**ECPC Sample Syllabus**

**Understanding Autism in Young Children**

*[A close up of a sign

Description automatically generated](https://ecpcta.org/)*

This **sample** syllabus provides ideas for resources, activities, readings, and assignments, aligned with the topic. For some topics, the content may be a separate or stand-alone course. However, for other topics, the content may only be part of a course or courses. ***This is a sample only, and is not a complete syllabus, and can be modified.***

**ECPC Sample Syllabus Content:**

**Understanding Autism in Young Children**

**Course Description**

This course is designed to help students gain understanding about strategies and techniques used to support young children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their families. The course will highlight current research about neurodevelopmental issues in autism; diagnostic criteria used to identify children with ASD; assessment and intervention considerations in communication, social interaction, and play; the selection and use of appropriate screening and evaluation tools; and intervention strategies with an evidence base. Learners will gain a better understanding of the role of families in the assessment and intervention of children with ASD in consideration of their cultural values and beliefs. Learners will engage in creating a framework for understanding and implementing effective interventions; and profiling the strengths and challenges of each intervention, including ways to match children’s strengths and needs, family capacity and the family’s cultural values and beliefs with the interventions selected. Learners will be exposed to collaborative and interdisciplinary models of service delivery that ensure family-centered and culturally relevant approaches to assessment and intervention.

**Recommended Texts**

Crawford, M. J., & Weber, B. (2016). *Autism intervention every day! Embedding activities in daily routines for young children and their families.* Brookes.

Rogers, S., Vismara, L., & Dawson, G. (2021). *Coaching parents of young children with autism.* Guilford Press.

**Standard Components - Student Learning Outcomes**

IHE faculty may develop additional student learning objectives that align with the Standards and components addressed by this course/course content by describing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students are expected to learn upon successful completion of learning objectives.

As a result of active participation and successful completion of course requirements, learners will be able to:

Standard 1

Component 1.4: Demonstrate an understanding of characteristics, etiologies, and individual

differences within and across the range of abilities, including developmental delays and disabilities, their potential impact on children’s early development and learning, and implications for assessment, curriculum, instruction, and intervention.

* Define the characteristics of autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
* Explain the criteria used to diagnose children with ASD.
* Identify myths and misconceptions about ASD.

Standard 4

Component 4.4: In collaboration with families and other team members, use assessment data

to determine eligibility, develop child and family-based outcomes/goals, plan for interventions and instruction, and monitor progress to determine efficacy of programming.

* List and describe the various methods of assessment to identify children with ASD.

Standard 6

Component 6.1: In partnership with families, identify systematic, responsive, and intentional

evidence-based practices and use such practices with fidelity to support young children’s learning and development across all developmental and academic content domains.

* Describe effective interventions and instruction to address educational outcomes, improve skill repertoire, and facilitate success in the least restrictive educational environment.

Standard 6

Component 6.2: Engage in reciprocal partnerships with families and other professionals to facilitate responsive adult-child interactions, interventions, and instruction in support of child learning and development.

* Demonstrate an understanding of the complex ASD treatment landscape and factors impacting ASD intervention including parental perspectives and communication, interdisciplinary collaboration on the ASD team, and use of evidence-based practice.

Standard 6

Component 6.3: Engage in ongoing planning and use flexible and embedded instructional and environmental arrangements and appropriate materials to support the use of interactions, interventions, and instruction addressing developmental and academic content domains, which are adapted to meet the needs of each and every child and their family.

* Plan for effective interventions and instruction to address educational outcomes, improve skill repertoire, and facilitate success in the least restrictive educational environment.

**Topical Course Outline**

Include a topical courseoutline. Align course topics with EI/ECSE Standards and components.

