



Autism Spectrum Disorder: Information & Effective Intervention Strategies

Instructor Name: Dr. Marrea Winnega
Phone: 509-891-7219
Office Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST Monday – Friday
Email: marrea_winnega@virtualeduc.com
Address: Virtual Education Software
16201 E Indiana Ave, Suite 1450
Spokane, WA 99216
Technical Support: support@virtualeduc.com

Introduction

Welcome to *Autism Spectrum Disorder*, an interactive computer-based instruction course designed to help you achieve a better understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder, of intervention strategies to enhance communication and learning, and of methods for teaching more conventional behaviors. *Autism Spectrum Disorder* provides information about the characteristics of the disorder, learning styles associated with the disorder, communication weaknesses, and various intervention strategies that have proven to be successful when working with autistic students. The course helps you comprehend why individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder act the way they do and what you can do to enhance more appropriate behavior. This course also lists resources for educators, related service personnel, and parents who would like more help or information on autism.

This computer-based instruction course is a self-supporting program that provides instruction, structured practice, and evaluation all on your home or school computer. Technical support information can be found in the Help section of your course.

Course Materials (Online)

Title: *Autism Spectrum Disorder: Information & Effective Intervention Strategies*
Author: Dr. Marrea Winnega, Ph.D. & Mary Coughlin, CCC-SLP
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Instructor: Dr. Marrea Winnega

Academic Integrity Statement

The structure and format of most distance-learning courses presume a high level of personal and academic integrity in completion and submission of coursework. Individuals enrolled in a distance-learning course are expected to adhere to the following standards of academic conduct.

Academic Work

Academic work submitted by the individual (such as papers, assignments, reports, tests) shall be the student's own work or appropriately attributed, in part or in whole, to its correct source. Submission of commercially prepared (or group prepared) materials as if they are one's own work is unacceptable.

Aiding Honesty in Others

The individual will encourage honesty in others by refraining from providing materials or information to another person with knowledge that these materials or information will be used improperly.

Violations of these academic standards will result in the assignment of a failing grade and subsequent loss of credit for the course.

Level of Application

This course is designed to be an informational course with application in work or work-related settings. The intervention strategies are designed to be used with autistic students who display a range of verbal abilities from use of few words or mute to very verbal and ranging in age from approximately 3 years to adulthood.

Expected Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, participants will demonstrate their ability to:

- Define the characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder for better understanding of these disorders.
 - Increase the ability to identify students having this disorder.
 - Provide information on how individuals with this disorder are different from other students, and how to teach them given these differences.
 - Understand their behavior in terms of their differences and communication styles.
 - Develop an understanding of the communication differences and weaknesses in autistic students.
 - Provide information on teaching strategies.
 - Provide resources for teachers and parents.
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Course Description

The course *Autism Spectrum Disorder* has been divided into four chapters and into five to eight exercises within each chapter. The first chapter is on the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder; it gives a clear picture of the characteristics that define this disorder. Although the information in this chapter is thorough, there is much information published about autism. We recommend that you complete readings and research outside the course materials to gain a fuller understanding of these disorders and the variety of interventions. To cover all areas and issues affecting autistic students and their behavior would not be possible in one course. However, this introduction chapter and subsequent chapters should give you a firm understanding of the disorder and effective tools for facilitating positive changes with these students.

The second chapter of *Autism Spectrum Disorder* is “**Behaviors & Differences.**” This chapter discusses ways that autistic individuals are different from other learners. The information in this chapter serves to increase your understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder so that an effective intervention plan can be developed to help the student with communication and/or behavioral difficulties. Gaining an understanding of the possible reasons for their behaviors will also help in the understanding of why certain interventions are more successful in teaching these students.

The third chapter is “**Communication & Language.**” In this chapter, you will be given information about the prerequisites of communication, the components of speech and language, and the profiles of nonverbal and verbal children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. You will be provided with interventions to enhance communication.

The final chapter covers “**Visually Supported Communication.**” You will learn how to use visual supports, schedules, and calendars to help autistic students monitor their time and program more effectively and independently. You will learn to use the strategy of “first/then” to help children finish important daily tasks before moving into pleasurable free-time activities. You will also be presented with some case examples to strengthen your understanding.

Student Expectations

As a student, you will be expected to:

- Complete all four information sections showing a competent understanding of the material presented in each section.
- Complete all four section examinations, showing a competent understanding of the material presented. **You must obtain an overall score of 70% or higher, with no individual exam score below 50%, and successfully complete ALL writing assignments to pass this course. *Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.**
- Complete a review of any section on which your examination score was below 50%.

- Retake any examination, after completing an information review, to increase that examination score to a minimum of 50%, making sure to also be achieving an overall exam score of a minimum 70% (**maximum of three attempts**). ***Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.**
- Complete all course journal article and essay writing assignments with the minimum word count shown for each writing assignment.
- Complete a course evaluation form at the end of the course.

