



Department of Teaching, Learning & Leading
1505/2505 Autism: Characteristics and Interventions
Fall 2024

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School of Education Mission

We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all. **We teach.** We commit to student, family, and community success. **We commit to educational equity.** We advocate. We work for justice. **We cultivate relationships.** We forge engaged partnerships. **We collaborate.** We learn with and from communities. **We innovate and agitate.** We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. **We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures.** We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. **We shape practice and policy.** We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. **We lead with integrity.** We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.

Course Description

This course will present information on the characteristics of and intervention approaches for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Introductory material will include diagnosis criteria and characteristics. Current research on theories of etiology will be explored and analyzed. Screening tools and assessments specific to this population will be examined in detail. Intervention approaches will be described and analyzed. Representatives serving children with autism will present services/intervention models available in the area.

Course Objectives

As a result of active participation and successful completion of requirements, students will:

<u>Define</u> the diagnostic and educational verification process and criteria for ASD	<u>Understand</u> the impact of having a child with autism and caregiver training options	<u>Understand</u> evidence-based practices for children with autism	<u>Identify</u> environmental adaptations and accommodations to support children with autism in school settings	<u>Connect</u> with and listen to community providers supporting children with autism and their families	<u>Reflect</u> after learning from providers supporting children with autism and their families
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Important Course Information

Meetings

On **Mondays** (with the exception of the first week on 8/26), students will meet with guest speakers from local agencies and across the United States via Zoom web conference. On **Wednesdays**, students will meet with the instructor in the Cathedral of Learning Room 306.

Communication

The instructor will use Canvas (Learning Management System; LMS) announcements to communicate most frequently with students.

- Tutorial on signing up for announcements: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/doc-10624>.
- Please communicate with the instructor through Canvas or via email at jhiggins@pitt.edu.

Office hours

Students may schedule an individual meeting anytime by emailing the instructor at jhiggins@pitt.edu. The instructor is available to meet in person at her office in Oakland or via Zoom web conference.

Textbook

Students in this course will read chapters from the following books (available at no cost through Pitt's Library):

- Eren, R. (2024). *Introducing autism: Theory and evidence-based practices for teaching individuals with ASD*. Taylor & Francis, Oxford: Routledge.
- Otten, K. L., de, B. S. R., & Bross, L. (Eds.). (2023). *The educator's guide to autism spectrum disorder: Interventions and treatments*. Corwin Press.

Participation expectations

Learning is a social process. While attendance is not tracked, you are expected to attend class, log on to Canvas and work through the modules weekly, be an active participant with guests on Zoom, and collaborate with other students. In the event of prolonged absences in which you do not participate in the prior (due to sickness or family emergency), you should contact me via email (jhiggins@pitt.edu). Extreme emergencies will be handled on an individual basis.

Due dates

All assignments are due on **Wednesdays before class at 2:59 PM EST**. Need an extension? Just ask. **Your instructor is happy to provide one!**

Assignment submissions in Canvas

Please make sure your assignments are clearly labeled with your first and last name. When appropriate, save your file with last name followed by the assignment title (e.g., **Higgins_reflection**).

Confidentiality

You are responsible to maintain the confidentiality of all the students you work with in field placements related to your coursework at the University of Pittsburgh. When writing or completing assignments for courses or speaking about your field experience and the students you work with, use **pseudonyms** (not initials) for student, teacher, and school names. In public, it is your responsibility to keep written assignments and any other materials bearing the names of students, teachers, or staff secure from the view of others.

Feedback

For most assignments, the instructor provides group-level summary for the entire class and/or individual feedback rubrics. The instructor analyzes highlights, patterns of strengths, points of improvements and posted as an announcement. Individual written feedback can be requested by a student at any time.

Late assignments or request for extension

Request for late assignments must be cleared ahead of time and for good reason as judged by the instructor. Given instructor permission in advance of due dates, assignments will be accepted within two weeks of due date.

Graded Activities & Assignments

TLL 1505 Undergraduate Level	Adult Learning Strategy	Point Breakdown	Total Points	% Grade
Reflections (4) <i>Students reflect on the materials and content provided in learning modules.</i>	Reflection	10 points each	40	15%
ASD Observation (1) <i>Students observe videos of two children (one with ASD and one without ASD), document observations, and compare behaviors observed.</i>	Mastery	50 points	50	19%
Online Learning Modules (2) <i>Students be asked to complete Internet learning modules from external website.</i>	Introduction Illustrate	15 points each	30	12%
Case Study Assignment (1) <i>Students review a case study and identify interventions and supports for a child with ASD.</i>	Mastery	20 points	40	15%
Final Exam (1) <i>Students take a final exam on the material covered in the course.</i>	Mastery	100 points	100	38%
Total			260	100%