| **Week** | **Standards/ Components** | **Topic and Readings** | **Activity Bank** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Standard 1  Component 1.4 | Definition of autism spectrum disorder   * Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) * **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) Criteria** | Begin a relationship/partnership with a family. This will extend beyond the semester.  Register for free access to the [Autism Internet Modules](https://autisminternetmodules.org/) (AIM). |
| 2 | Standard 1 Component 1.4 | Prevalence of ASD  Characteristics of ASD | Explore the [Autism Data Visualization Tool](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data/index.html) to learn more about the prevalence of autism in your state. |
| 3 | Standard 1  Component 1.4 | Early signs and symptoms of ASD | Explore the [CDC’s Learn the Signs Act Early](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html) resources and share one family-specific resource with your family partner. Summarize your conversation about the resource in 1-2 paragraphs. |
| 4 | Standard 4 Component 4.4 | Screening  Screening Tools | Watch this video about [how to recognize Autism signs in toddlers with the M-CHAT.](https://youtu.be/_rl31KFbhB0) |
| 5 | Standard 4 Component 4.4 | Evaluation  Evaluation Tools | Learn more about the differences between a medical diagnosis and an educational determination of ASD by exploring [autism spectrum disorder (Part 1): An Overview for Educators](https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/asd1/) module from the IRIS Center. |
| 6 | Standard 4 Component 4.4 | Comorbid diagnoses | Choose a known co-occurring condition and learn more about the symptoms of the condition and the impact on child functioning. |
| 7 | Standard 4 Component 4.4 | Communication with families | Ask your partner family about their best experience and worst experience in receiving information about their child. |
| 8 | Standard 4 Component 4.4 | Helping families make informed decisions | Research an autism-related topic such as sleep or nutrition and develop a conversation guide for parents with information about choices. |
| 9 | Standard 6 Component 6.1 | Supportive environments for young children with ASD | Develop a list of strategies used to create a supportive environment, including transitions. |
| 10 | Standard 6 Component 6.1 | Everyday activities for young children with ASD | With your family partner, create a list of activities that they can do with their child in the following areas:   * Meals and snacks * Play with people * Play with props * Caregiving activities (e.g., diapering, dressing) * Play with toys * Family chores * Books * Transitions |
| 11 | Standard 6 Component 6.1 | Evidence-based practices used with very young children   * National Professional Development Center on ASD * National Autism Center | Learn more about evidence-based practices in autism by exploring [autism spectrum disorder (Part 2): Evidence-Based Practices](https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/asd2/#content) module from the IRIS Center. |
| 12 | Standard 6 Component 6.2 | Evidence-based practices used with very young children   * Naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions (NDBI)   + Early Start Denver Model   + JASPER   + Early Achievements | Register for a free online sign-in to [Autism Navigator](https://autismnavigator.com/)  Open the **Video Glossary** and locate the **Treatments** Tab on the left. On the dropdown menu, open **Toddler Treatment Models**, then identify common strategies used by these NDBI approaches. |
| 13 | Standard 6 Component 6.2 | Evidence-based practices used with very young children   * Parent implemented interventions | Learn more about [parent implemented interventions](https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/parent-implemented-interventions) by exploring this module from Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules (AFIRM). |
| 14 | Standard 6 Component 6.3 | Identifying pseudoscientific practices used with young children with ASD | Describe a practice that may be a pseudoscientific practice used with young children with ASD. Include three detailed reasons why you selected the practice. |
| 15 | Standard 6 Component 6.3 | How to select reliable resources to support young children with ASD and their families in the following categories:   * Advocacy, information, and support * Professional resources * State resources * Federal and federally funded resources | For each resource category, select and annotate three resources. Share the list with your family partner. |

**Resources**

Resources to supplement the ECPC Sample Syllabus Understanding Autism in Young Children.

* [Autism Data Visualization Tool](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data/index.html)
  + Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data resource tool
* [Autism Internet Modules](https://autisminternetmodules.org/)
  + Modules to support learner understanding about evidence-based practices used for intervention and instruction with young children with autism and their families
* [Autism Navigator](https://autismnavigator.com/)
  + Information for professional and families about autism in young children, including a video library and online course modules.
* [Autism Spectrum Disorder (Part 1): An Overview for Educators](https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/asd1/)
  + An IRIS Module about autism
* [Autism Spectrum Disorder (Part 2): Evidence-Based Practices](https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/asd2/#content)
  + An IRIS Module about evidence-based practices used with children with autism and their families
* [How to recognize Autism Signs in Toddlers with the M-CHAT](https://youtu.be/_rl31KFbhB0)
  + A video to support learner understanding about screening tools
* Initial [Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for EI/ECSE (2020)](https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-standards-early-interventionists-early-childhood-special-educators)
* [Learn the Signs Act Early](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html)
  + Centers for Disease Control and Prevention resource and supporting materials to learn about the early signs of autism
* [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/professional_standards_and_competencies_for_early_childhood_educators.pdf)
* [ECPC Cross-Disciplinary Competencies](https://ecpcta.org/cross-disciplinary-competencies/)

**Journals in EI/ECSE**

Below are examples of journals that publish topics about EI/ECSE. Faculty may want to explain how to use articles to support practice and to examine current research. Clarify the difference between practitioner-based journals and research-based journals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * *Infants and Young Children* * *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* * *Journal of Early Intervention* * *Journal of Special Education Technology* * *Young Exceptional Children* * *Teaching Exceptional Children* | * *Intervention in School and Clinic* * *Journal of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention* * *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education* * *Young Children* * *Exceptional Parent Magazine* * *Rural Special Education Quarterly* |

**Activities and Assignments**

1. **ASD Characteristics in Young Children with ASD (Standard 1, Component 1.4)**

Assignment Description: Review the characteristics of ASD table below. Working within your interdisciplinary team, create a scenario that demonstrates each characteristic and describe the associated impact on the child’s ability to engage in daily life. Next, describe how the child’s home, school, and community environments magnify or reduce this impact.