Course Overview

Chapter 1 – Introduction & Characteristics

This section focuses on the characteristics that define the autism spectrum. The areas to be discussed are the social and communication deficits and the restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities exhibited by individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Chapter 2 – Behaviors & Differences

This section describes how autistic individuals perceive the world and their different learning styles. These differences will be applied to the behavioral challenges these students exhibit.

Chapter 3 – Communication & Language

This section discusses the prerequisites for communication, such as object permanence and cause and effect, the components of speech and language, and the communication profiles exhibited by individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Enhancing communication in both the nonverbal and the verbal student will be addressed.

Chapter 4 – Visually Supported Communication

This section discusses how visual supports can be used to help students understand verbal directions and what they need to be doing. Visual supports include symbols, line drawings and pictures used as pictures on a ring, communication boards, schedules, lists, and first/then cards.

Examinations

At the end of each course chapter, you will be expected to complete an examination designed to assess your knowledge. You may take these exams a total of three times. Your last score will save, not the highest score. After your third attempt, each examination will lock and not allow further access. The average from your exam scores will be printed on your certificate. However, this is not your final grade since your required writing assignments have not been reviewed. Exceptionally written or poorly written required writing assignments, or violation of the academic integrity policy in the course syllabus, will affect your grade. As this is a self-paced computerized instruction program, you may review course information as often as necessary. You will not be able to exit any examinations until you have answered all questions. If you try to exit the exam before you complete all questions, your information will be lost. You are expected to complete the entire exam in one sitting.

Writing Assignments

All assignments are reviewed and may impact your final grade. Exceptionally or poorly written assignments, or violation of the Academic Integrity Policy (see course syllabus for policy), will affect your grade. Fifty percent of your grade is determined by your writing assignments, and your overall exam score determines the other fifty percent. ***Refer to the Essay Grading Guidelines, which were sent as an attachment with your original course link.***

You should also refer to the Course Syllabus Addendum, which was sent as an attachment with your original course link, to determine if you have any writing assignments in addition to the Critical Thinking Questions (CTQ) and Journal Article Summations (JAS). If you do, the Essay Grading Guidelines will also apply.

1) Critical Thinking Questions

There are four CTQs that you are required to complete. You will need to write a minimum of 500 words (maximum 1,000) per essay. You should explain how the information that you gained from the course will be applied and clearly convey a strong understanding of the course content as it relates to each CTQ. To view the questions, click on REQUIRED ESSAY and choose the CTQ that you are ready to complete; this will bring up a screen where you may

enter your essay. Prior to course submission, you may go back at any point to edit your essay, but you must be certain to click SAVE PROGRESS once you are done with your edits.

You must click SAVE PROGRESS before you write another essay or move on to another part of the course.

2) Journal Article Summations

You are required to write, in your own words, a summary on a total of three peer-reviewed or scholarly journal articles (one article per JAS), written by an author with a Ph.D., Ed.D., or similar, on the topic outlined within each JAS section in the “Required Essays” portion of the course (blogs, abstracts, news articles, or similar are not acceptable). Your article choice must relate specifically to the discussion topic listed in each individual JAS. You will choose a total of three relevant articles (one article per JAS) and write a thorough summary of the information presented in each article (you must write a minimum of 200 words with a 400 word maximum per JAS). Be sure to provide the URL or the journal name, volume, date, and any other critical information to allow the facilitator to access and review each article. Your summaries must meet the minimum word count. In other words, the citations are not to be used as a means to meet the minimum word count.

To write your summary, click on REQUIRED ESSAYS and choose the JAS that you would like to complete. A writing program will automatically launch where you can write your summary. When you are ready to stop, click **SAVE PROGRESS**. Prior to course submission you may go back at any point to edit your summaries but you must be certain to click SAVE once you are done with your edits. For more information on the features of this assignment, please consult the HELP menu.

You must click SAVE PROGRESS before you write another summary or move on to another part of the course.

Instructor Description

Autism Spectrum Disorder has been developed by Marrea Winnega, PhD, BCBA, and by Mary Coughlin, CCC-SLP. Dr. Marrea Winnega, the instructor of record, is a licensed clinical psychologist and a board certified behavior analyst with more than 25 years of experience in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Previously, she was an assistant professor of Clinical Psychology in the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Department of Disability and Human Development and the Department of Psychiatry. She facilitated numerous parent groups for parents of autistic children in her position at the University of Illinois at Chicago Institute on Disability and Human Development (UAP). She has also conducted numerous workshops, in-services, and trainings throughout the United States. In 1998, Dr. Winnega developed the Autism Dynamic Beginnings classroom, an intensive, multimodal classroom for 3- to 6-year-olds with autism. This program has grown to multiple classrooms serving students ages 3 to 21. Currently, she is developing classrooms using structured teaching and the verbal behavior approach as well as social-communication classrooms for verbal students with autism.

