library's resources and services.

## **Graduate Writing Resources**

[Graduate Writing Resources](#) are available to assist with many types of writing tasks. These resources are not just available for students who struggle with writing and can help any student improve writing skills.

## **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you need specific accommodations and you have a documented disability, please contact the [Student Accessibility Resources](#) office to coordinate accommodations. If you plan to request accommodations in this course, let me know as soon as possible so I can assist you.

## **COURSE ORGANIZATION and ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Unit Modules** (two-week modules)

Unit modules will be a foundational part of the course and this is where you will find instructions for each two-week segment of the course. They typically include readings, video lectures, discussion board activities, quizzes and assignments. Some units will also include outside videos or websites to review. Units will be open for two weeks and most activities will be due at the end of the two-week period. All previous units will be open throughout the course.

### **Readings**

You will have book chapters and articles to read for each unit. It is critical to stay up on the readings. This is where you will learn much of the content for the autism endorsement.

### **Discussion board**

Discussion boards will be posted with most units to promote interactions between you and your classmates related to autism. A grading rubric is provided on the Blackboard site under Course Basics.

**Synchronous Meetings** (participate in 2 synchronous meetings)

Synchronous meetings will provide an important opportunity to talk about course materials and assignments and engage in discussions with other students in the course. The dates and times for these meetings are listed in the course schedule.

**Quizzes**

Each unit will have a brief reading quiz to check for understanding of the reading material and strengthen your foundation for engaging in discussion board and completing assignments.

**Assignments**

You will have an assignment associated with each unit module. These will vary in type and length, but most will involve application of concepts from the unit readings and lecture materials. These assignments will constitute an important part of your learning and grade for the course. All written assignments must be prepared in a professional manner (typed, and free from spelling/grammatical errors). More information about each of these assignments will be provided in Blackboard.

**POINTS AND GRADING**

Assignment	Points	Total Points for Semester
Discussion board (4)	10	40
Assignments (6)	20	120
Synchronous meetings (2)	15	30
Quizzes (6)	5	30
TOTAL POINTS		220

**Final Grade Requirement**

Letter Grade	Percentage Range
A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	70-76%
D	61-69%
F	0-60%

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GVSU Student Code regarding Integrity of Scholarship and Grades:

Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities: "Standards of conduct are established in order to foster a community and environment where the mission, vision and values of Grand Valley State University... can flourish. These standards are embodied within a set core of values that include **integrity, community, inclusion & equity, respect, and responsibility**. The University conduct process exists to protect the interests of the community and to challenge those whose behavior falls outside of these values and our policies."

Academic Misconduct Policies and Procedures According to GVSU Code STU 5.1, "Academic Misconduct is defined as any action or behavior that misrepresents one's contributions to or the results of any scholarly product submitted for credit, evaluation, or dissemination." Additional information about the following aspects of Academic Misconduct, including cheating, collusion, dual submission, falsification, and plagiarism is available [here](#).

### GVSU Course Policies

This course is subject to GVSU's general requirements for courses. A full list with pointers to resources may be found at <https://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>.

**Psy 540: Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder**  
**Spring/Summer 2025 Schedule**

Dates	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Unit 1 5/5-5/18	Characteristics, Etiology, Identification, and Co-Occurring Conditions in ASD  Neurodiversity and Profound Autism	OAR guide - Background (pg. 1-14) Janzen & Zenko (2012) - Ch. 3 Ellison (2023) Lawrence (2019) – Ch. 1	Quiz 1 Assignment 1 (includes completing AFIRM module) Discussion Board
Unit 2 5/19-6/1	Perspectives on ASD and Looking at ASD Differently  More on Neurodiversity and Profound Autism	OAR guide - Background (pgs. 15-30) Notbohm (2019) - Ch. 1-5 (more if you are able to!) Lawrence (2019) – Ch. 3 Lerner (2023)	Quiz 2 Assignment 2  <b>Synchronous Meeting</b> Tuesday, 5/20: 7:00pm-8:15pm
Unit 3 6/2-6/15	Inclusive Practices and Community Engagement  Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination	Kluth (2010) - Chapter 2 & 10 Self-Determination Resource Review NEA Guide (2020) Optional: Agran et al. (2014)	Quiz 3 Assignment 3 Discussion Board
Unit 4 6/16-6/29	Working as a Team  Goals for School; Goals for Life	McCollow & Hoffman (2020) Janzen & Zenko (2012) - Ch. 7 Test et al. (2014)	Quiz 4 Assignment 4 Discussion Board
6/30-7/4	Break week		
Unit 5 7/7-7/20	Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Functional routines</li> <li>Visuals</li> <li>Video modeling</li> <li>Peer-based Intervention</li> </ul>	Janzen & Zenko (2012) - Chs. 11-13 Ganz et al. (2011) Hume et al. (2014) Cohen & Demchak (2018)  Optional: Zeigler et al. (2020) or Bambara et al. (2018)	Quiz 5 Assignment 5  <b>Synchronous meeting:</b> Tuesday, 7/15: 7:00pm-8:15pm
Unit 6 7/21-8/3	Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) II	Odom et al. (2021) Leach (2010)	Quiz 6 Assignment 6

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABA in schools</li> <li>• Scripts</li> <li>• Self-mgt</li> <li>• Exercise/ movement</li> </ul>	Schulze (2016) Janzen & Zenko (2012) - Ch. 21	Discussion Board
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### Reading List

Agran, M. & Hughes, C. (2014). Chapter 5: Promoting self-determination and self-directed learning. In Agran, M., Brown, F., Hughes, C., Quirk, C., & Ryndak, D., *Equity and full participation for individuals with severe disabilities: A vision for the future*. Brookes Publishing.