TLL 2505 Graduate Level	Adult Learning Strategy	Point Breakdown	Total Points	% Grade
Reflections (4) <i>Students reflect on the materials and content provided in learning modules.</i>	Reflection	10 points each	40	11%
ASD Observation (1) <i>Students observe videos of two children (one with ASD and one without ASD), document observations, and compare behaviors observed.</i>	Mastery	50 points	50	14%
Online Learning Modules (2) <i>Students be asked to complete Internet learning modules from external website.</i>	Introduction Illustrate	15 points each	30	8%
Case Study Assignment (1) <i>Students review a case study and identify interventions and supports for a child with ASD.</i>	Mastery	20 points	40	11%
Choice Activities (2) <i>Students choose from a selection of activities related to supporting student wellness</i>	Practice/Reflect	10 points each	20	6%
Final Exam (1) <i>Students take a final exam on the material covered in the course.</i>	Mastery	100 points	100	28%
Autism Resource Assignment & Share (1) <i>Students create a professional development handout, video, or infographic on a topic of choice related to ASD. They present the information in 10 minutes or less in class.</i>	Illustrate	50 points	50	14%
Article Reviews (2) <i>Students write reviews of research articles focused on ASD topics.</i>	Practice Mastery	15 points each	30	8%
Total			360	100%

Grades

To receive a course letter grade of A-C, all required assignments, projects, and course materials must be completed. The instructor can consider an incomplete only if a substantial portion (50% or more) of the class assignments is completed with a satisfactory grade (A-B) at the time of request. In all other circumstances, students should plan to withdraw from the course.

Percentage (%)	Letter Grade
94 - 100	A
90 - 93	A-
87 - 89	B+
83 - 86	B
80 - 82	B-
74 - 79	C
69 - 73	D

Technology Requirements

Students will need the following technology to participate fully in this course.

- Active Pitt email address (if you forward your mail make sure to check regularly)
- Access to Canvas LMS (Learning Management System)
- Internet connection (preferably high -speed broadband wired or wireless)
- Speakers and a microphone (built in or USB plug-in or Bluetooth)
- Webcam (built-in or USB plug in)
- Supported operating systems to access Zoom ([requirements here](#))
- Supported Web browser (Google Chrome is strongly recommended)
- Word processor (such as Microsoft Word)
- Adobe Reader (to view PDF files)

Note: The instructor recognizes that not all students may have access to the technology listed above. Please reach out to the instructor to discuss accommodations if needed.

Tech Support

Contact Pitt IT for technical assistance by submitting a ticket to the helpdesk. Students may also contact 412-624-HELP (437) or email helpdesk@pitt.edu.

Course, School, and University Policies

Online Conduct

Appropriate online academic conduct means maintaining a safe learning environment based on mutual respect and civility. All participants in Pitt online courses are expected to behave professionally by adhering to these standards of conduct:

- Never transmit or promote content known to be illegal.
- Respect other people's privacy as well as your own.
- Forgive other people's mistakes.
- Never use harassing, threatening, embarrassing, or abusive language or actions.

Online communication that fails to meet these standards of conduct will be removed from the course. Repeated misconduct may result in being blocked from online discussions, receiving a grade penalty, or being dismissed from the course. Such misconduct in the online environment may also be reported to officials for appropriate action in accordance with University policy. If you ever encounter inappropriate content in our course, please contact your instructor with your concerns.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

Disability Services

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other modifications, you need to notify the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call (412) 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Disability Resources and Services office is located in 140 William Pitt Union on the Oakland campus.

TLL Departmental Grievance Procedures

The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in DIL believes that a faculty member has not met his or her obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow this procedure:

1. The student should talk directly to the faculty member to attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the student should talk to the relevant program coordinator.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should talk to the associate chair of DIL
4. If needed, the student should next talk to the SOE associate dean of students.
5. If the matter still remains unresolved, the student should file a written statement of charges with the dean's designated Academic Integrity Administrative.

Civility Commitment

As future or current teachers, we will operate from a standpoint that everyone believes that all students deserve a quality education in a safe setting. The same can be said for university learning. A university classroom is, by definition, space where a free exchange of ideas must happen, but where consideration for others, their views, and their life experiences is also paramount. When you are uncomfortable with an idea, it is your right to speak up about that. As we learn with and about people with very different life experiences and beliefs from our own, it is imperative that we respect these perspectives and use respectful language in discussing and challenging ideas. Carefully consider your language choices to ensure that all learners feel safe and valued. If at any time, you are uncomfortable please feel free to speak out and/or speak to me privately.