Mary Coughlin is a retired speech-language pathologist and a board certified behavior analyst with more than 35 years of experience in the field. Her background includes working with students in both regular education and special education settings. She has taught in a communication development classroom and has worked with students with behavior disorders; students with severe-profound disabilities, birth to 5; and medically fragile children, as well as those with developmental delays and autism. She served on a diagnostic team serving early childhood children for more than 10 years. For the last 25 years, she has worked with students with autism and significant other impairments. She has presented numerous workshops for parents and professionals on the various aspects of communication, speech, and language. She worked with Dr. Winnega in Autism Dynamic Beginnings since its inception and was a consultant to the program (renamed Students Teachers Achieving Results (STAR) program) incorporating the verbal behavior approach and structured teaching into effective teaching strategies for its students to maximize socially appropriate behavior and functional communication skills using a positive behavior approach. She also initiated the PBIS program for its use within a segregated school environment and has served on the committee for the Cooperative on which she worked for more than 10 years.

Contacting the Instructor

You may contact the instructor by emailing Dr. Winnega at marrea_winnega@virtualeduc.com or calling her at 509-891-7219, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m – 5 p.m. PST. Phone messages will be answered within 24 hours. Phone conferences will be limited to ten minutes per student, per day, given that this is a self-paced instructional program. Please do not contact the instructor about technical problems, course glitches, or other issues that involve the operation of the course.

Technical Questions

If you have questions or problems related to the operation of this course, please try everything twice. If the problem persists, please check our support pages for FAQs and known issues at www.virtualeduc.com and also the Help section of your course.

If you need personal assistance then email support@virtualeduc.com or call 509-891-7219. When contacting technical support, please know your course version number (it is located at the bottom left side of the Welcome Screen) and your operating system, and be seated in front of the computer at the time of your call.

Minimum Computer Requirements

Please refer to VESi's website: www.virtualeduc.com or contact VESi if you have further questions about the compatibility of your operating system.

Refer to the addendum regarding Grading Criteria, Course Completion Information, Items to be Submitted, and how to submit your completed information. The addendum will also note any additional course assignments that you may be required to complete that are not listed in this syllabus.

Bibliography (Suggested Readings)

Please note that the authors do not support the use of previous diagnostic category known as Asperger's Disorder. However, there are books and a body of literature listed below from before 2013 that use that terminology. These books continue to be useful references for interventions and descriptions.

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Latest information in a variety of journals, including *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*; *Focus on Autism*; *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*

Books by Carol Gray:

The New Social Story Book, *The New Social Story Book—Illustrated Edition*, and *Taming the Recess Jungle*. Available through Future Horizons.

Resources

Autism Society of North Carolina blog with useful information: <https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/blog/>

Contact the **Autism Society** for information including about the affiliate network: <https://www.autism-society.org/about-the-autism-society/affiliate-network/>

Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 46(1), Spring 2013 – Special Issue on Functional Analysis: Commemorating Thirty Years of Research and Practice. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/19383703/2013/46/1>

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 35(2), April 2005 – This issue focuses on Asperger's Disorder.

Resources for the ASD spectrum:

Autism Spectrum Connection (Formerly: OASIS (Online Asperger's Syndrome Information and Support); MAAAP Services for Autism and Asperger Syndrome

Website: <http://www.aspergersyndrome.org>

Autism Speaks statistics: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-statistics>

Signs of Autism in Girls who are highly verbal:

<https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/signs-of-autism-in-girls/>

<https://childmind.org/article/autistic-girls-overlooked-undiagnosed-autism/>

Lives in the balance:

www.livesinthebalance.org

<https://truecrisisprevention.org/unsolved-problems-vs-overt-behavior/>

National Standards Project, National Autism Center, www.nationalautismcenter.org ©2009 “The National Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting effective, evidence-based treatment approaches for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and to providing direction to families, practitioners, organizations, policy-makers, and funders. The Center's goal is to serve individuals with ASD by responding to the rising demand for reliable information and by providing comprehensive resources for families and communities.”

Autism-Focused Intervention Resources & Modules: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/>

Social Thinking by Michelle Garcia Winner: <https://www.socialthinking.com/>

Universal Design for Learning: <https://medium.com/udl-center/new-udlcenter-16ce1923fd19>

UDL Guidelines: <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

UDL at a glance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDvKnY0g6e4&list=PLR6ytVuE7QqQNii40DtLcM8RAYZd2VJt5>

Publishers/Bookstores

Future Horizons, Inc. <https://www.fhautism.com> (Also has webinars and conferences)

AAPC Publishing <https://www.aapcautismbooks.com/>

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