

University of  
Lethbridge



Faculty of Education

**EDUCATION 5200: Graduate Seminar**

**Curriculum Studies and Classroom Practice:  
Perceptions of (Dis)Ability and Difference  
in**

**M.Ed. General**

**(Study theme: Teaching, Learning and Neuroscience)  
Fall 2017**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An examination of the relationship between curriculum studies and practices in a variety of educational settings. Credit can be obtained from only one course within the series.

The everyday choices educators make related to the curriculum, assessment, instruction, and management of their classrooms are often influenced by latent perceptions of (dis)ability and difference. To understand the nature of those perceptions, this course examines paradigms of (dis)ability and difference through historical contexts and representations of individuals in popular culture media. Representations in popular culture media are included in this course because, for much of society, perceptions of (dis)ability are informed by what we watch and read (e.g., television shows, movies, narrative fiction).

In this course, students will investigate, analyse, and explore paradigms of (dis)ability and difference through considerations of (a) pre-modern and contemporary perceptions of (dis)ability, (b) popular cultural representations of (dis)ability, (c) underlying assumptions of learning and development, (d) policy and practice as they relate to students with differences, and (e) implications for classroom-wide and school-wide practice and policy.

## **RATIONALE**

Students arrive at school with a wide variety of social, intellectual, and physical abilities and it tends to fall on educators to be the litmus paper that determines who “can” and who “cannot” achieve in schools. Unfortunately, decisions about ability and difference are often made without consideration of the historical, cultural, and scientific factors that influence perceptions of (dis)ability and difference. This course is designed to provide an opportunity for educators to understand the context, and underlying assumptions, of modern perceptions of (dis)ability so educators can think critically about policy and practice for all students.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students will demonstrate:

1. An understanding of how perceptions influence beliefs and actions
2. Familiarity with historical and modern models of (dis)ability and difference
3. Critical thinking around the relationship between assumption (personal and societal) and practice (policy, curriculum, assessment)
4. Creative thinking for transformative education

## **COURSE CONTENT**

The course is framed by three broad themes, which will guide readings, discussions, and course assignments.

- A. Historical and Contemporary Models of (Dis)Ability (Modules 1 & 2)
  - Pre-modern perceptions of difference
  - Modern representations of difference from popular culture
  - Medical, behavioural, and deficit-based frameworks
- B. Deconstructing Models of (Dis)ability (Modules 3 & 4)
  - Comparative assumptions of various models of (dis)ability
  - Policy and practice relating to diverse students (Alberta, Canada, USA)
  - Dismantling binary models of ideals and averages
- C. Reconstruction Our Understanding (Modules 5 & 6)
  - Issues of identity and ability in education and society
  - Moving beyond “special education” and “inclusion”
  - Transformative education for diverse student needs; influencing up, hopeful design

## **COURSE FORMAT AND DELIVERY**

This course is an online course with 6 modules of study. This course uses the following formats of instruction: (a) series of short video lectures, (b) required and recommended readings and viewings, (c) independent and collaborative work for assignments, and (d) discussion forum dialogue.

## **TEXT/RESOURCES**

There is no required textbook you must purchase for this course. Any text readings for the course will be available through the course Moodle site. Throughout the course, you are expected to watch several episodes of television and movies. Some of these videos are available on Netflix, while some are available on DVD or as individual purchases through applications such as iTunes. Links are provided for this content.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION**

### **ASSIGNMENT #1 (40%) Discussion Blogs (throughout the course)**

**Purpose.** The purpose of this assignment is to provide a forum for students to engage in dialogue as they navigate through the course content. Due to the online format of this course, online discussions are the major component of course instruction and interactions.

**Requirements.** Students will post Topic posts (worth 30%). Students will also receive a grade for the content of their responses and online contributions (e.g., responses to the Topic posts of other students; 10%).

### **ASSIGNMENT #2 (30%) Diversity Stories Podcast (the end of Module 4)**

**Purpose.** To complement the course's emphasis on theoretical and fictional content, students will explore the human element of (dis)ability through the creation of a podcast about a real story of diversity in the school system.

**Requirements.** By conducting an interview with someone with (dis)abilities or differences and researching relevant policy and scientific literature, students will produce a 10-minute podcast that tells the story of childhood or adolescent experiences in school (and home) of someone with (dis)abilities or differences. Weaving together interview clips and scientific or scholarly content, the podcast will present the lived experiences of someone with a (dis)ability or difference.