* ASD Characteristics: Social Communication = 7
* ASD Characteristics: Repetitive, Restrictive Patterns of Behavior, Interest, or Activities = 7
* Environmental Impact = 6

Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ /20 Points

ASD Characteristics Table

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts:** | **Presentation**  Does this child display this characteristic?  If so, what does it look like in this child? | **Characteristic Impact**  How do these characteristics impact this child’s ability to eat, dress, care for personnel needs, interact with others, play, and make friends, and/or attend or learn at school? |
| Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity for example, from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation; to reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; to failure to initiate or respond to social interactions | *Example: Sally rarely initiates conversations with peers, and when she does it is only to talk about her favorite tv show.* | *Example: Peers are hesitant to interact with and include Sally* |
| Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, ranging, for example, from poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication; to abnormalities in eye contact and body language or deficits in understanding and use of gestures; to a total lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication. |  |  |
| Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understand relationships, ranging, for example, from difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts; to difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends; to absence of interest in peers. |  |  |
| **Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities** | **Presentation**  Does this child display this characteristic?  If so, what does it look like in this child? | **Characteristic Impact**  How do these characteristics impact this child’s ability to interact with others and fully participate in everyday routines with family and typical peers? Do they impact the child’s nutritional status, or sleep patterns? |
| Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech (e.g., simple motor stereotypes, lining up toys or flipping objects, echolalia, idiosyncratic phrases). |  |  |
| Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior e.g., extreme distress at small changes, difficulties with transitions, rigid thinking patterns, greeting rituals, need to take same route or eat same food every day). |  |  |
| Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus (e.g., strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or perseverative interests). |  |  |
| Hyper- or hypo- reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment (e.g., apparent indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, visual fascination with lights or movement). |  |  |

Environmental Context:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Context** | **Impact**  List the environments where the above impacts are most apparent. | **Does the environment magnify or support this need?** |
| Home |  |  |
| School (if applicable) | *Example: Peers are hesitant to interact and include Sally.* | *Example: Magnify, most kids play together during recess but because the recess is loud and chaotic Sally stays inside, limiting her opportunities to interact with peers.* |
| Community |  |  |

1. **Assessment for Identification of ASD (Standard 4, Component 4.4)**

Assignment Description: Access the [AIM Module: Assessment for Identification (Updated)](https://autisminternetmodules.org/). Take the pre-assessment and note 3 questions you had from the pre-assessment or Module 2. Complete the AIM Module and report 3 new pieces of information you learned or bettered your understanding of ASD assessment and/or answers you found to your questions. Finally, take the post-assessment.

* Pre-assessment= 8
* Questions/New Understanding = 4
* Post-assessment = 8

Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ / 20 Points

1. **Case Study: Young Child with ASD (Standard 6, Component 6.1)**

Assignment Description: Prepare a case study for a child who meets the diagnostic criteria for ASD. The case study must include background, diagnosis, symptoms, treatment, family dynamics, and current intervention or educational status.

Include the following:

* Background/general history of the individual = 5
* Developmental characteristics (include development, behaviors, medical or educational diagnosis, age of diagnosis) = 5
* Communication: How does the child communicate, what are their strengths and needs, what interventions and supports are in place to address these needs? = 5
* Social: What social interactions does the individual experience and what social skill supports, or interventions are utilized and recommended? = 5
* Sensory: What sensory processing differences are present? Explain & describe strategies being used = 5
* Academic/Intervention History: Discuss current EPBs and recommendations = 10
* Report if any pseudoscientific interventions are being using with this child, and if so, an alternative evidence-based intervention.
* Positive behavior strategies: What strategies are being used, what is recommended, and who is responsible = 10
* Family Collaboration: Discuss level of involvement and communication system = 5
* Other factors related to inclusion = 10
* For pre-school or school aged children: describe the child’s least restrictive environment, rational for the LRE, positive behavior, academic and/or adaptive supports that allow the student to participate in the LRE. Report if you agree with the IEP/IFSP team’s determination and what you would change.
* For infants and toddlers: describe social play opportunities (e.g., play dates, tumble, or baby gymnastics classes) with typically developing children that are available the child. Report what barriers you see to meaningful social-play opportunities Report if you would or would not recommend more opportunities for this child, and your rationale for this recommendation.

Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_/60 points