

Psychoeducational Foundations of Learning Disabilities

Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
18:826:557

Mondays, 9:00am to 11:45am

Location: GSAPP A340

Canvas Site: <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/198143>

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Course Information

Instructor & Course Assistant

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Course Assistant

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Course Format & Website

This course is offered in person. However, if necessary, in response to threats to public health, we can adapt portions of this course to an online format. We will make limited use of Canvas—primarily just for storing lecture slides, notes, handouts, and readings online. Students can log in to the Canvas website using their Rutgers RUID and password. The URL for this course is:

<https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/198143>

Course Purpose & Objectives

In keeping with a practitioner-scholar model, this course will provide students with a strong foundation in learning disability research and best practices in administering learning assessments. Legal and ethical issues will be discussed to provide students with an understanding of federal law, NJ administrative code 6A:14, and professional standards related to psychoeducational assessment. Students will be provided with experiences in administering and interpreting standardized academic tests, integrating this data within a comprehensive assessment battery, and communicating assessment results and recommendations. An overview of evidence-based interventions for specific learning disabilities will be reviewed as it relates to report recommendations.

Course Objectives

- Understand the historical and legal foundations of specific learning disabilities (SLD).
- Gain familiarity with the scientific knowledge base on SLD from behavioral, cognitive, and neurological perspectives.
- Understand the three major paradigms of evaluation for SLD, and how paradigmatic differences translate into differences in practice. Also, understand the strengths and limitations of each major paradigm.
- Understand the primary skills and constructs targeted in assessment for SLD.

- Students will become proficient in planning evaluations to address concerns about student development in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Gain proficiency in administration and interpretation of core subtests in the WJ-IV Tests of Achievement; gain familiarity with core subtests of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test.
- Students will gain proficiency in the integration of assessment information to inform intensive, individualized intervention.

Required Reading

Students are expected to acquire a copy of *Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention*, 2nd Edition, by Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, and Barns. Additional readings will be posted on the Canvas website for this course and listed on this syllabus.

Fletcher, J. M., Lyon, G. R., Fuchs, L. S., & Barnes, M. A. (2018). *Learning disabilities: From identification to intervention*. Guilford Publications.

Profession-Wide and Competencies & Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Profession-Wide Competencies

- **2.1** Demonstrates knowledge of and adherence to APA Ethical Principles, Code of Conduct, and relevant laws, professional standards, and guidelines governing psychological practice.
- **2.2** Recognizes ethical dilemmas as they arise, and applies ethical decision-making processes in order to resolve those dilemmas.
- **2.3** Conducts self in an ethical manner across professional activities.
- **3.1** Displays an awareness of how personal bias and cultural history, attitudes, and biases affect understanding and interactions with people different from themselves.
- **3.4** Works effectively with diverse individuals and groups, including those whose group membership, demographic characteristics, or worldviews are different from or similar to their own.
- **4.1** Behaves in ways that reflect the values and attitudes of psychology, including integrity, deportment, professional identity, accountability, lifelong learning, and concern for the welfare of others.
- **5.1** Develops and maintains effective relationships with students, teachers, parents, other health service professionals, and other stakeholders in the provision of psychological services.
- **5.2** Demonstrates skills in producing, comprehending, and integrating oral, nonverbal, and written communications that are informative and well-integrated across a range of situations, populations, and systems.
- **6.1** Selects and conducts psychological assessments that are multi-method and multisource, technically adequate, and relevant to service recipient needs and the goals of the assessment.
- **6.2** Interprets and uses assessment results that guide case conceptualization, classification, and recommendations while recognizing the multiple systems impacting student functioning.
- **6.3** Communicates orally and in writing assessment results in an accurate and effective manner sensitive to a range of audiences.
- **6.4** Demonstrates current knowledge of diagnostic classification systems, adaptive and maladaptive behaviors, and the impact of client behaviors on functioning.
- **6.5** Demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge of functional and maladaptive behaviors to the

assessment and/or diagnostic process.

- **7.3** Applies relevant literature and empirically-based principles to clinical decision making.
- **9.2** Provides evidence-based consultation and technical assistance to teachers, administrators, parents, and other health service professionals in order to identify effective strategies for addressing educational, social, and emotional problems and needs.

