FACULTY MEMBER:  

TERM:  

COURSE TITLE:  Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders  

COURSE NUMBER:  SOC 365  

This course uses the WU Blackboard and email systems. Students should familiarize themselves with Blackboard and check the accuracy of their WU email addresses. Students are expected to check both Blackboard and their WU email account regularly throughout the block. Blackboard will be used to communicate course-related information to students, and for posting/submitting assignments and taking tests. If the University is closed for inclement weather, this course will continue as an “online” course using Blackboard technology.  

OFFICE HOURS/METHOD OF CONTACT:  

TEXTBOOK:  Autism Internet Modules will be used in place of a textbook. Please create an account prior to the beginning of the course. (http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/)  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  

This course is designed to familiarize students with autism spectrum disorders. Students will focus on diagnostic criteria, history of the disorders, treatment, evidence-based practice, and policy. A focus on current evidence based treatments and pseudoscientific trends in autism treatment will make students informed consumers of research. In addition, the course will focus on applied behavior analysis (ABA) as an intervention and review techniques for teaching new skills and reducing problem behaviors in individuals with autism.  

RATIONALE:  

This course will equip the student with a better understanding of individuals and clients with Autism Spectrum Disorders in order to best interact with and provide services to them.  

I. OBJECTIVES:  

GOAL A: Students will develop an in-depth understanding of autism.  

Learning Outcomes: the student will:  

A-1: Recognize manifestations of autism.  
A-2: Discuss scientific perspectives on the genetic and neurobiological underpinnings of autism.  
A-3: Familiarize themselves with the diagnosis of autism as defined by the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.  

GOAL B: Students will become critical consumers of research and information;
demonstrate the ability to identify evidence-based practices.
Learning Outcomes: the student will:
   B-1: Demonstrate the ability to search literature from empirical, peer-reviewed sources
   B-2: Identify experimental designs
   B-3: Recognize “red flags” and flaws in research and outcome claims

GOAL C: Students will understand common approaches and treatment for behaviors related to Autism Spectrum Disorders.
Learning Outcomes: the student will:
   C-1: Identify current standards and trends in Autism treatment
   C-2: Identify which treatments are evidence based
   C-3: Demonstrate the ability to navigate and find resources for services and treatment

GOAL D: Students will demonstrate familiarity with the continuum of services, state departments and policies, and federal law designed for individuals with Autism.
Learning Outcomes: the student will:
   D-1: Identify the resources where policies may be found and their governing bodies
   D-2: Summarize Autism policies within their state
   D-3: Advocate for the rights of their clients afforded by current laws

GOAL E: Students will become familiar with disability advocacy and appropriate terminology.
Learning Outcomes: the student will:
   E-1: Practice professionalism and empathy
   E-2: Navigate resources relevant for their clients and demonstrate effective case management skills
   E-3: Demonstrate use of accurate and politically correct terminology

GOAL F: Students will use appropriate written and oral communication skills.
Learning Outcomes: The student will:
   F-1 Write clearly, concisely, and appropriately using correct English grammar, punctuation, usage, mechanics, sentence structure, and vocabulary.
   F-2 Use appropriate APA format for scholarly writings.
   F-3 Speak with confidence, clarity, and conciseness.
   F-4 Research, prepare, and deliver professional presentations.

II. METHODOLOGY:

A. Teaching Methods:
   Collaboration with your peers, readings, exams, activities, and individual work.

B. Evaluation Procedures:
Student evaluation will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis &amp; Referral Assignment</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debunking misconception journal</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based practice PowerPoint</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Assignment</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Discussion Board</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurotribes paper</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism Internet Modules</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>775</td>
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</tbody>
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C. Sample Grade Calculation

Each of these assignments is described in detail on the course Blackboard site in the information posted under the Assignments tab. In addition, grading rubrics for these assignments are posted under the Rubrics tab on the course Blackboard site. Furthermore, videos describing how to complete the various assignments can be found within the START HERE tab.

To calculate your final grade: Take the total number of points you have earned for all assignments (this information is available in your grade book in Blackboard in the Total Points column) and divide it into 575. Compare the resulting percentage to the WU undergraduate grading system located at http://www.wilmu.edu/academics/gradingscale_undergrad.aspx to determine your final grade.

For example, if your total points earned are 700, divide 700 by 775, resulting in .90, or an 90% (B+)

III. ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Diagnosis & Referral Assignment:** You will be given a hypothetical client profile and use the information given in order to create a diagnosis report and treatment referral. Explain what diagnostic criteria have and have not been met according to the DSM, justify the rationale behind your diagnosis (or lack of diagnosis), and outline the skills which will be most important to focus on for the client, and how these deficits may be best addressed.

- **Debunking misconception journal:** You will write a journal in the style of a “letter to the editor”, parent column, or response to a publication. This journal article will describe and address a common misconception about Autism, and use reliable sources to debunk incorrect claims.

- **Evidence-based practice PowerPoint:** Choose an Autism treatment and use the criteria outlined by Reichow (2010) to determine if it may be considered an evidence-based
practice. The student will find 5 research articles on the treatment, summarize them, rate them according to the rating criteria, and determine a final z-score which will be used to categorize this treatment. Articles must be from a peer-reviewed source and published within the last 15 years. An example presentation is available on Blackboard, and this process will be covered during lecture.

- **Data Collection Assignment:** Students will be expected to observe a student with Autism and complete various forms of data collection (see assignment materials on Blackboard). Submit raw data as well as a graph and brief summary of data.

- **Exams:** Exams will be posted online and will consist of 25 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each, and 5 short answer questions worth 5 points each. You will have 90 minutes to complete each exam, and only one opportunity will be available per exam.

- **Policy Discussion Board:** Choose a state-specific policy related to Autism treatment. This may be related to special education, insurance coverage, Medicaid, etc. Create a discussion post outlining the State you’re covering, the details of the policy (criteria to receive services, who provides the services, client rights, funding, etc.), and whether or not you feel it meets the needs of the individuals in need of services.

- **Case Study:** Choose a case study on Autism to present to your peers. This may be a published longitudinal case study, or based on an individual with Autism whom you know or have worked with. Include a biography of the individual (age, diagnosis, placement, family details, hobbies/preferences), how they were diagnosed, goals/targets/interfering behaviors, services they receive, and progress (if known). Please use a pseudonym and refrain from including any identifying information on the individual (i.e. photos, birthdate, etc.). Evaluate the services the individual is receiving and make recommendations.

- **Neurotribes paper:** Read Neurotribes by Steve Silberman, and write a 2-part paper in APA format. The first part of the paper should be a brief synopsis of the book. The second part of the paper should answer the following questions: have the types of neurological characteristics across our population changed significantly over time? How does this affect rising diagnosis rates, and how might you explain these increases? How do you feel that Silberman’s perspective on neurotypes impacts the way we address diagnosis and treatment? This paper should be 4-5 pages in length.

- **Autism Internet Modules:** Please complete Autism Internet Modules by Sunday at midnight during the week they are assigned. Each module will take you approximately 45 mins-1 hour. Please save and upload your module assessment results PDF to Blackboard.