Sexual Harassment

The University of Pittsburgh is committed to the maintenance of a community free from all forms of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment violates University policy as well as state, federal, and local laws. It is neither permitted nor condoned. It is also a violation of the University of Pittsburgh's policy against sexual harassment for any employee or student at the University of Pittsburgh to attempt in any way to retaliate against a person who makes a claim of sexual harassment. Any individual who, after thorough investigation and an informal or formal hearing, is found to have violated the University's policy against sexual harassment, will be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, reprimand, suspension, termination, or expulsion. Any disciplinary action taken will depend upon the severity of the offense. For more information, see the Web site: <https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-20-sexual-misconduct-formerly-06-05-01>

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

Names and Pronouns

I will gladly honor your request to address you by your name and pronoun (that may differ from the school records). Please advise me of this preference early in the term so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. You may email me or tell me in person in class, whichever is most comfortable to you! I want to be sure you feel yourself and comfortable in our class community.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Copyright Statement

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials. See Library of Congress Copyright Office and the University Copyright Policy.

G-grades

If unforeseen events (such as major illness) prevent a student from timely completion of course work, he/she may request a meeting with the instructor to discuss the possibility of earning a "G" grade for the term. If both student and instructor agree to the "G" grade, they collaboratively write a document that describes, in detail, what the student needs to do to complete the required course work and the time frame (not to exceed one academic year) within which he/she must do so. Upon receiving all work, the course instructor would evaluate the work and send forward to the Associate Dean a request for the permanent grade.

Food/Housing Insecurity

Many students, both undergraduate and graduate, experience housing and/or food insecurity that can impact their academic work and general health. Please know there are resources available to you that are confidential. Of course, you are welcome to speak with me if you need support in contacting the right people/offices. You may also consider exploring the Pitt Pantry or Off-Campus Housing Office.

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Fall 2024 Course Outline

Key for Class Meetings	
White	Meet in the Cathedral of Learning
Yellow	Zoom meeting with Instructor or Guest
Blue	No Zoom meeting on this day
<i>Italics</i>	<i>Graded assignments</i>

W	D	Class	Lesson Topics and Tasks
1	M	8/26	Introduction to TLL 1505/2505 Autism ☑ Prepare to introduce yourself and interest in autism
1	W	8/28	Lesson 1 Neurodiversity & Autism ☑ Read Eren (2024) Ch 1 Definition of Autism
2	M	9/2	NO CLASS LABOR DAY
2	W	9/4	Zoom meeting with Instructor *9/6 is last day to drop courses
3	M	9/9	Lesson 2 Diagnosis & Educational Verification Process ☑ Read Eren (2024) Ch 2 Diagnosis and Classification of ASD
3	W	9/11	Zoom meeting with Guest
4	M	9/16	Lesson 3 Families of Children with Autism ☑ Read Otten et al. (2023) Ch ☑ <i>Reflection #1 Diagnosis due</i>
4	W	9/18	Zoom meeting with Guest
5	M	9/23	Lesson 4 Parent Training for Children with Autism ☑ Read Otten et al. (2023) Ch ☑ <i>Choice activity #1 (MEd only) due</i>
5	W	9/25	Zoom meeting with Guest
6	M	9/30	Lesson 5 Evidence-based Practices Part I ☑ Read Otten et al. (2023) Ch ☑ <i>Reflection #2 Families due</i>
6	W	10/2	Zoom meeting with Guest ☑ <i>ASD Observation Report due</i>
7	M	10/7	Lesson 6 Evidence-based Practices Part II ☑ <i>Article review #1 (MEd only) due</i>

7	W	10/9	Zoom meeting with Instructor Lesson 7 Inclusion and Children with Autism Part I <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read Koenig et al. (2009) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read Strain & Bovey (2011)
8	M	10/14	NO CLASS ENJOY THANKSGIVING BREAK
8	W	10/16	Zoom meeting with Guest
9	M	10/21	Lesson 8 Inclusion and Children with Autism Part II <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read Meadan et al. (2011) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read Barton et al. (2011) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Online module #1 due</i>
9	W	10/23	Zoom meeting with Guest
10	M	10/28	Lesson 9 Social Skills and Autism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read Charlop et al. (2018) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read Wilkinson (2008) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Article review #2 (MEd only) due</i>
10	W	10/30	NO Zoom meeting this week <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complete Choice activity #1 (MEd only)
11	M	11/4	Lesson 10 Executive Functioning in Autism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> McCrimmon et al. (2016) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Berenguer et al. (2018) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Online module #2 due</i>
11	W	11/6	Zoom meeting with Guest
12	M	11/11	Lesson 11 Advocacy & Services for ASD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volkmar & Wiesner (2017) Ch 6 pp. 121 – 143 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Case study assignment due</i>
12	W	11/13	Zoom meeting with Guest
13	M	11/18	Lesson 12 Professional Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morris et al. (2020)
13	W	11/20	Zoom meeting with Instructor Lesson 13 Transitions in Education and Services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Readings TBD
14	M W	11/25 11/27	NO CLASS ENJOY THANKSGIVING BREAK

15	M	12/2	Master's student presentations Final Review Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Autism Resource Assignment (MEd only)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Reflection #3 due</i>
16	W	12/4	Zoom meeting with Guest
17		12/9	Final Exam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complete online <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Reflection #4 embedded within exam</i>