Discipline-Specific Knowledge

- **Affective Aspects of Behavior**, including topics such as affect, mood, and emotion. Psychopathology and mood disorders do not by themselves fulfill this category.
- **Biological Aspects of Behavior**, including multiple biological underpinnings of behavior, such as neural, physiological, anatomical, and genetic aspects of behavior. Although neuropsychological assessment and psychopharmacology can be included in this category, they do not, by themselves, fulfill this category.
- **Cognitive Aspects of Behavior**, including topics such as learning, memory, thought processes, and decision-making. Cognitive testing and cognitive therapy do not, by themselves, fulfill this category.
- **Developmental Aspects of Behavior**, including transitions, growth, and development across an individual's life. A coverage limited to one developmental period (e.g., infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, or late life) is not sufficient.

Course Calendar, Topics, Readings, and Deadlines

Note: Learning objectives for this course have been arranged within several “units” (displayed in the table below). The dates and contents of lectures are estimated based on class mastery of materials and are subject to change as determined by the instructor.

Class/Date	Topics	Readings & Assignments	Due
Unit 1: Historical & Practical Foundations			
#1: 9/12	Course introduction & overview of the origin and recent history of SLD as a disability category in education.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 1 ; Fletcher et al., Ch. 2	
#2: 9/19	Models of SLD identification. Overview of assessment of achievement. Introduction to WJ-IV Ach.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 3 ; Fletcher et al., Ch. 4 ; Schneider & Kaufman (2017)	Check out WJ-IV Ach. Test Kits
Unit 2: Development & Assessment of Skills in Reading and Writing			
#3: 9/26	Typical development and assessment of basic reading skills.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 6; Church, Grigorenko, & Fletcher (2021)	
#4: 10/3	Development and assessment of higher-order reading processes.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 7	
#5: 10/10	Development & assessment of skill in written expression.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 9	Practicum Supervisor Interview
Unit 3: Development & Assessment of Skills in Mathematics			
#6: 10/17	Typical development in mathematics, cog. procs & assessment of calculation.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 8	
#7: 10/24	Typical development and assessment of skill in mathematics problem solving.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 8 ; Fuchs et al. (2020)	WJ-IV Ach. Practice Administration & Brief Report #1
Unit 4: Evaluation & Planning for Specific Learning Disabilities			
#8: 10/31	Relationships between Cog. and Ach.: PSW Approach.	Flanagan et al. (2018); Maki, Kranzler, & Moody (2022)	
#9: 11/7	Ruling out instruction – RTI approach to ID in practice. Guest Speaker on RTI?	Reschly (2014); Barret & Newman (2018)	WJ-IV Ach. Practice Administration & Brief Report #2
#10: 11/14	SLD identification for English Language Learners; Dr. Cohen-Weiss present on Neuropsychological Assessment.	Benson et al. (2020); Ortiz, Piazza, Ochoa, & Dynda (2018)	WJ-IV Ach. Competency Exam

Unit 5: Practical Considerations in Evaluation and Other Service Delivery			
#11: 11/21	Evaluation procedures under IDEA & NJ code; report writing.	NJ Code; Burns et al. (2020); Dombrowski (2015), Ch. 5	
#12: 11/28	Linking evaluation data to instruction/intervention, accommodation, and modification: Reading & Writing	Fletcher et al., ch 5; Additional reading TBD	Test Review & Critique
#13: 12/5	Linking evaluation data to instruction/intervention, accommodation, and modification: Mathematics	Sabnis et al. (2020)	
#14: 12/12	Consultation & Collaboration – Working beyond the evaluation report.	Peltier et al. (2022); Lichtenstein (2022)	Complete psychoeducational evaluation report.
#15: 12/19	TBD (Also first day of Hannukah)		

Quick Reference Calendar

Week #	Session Date	Task / Assignment Due
1	9-12-22	None!
2	9-19-22	Check out WJ-IV Ach. Test Kits
3	9-26-22	None!
4	10-3-22	None!
5	10-10-22	Interview
6	10-17-22	None!
7	10-24-22	WJ-IV Practice Admin. & Report 1
8	10-31-22	None!
9	11-7-22	WJ-IV Practice Admin. & Report 2
10	11-14-22	WJ-IV Competency Exam.
11	11-21-22	None!
12	11-28-22	Test Review; Return Test Kits
13	12-5-22	None!
14	12-12-22	None!
15	12-16-22	Full Achievement Evaluation Report

Assignments, Grading, and Course Expectations

Assignments

Participation (5 points)

Students are expected and encouraged to be active participants in lectures, discussions, and other learning activities.