### **ASSIGNMENT #3 (30%) The "So...What Now?" Paper (end of Module 6)**

**Purpose.** The final assignment is designed so students have an opportunity to thinking critically and creatively about how to apply the content of the course and program to a curriculum/assessment design issue. Students will decide on future directions, consider how to influence change, and plan the steps that are necessary to move forward on the specific curriculum/assessment design issue that they identify. Students are asked to integrate their new understandings with their other course work from the program. This assignment should be considered a culminating task for the course, as well as the entire MEd program.

**Requirements.** This assignment can be completed in variety of ways. Many students may decide to complete Assignment #3 as a position paper. Other options include designing a program for classroom assessment, developing a professional development session, or hosting a professional learning community workshop.

## **Course Assignments and Evaluation**

*There is a strict late policy. Late assignments will lose 3% per calendar day, unless an extension was granted in advance of the due date. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances that are unpredictable and out of your control. Documentation must be provided by a relevant professional (e.g., doctor).*

*It is expected that your writing meets the expectations of a graduate level program, including abiding by the APA Publication Manual 6th edition. Writing must demonstrate appropriate standards of written communication; grammatical errors, lack of clarity, poor structure or organization are not acceptable.*

### **Grading Scheme**

Course outlines should include the following grading scheme:

#### **GRADING SCHEDULE FOR GRADUATE CLASSES**

<b>Numeric Value</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Grade Point</b>
97 – 100	A+	4.00
93 – 96	A	4.00
90 – 92	A-	3.70
87 – 89	B+	3.30
83 – 86	B	3.00
80 – 82	B-	2.70
Note: Any course with a grade of less than B- cannot be considered for credit in a Faculty of Education master's level program.		
77 – 79	C+	2.30
73 – 76	C	2.00
70 – 72	C-	1.70
67 – 69	D+	1.30
63 – 66	D	1.00
<63	F	0.00

### **Students with Disabilities Policy**

*If you have a disability, special learning needs, or a recent injury that requires academic accommodation to complete the required activities and/or assignments, please follow the procedures outlined in the University Calendar. You are encouraged to contact the Accommodated Learning Centre (<http://www.uleth.ca/ross/accommodated-learning-centre/>) for guidance and assistance. Counselling Services (<http://www.uleth.ca/counselling/>) is another resource available to all students.*

### **Student Conduct**

*Students are subject to the student discipline policy for academic and non-academic offences in accordance with the University Calendar ([www.uleth.ca/ross/academic-calendar/sgs](http://www.uleth.ca/ross/academic-calendar/sgs)). Additionally, in the Faculty of Education graduate programs, students are required to adhere to the conduct expectations as stipulated in Faculty of Education policies, and the Standards of Practice/Conduct, Code of Ethics, and/or the Code of Professional Conduct for the field, as noted below.*

*ATA Code of Professional Conduct*

[http://www.teachers.ab.ca/About the ATA/UpholdingProfessionalStandards/ProfessionalConduct/Pages/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/About%20the%20ATA/UpholdingProfessionalStandards/ProfessionalConduct/Pages/CodeofProfessionalConduct.aspx)

*Standards of Professional Conduct for Master of Education Students:*

<http://www.uleth.ca/graduate-studies/master-education/resources/beginning-your-program/professional-conduct>

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

*The personal information your classmates and course instructors disclose to you should not be discussed with anyone outside the course, now or in the future, unless the author of the personal narrative has stated otherwise. Unless you have the person's specific permission, please do not mention identifying information about the person's story (e.g., no names, no agency) and keep the disclosure broad rather than specific.*

*Recording lectures or class discussions is not permitted unless the instructor and all audience members have granted permission in advance.*

*If you are aware of any situations where individuals are not honoring the expectation of privacy/confidentiality, you are encouraged to intervene by discussing the matter with that individual. If you are not comfortable doing so, or if a resolution is not forthcoming, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.*

*While faculty/staff and students are expected to take all possible precautions to safeguard the personal information that is exchanged in each course, whether it be in discussion forms, web conferencing, recordings, assignments, etc., there is no guarantee of confidentiality.*

### **Withdrawal from an Online Course**

*If you have indicated in writing to your instructor that you will be withdrawing from an online course, your access to that course will need to be removed as soon as possible. You must notify the program staff immediately to complete the required paperwork.*