Bambara, L. M., Thomas, A., Chovanes, J., & Cole, C. L. (2018). Peer-mediated intervention: enhancing the social conversational skills of adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 51(1), 7-17. doi:10.1177/0040059918775057

Cohen, A., & Demchak, M. (2018). Use of visual supports to increase task independence in students with severe disabilities in inclusive educational settings. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 53(1), 84-99.

Ellison, K. (November 18, 2023). A rift over 'profound autism' reveals a community's deeper divide. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/11/18/profound-autism-labels-neurodiversity/>

Ganz J. B., Earles-Vollrath T. L., & Cook K. E. (2011). Video Modeling: A visually based intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 43(6), 8-19.

Hume, K., Sreckovic, M., Snyder, K., & Carnahan, C. (2014). Smooth transitions: Helping students with Autism Spectrum Disorder navigate the school day. *Teaching Exceptional Children* 47(1), 35-45.

Janzen, J. & Zenko, C. (2012). *Understanding the nature of autism: A guide to the Autism Spectrum Disorders* (3rd ed.). Hammill Institute on Disabilities.

Kluth, P. (2010). *You're going to love this kid (2nd ed.)*. Brookes Publishing.

Lawrence, C. (2019). *Teacher Education and Autism: A research-based practical handbook*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Lerner, M.D., Gurba, A.N. & Gassner, D. (2023). A framework for neurodiversity-affirming interventions for autistic individuals. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 91(9), 503-504.

Leach (2010). *Bringing ABA into your inclusive classroom*. Brookes Publishing.

McCollow M.M., & Hoffman H.H. (2020). Evidence-Based Decision-Making: A team effort toward achieving goals. *Young Exceptional Children*, 23(1), 15-23.

National Education Association (2020). Teaching students with autism: A guide for educators. Retrieved from: <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/teaching-students-autism-guide-educators>

Notbohm, E. (2019). *Ten things every child with autism wishes you knew (3rd ed.)*. Future Horizons.

Odom, S.L., Hall, L.J., Morin, K.L. *et al.* (2021). Educational interventions for children and youth with autism: A 40-year perspective. *Journal of Autism Developmental Disorders*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-04990-1>

OPAR Life Journey through Autism: An Educator's guide to ASD (Level 1 Supports).  
<https://researchautism.org/resources/an-educators-guide-to-asd-level-1-supports/>

Ruble L. A., & Dalrymple, N. J. (2002). Compass: A parent-teacher collaborative model for students with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 17(2), 76-83.  
doi:[10.1177/10883576020170020201](https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576020170020201)

Ruble L., & McGrew J. (2020). Goal Attainment of Students with ASD Using COMPASS. In F. Volkmar (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Springer Publishing.

Schulze, M. A. (2016). Self-management strategies to support students with ASD. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 48(5), 225-231.

Test, D. W., Smith, L. E., & Carter, E. W. (2014). Equipping youth with autism spectrum disorders for adulthood: Promoting rigor, relevance, and relationships. *Remedial and Special Education*, 35(2), 80-90.

Ziegler, M., Matthews, A., Mayberry, M., Owen-DeSchryver, J., & Carter, E. W. (2020). From barriers to belonging: Promoting inclusion and relationships through the peer to peer program. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 52(6), 426-434.

## Thoughts on a Successful Online Learning Experience

Taking an online course is different from traditional classroom courses. You will take a larger role in organizing your time and guiding your own learning. The role of the instructor becomes facilitator, guide, and resource to help you learn the course material and apply it in your personal and professional life. I am here to assist you, but you need to let me know what you need.

As a successful online learner, you will interact with the course materials regularly; manage your time; share thoughts and experiences with others; critically reflect on material; and apply what you are learning. You are the conductor of your own learning, which is what lifelong learning is all about!

Much to the surprise of many students, online courses are not easier than traditional courses. Quite the contrary. You may have more flexibility and less travel, but the content is the same and you have a greater responsibility for your learning. There are also more opportunities and expectations to participate in discussions. Online learning is an excellent format, but it is not and should not be passive. You want to be actively engaged with your instructor, other students, and your own thinking.

## Tips for a Successful Learning Experience

*\*Although these might seem obvious and simple, they will make a difference*

- Read the syllabus and all preparatory information on Blackboard
- Stay organized and track due dates
- Plan weekly study times
- Keep up on the reading
- Log on to Blackboard at least 3 times per week to check announcements, discussion board, and interact with course material
- Get to know the other students in the class and help each other learn the language and the concepts
- Post questions, comments, and ideas on discussion board
- Ask questions of the instructor. Not just clarification questions about logistics, but content questions.