

SPE 791 CRITICAL ISSUES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Wednesday 10:40 am – 1:30 pm
Interdisciplinary B 353

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The doctoral seminar is designed to prepare students to do theoretically grounded critiques of scientific scholarship. The seminar is also designed to expose students to contemporary critical issues in special and inclusive education systems. For this purpose, we will cover the following topics:

1. Response to Intervention (RTI) with a particular focus on cultural differences.
2. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in multicultural schools.
3. Writing scholarly manuscripts.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The seminar will meet every other week and the sociocultural research group will meet on the other two weeks of each month. We will do critical readings and discussions of the first two contemporary topics during the first half of the semester, while we will maintain a focus on writing issues throughout the semester. The critical reviews of the first two topics will be guided by the following overarching questions:

- **Theoretical lenses:** *How's learning defined in this literature and how is the link between culture and learning addressed?*
- **Nature of the empirical support:** *What conclusions can you draw about the methodological features of the evidence used to support the main premises and key ideas in this literature?*

Each class period will be organized around the following activities:

1. Instructors' mini-lecture—contextualization of the class topic, orientation to the premises and empirical basis of the work under review.
2. Whole group discussion focused on at least two of the following, (ideally) building on materials previously covered in class:
 - ❖ *Synthesis:* Identify agreements, conclusions, or generalizations related to the topic under discussion. Conclusions can refer to (theoretical and/or methodological) insights gained through course readings and/or classroom discussions.
 - ❖ *Knowledge building:* Raise questions and make statements about the view of learning that is emerging from course materials and/or class discussions.
 - ❖ *Criticism:* Raise questions or analytic comments related to the conceptualization or the study of the target topic. Disagreements, contradictions, ambiguities, or tensions in

the reviewed literature can be raised about the notion of learning and its link to culture.

3. Activity about writing.

The second half of the semester will be devoted to work in teams on reviews and critiques of various tools related to topics 1-2 (see description below).

SCHEDULED TOPICS, READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

Readings for topics 1-2 will be uploaded on your Blackboard site under readings by week. The discussions and activities about writing will be based in part on the following volume:

Hancock, E. (2003). *Ideas into words: Mastering the craft of science writing*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
Aug. 25	Introductions	
September 1	Research Group	
Sept. 8	RTI and Differences Writing	
Sept. 15	Research Group	
Sept. 22	RTI and Differences Writing	
Sept. 29	Research Group	
Oct. 6	PBIS and Differences Writing	
Oct. 13	Research Group	
Oct. 20	PBIS and Differences Writing	
October 27	Research Group	
Nov. 3	Critique of tools: RTI and Differences Writing	First draft of final products due.
Nov. 10	Research Group	

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
Nov. 17	Critique of tools: PBIS and Differences	Writing
November 24	Research Group	
Dec. 1	Wrap up: What did we learn?	Writing

ASSIGNMENTS

CLASS PARTICIPATION

In order for this seminar to be a successful learning experience, we need to be intentional about the culture and practices that we create together. We need to engage, participate, contribute and nurture the opportunity to risk, critique, and create. Accordingly, let us commit to punctuality and consistent attendance at all sessions. Let us agree to prepare, read extensively to create background knowledge, and enter into classroom discourse to uncover and reveal our assumptions and extend our understanding. We also need to participate in the development of interactive exchanges in which feedback, risk, critique and creation are all part of a cycle of continuous exploration and learning. Students are responsible for reading and studying the assigned readings prior to each class. Students are expected to demonstrate their comprehension of readings through their active participation in class discussions. Absence negatively affects the colleagues with whom you interact, work, and learn. If something occurs that necessitates missing a class, the student is responsible to inform the instructors prior to class.

CRITIQUES OF TOOLS

Two teams will be organized to lead a critique of tools on RTI and PBIS. The groups will introduce the class to the (a) structure and conceptual foundations of the tool and (b) engage the class in a critique of the tool. The critiques will focus on (a) the assumptions and premises embedded within the tools, (b) the degree to which these tools represent or attempt to resolve tensions within the topic of study, (c) what is missing in the representations of these tensions, and (d) alternatives to improve the tools.

The group members are expected to research and become well acquainted with the selected tool and relevant literature. Groups are expected to make appointments with the instructors throughout the semester to plan and prepare this assignment.

FINAL PRODUCT

Different products will be required from the various student cohorts represented in the seminar. First-year students will submit a 25-page paper on a critical issue in the special education field. Students can choose a topic covered in the seminar or another topic of their interest (in consultation with the instructor). The paper should offer readers a comprehensive look at the topic that includes (a) a statement of purpose and definition of basic terms, (b) a

historical contextualization of the topic, (c) a discussion/critique of the conceptual and methodological bases of the target knowledge base, and (d) a conclusion.

Second year students will write a 30-page literature review on the topic of their dissertation. The guidelines for literature reviews discussed in previous seminars will be used for this paper. We will review briefly these guidelines in class. Students advanced to candidacy will produce an 8-10 theoretically grounded data analysis report based on their dissertation data. Specific guidelines will be provided during individual meetings with instructors.

A first draft of these products is due on November 3rd, 2010. The final products are due on December 8th, 2010. All papers should be prepared according to the 2010 APA publication manual (6th edition).

EVALUATION & GRADES

Feedback will be provided throughout the semester. Final Grades will be Pass/Fail.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you need accommodations due to a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with the faculty, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with one of us as soon as possible. Those requesting accommodations/modifications should also be registered with the Disabled Student Resources department here at Arizona State University.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Consistent with the mission and goals of the MLF Teachers College, faculty educates teachers, leaders, and researchers in various areas of special education. For this purpose, students are encouraged to engage critically and use a diversity of ideas, perspectives, beliefs, practices, and values. Similarly, students in the special education program are expected to understand and use systematically the cultural and linguistic resources of the school population to enhance their development. Graduates of this program capitalize on the educational benefits resulting from engagement with these forms of diversity and make meaningful contributions to enhance the educational system in our multicultural state and democratic society as a whole.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Each student must act with honesty and integrity, and must respect the rights of others in carrying out all academic assignments. Students are responsible for knowing the rules governing the use of another's work or materials and for acknowledging and documenting the source appropriately. "Plagiarism" means using another's words, ideas, materials or work without properly acknowledging and documenting the source. Plagiarism and cheating on assignments may result in failing this class, suspension, or expulsion. "All forms of student academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism" are prohibited conduct as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and will be taken very seriously. Please review carefully these rules, procedures, and sanctions at the following web pages:

Student Conduct Code: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/sta/sta104-01.html>

Academic Integrity: http://coe.asu.edu/oss/integrity_conduct_standards.html