Practicum Supervisor Interview (9 points)

The purpose of this assignment is to give you an introduction to the typical roles and practices of school psychologists in the evaluation of students for concerns about development of academic skills, or presence of specific learning disabilities. Interviews will cover aspects of evaluation planning, roles of team members in carrying out evaluations, report writing, and consultative practices. We will share out and briefly discuss the results of these interviews to identify themes and variation between psychologists. Due 10-10-22.

WJ-IV Achievement Practice Administrations 1 and 2 (18 points each, 36 points total)

Working in pairs, students will administer the standard battery of WJ-IV Ach. tests twice and write a brief summary report for both administrations (one person in each pair will be the other person's examinee). The purpose of these exercises is to give students multiple opportunities for practice and feedback on test administration and communication of achievement test results. WJ-IV Ach. #1 due 10-24-22; WJ-IV Ach. #2 due 11-7-22

WJ-IV Administration Competency Exam (18 points)

Students will demonstrate proficient in administration of WJ-IV Ach. tests (standard batter) with the course instructor or course assistant. We will offer opportunities for practice likely the week before competency testing; competency tests are tentatively scheduled to occur on or near 11-14-22.

Test Review (14 points)

There are many constructs relevant to the development and functioning of academic skills, and many more tests dedicated to these skills and associated constructs—far more than we can cover in one semester. Working in pairs, students will select a test of a specific academic skill or associated construct and will generate a descriptive report of that test for their peers, including a summary of strengths and limitations of that instrument. Reviews written by each pair will be compiled and shared with the entire class.

Full Evaluation & Report (18 points)

Students will be given a scenario, including scores from cognitive testing, WJ-IV Ach. scores, and other relevant assessment information. Students will score, summarize, and synthesize these data in a full psychoeducational report culminating in a determination of the hypothetical examinee's need and eligibility for special education under the category of SLD, as well as evidence-based recommendations for intervention and accommodation.

Determination of Course Grades

Grading will follow Rutgers' criteria: 100-90 A; 89-85 B+; 84-80 B; 79-75 C+; 74-70 C; 69-60 D; 59-0 F

Course Expectations

- ✓ All assignments must be completed on time. Please note assignments received after due dates can receive grade reduction.
- ✓ Assignments can be submitted via email to the course instructor. Submission of hard copies in class is also acceptable.
- ✓ APA Style 7th Edition must be used with all written assignments. See link to most up to date APA version: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>.
- ✓ Because assessment and data-based decision making comprise a set of skills that can only be developed through practice and feedback in addition to direct instruction, students are expected to participate actively in class discussions and activities.
- ✓ Students are expected to make arrangements with the instructor in the event of course absences to cover any missed content or activities.
- ✓ All students must review the Rutgers University policy on academic integrity: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>.

Student Success

Support for Students

The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at success.rutgers.edu, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Disability Accommodation

Any student who believes that s/he may need an accommodation in this class due to a disability should contact the University Office of Disability Services, Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8045, email address: dsoffice@rci.rutgers, Phone: (848) 445-6800, fax: (732) 445-3388, for a letter of accommodation. (Undergraduate New Brunswick students should contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities for their College.). Any student who has already received a letter of accommodation should contact the instructor privately to discuss implementation of his/her accommodations immediately.

Course Evaluation

Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and instructor. Students will complete this survey toward the end of the semester, and students' identities cannot be connected to their responses. The aggregated numerical results are public, and the numerical results and comments are shared with the instructor, and GSAPP. This survey will also be used by GSAPP to conduct a mid-point evaluation, the results of which are confidential to the instructor and school.

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