



EAST TEXAS A&M

SPED 540—Assessment and Interventions for Social Communication Impairments

COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Kelly M. Carrero, BCBA, LBA-TX; Associate Professor

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:45 am – 1:45 pm and Thursdays, 10:45 am – 1:45 pm or by appointment

Office Fax: 903.886.5510

University Email Address: Kelly.Carrero@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: Virtual Office Hours (VOH) for general course questions; Email for questions and/or information specific to individual students

Communication Response Time:

Using University Email = within 48 hours Monday – Friday, weekends and holidays may take longer.

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University: Located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Required Readings:

Students will need to select a book for the Book Study Activity and get their selection approved by the instructor. Below are some examples of acceptable books and/or authors:

ANY book written by **Temple Grandin** (except those she wrote about animal science—make sure it is one of her autism-related books). Some good books which I have read and recommend include:

--*Thinking in Pictures*

--*The Way I See It*

--*The Autistic Brain*

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Dubin, N. (2021). *Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Disabilities, and the Criminal Justice System: Breaking the Cycle*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN-10: 1787753611

Higas, N. (2007). *The reason I jump: The inner voice of a thirteen-year-old boy with autism*. Random House Trade Paperback. ISBN-10: 081298515X; ISBN-13: 978-0812985153

Maurice, C. (1994). *Let me hear your voice*. Ballantine Books. ISBN-10: 0449906647

ANY book written by **John Elder Robison**. I can personally recommend: *Switched On*

ANY book written by **Torey Hayden**. They are ALL excellent!

Recommended Readings:

Any book from Council for Exceptional Children Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities: <http://www.daddcec.com/other-publications.html>

American Psychological Association (APA). (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. (7th Ed.). Washington, D.C.

Other resources. East Texas A&M's Library provides access to thousands of online journals. Of particular interest to this class are resources found in the ERIC and PsycINFO databases. You may access these resources on campus or from home by using your CWID and password at <http://www.tamuc.edu/library/>

Course Description

This course addresses the (a) process of verbal, non-verbal, and paralinguistic communication skills; (b) assessment of communication competence, including social skills; and (c) research-based intervention strategies and effective practices for promoting effective communication for learners with social communication impairments, including Autism Spectrum Disorders. Language development, communication and language-based assessments, social skills training, alternative/augmentative modes of communication, assistive technology devices, and the impact of contextual factors affecting communication competence will be discussed and investigated.

Student Learning Outcomes At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the etiologies and characteristics of receptive/expressive language, cognitive communication, social aspects of communication & communication modalities in individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).
2. Students will integrate developmental theories and milestones into an assessment of individuals with social communication impairments, including ASD.
3. Students will be able to identify, explain, and compare strategies and materials used to educate individuals with social communication impairments, including ASD.
4. Students will demonstrate understanding of procedures of effective assessments, instruction, and supports that target (a) social communication, (b) functional behavior, and (c) the academic performance of individuals with social communication impairments, including ASD.

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

To be successful in this course, you will need to know how to access and navigate (a) Desire2Learn, (b) Microsoft Word, and (c) Microsoft Excel. If you use the program PAGES, you will need to convert your file to a Word document or PDF before submitting to Dropbox. **I will not serve as technical support.** ETAMU has multiple professionals (e. g., Instructional Technology, CITE, library) who will be able to help you troubleshoot and/or teach you how to navigate the necessary technical requirements for this course.

Instructional Methods

Your course is delivered to you fully online, using the Desire2Learn (D2L) instructional system that is available to you through East Texas A&M University. There are no on-campus meetings of this class.

Content delivery will be completely online and asynchronous. You will be expected to work through course modules that will be posted on D2L. If you have problems accessing the system, immediately contact the system administrator through the help screens provided.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

To be successful in this course, log into the course on D2L regularly and follow the course modules. Other ways to be successful in this course include: (a) getting the contact information of one of your classmates (in the event you missed a class or just need clarification), (b) contacting a librarian at ETAMU (you can do this over the phone), and (c) meeting with me during my office hours if you have questions or concerns.

GRADING

The instructor reserves the right to make subjective judgments about the quality of student participation and products. In other words, quantity does not equate to quality nor does effort equate to quality. Moreover, a grade of A will be reserved for only the highest achieving students. If you need to receive an A in this course, I suggest you work hard to submit stellar products. My office hours are listed on the first page of this syllabus if you need to come and speak with me DURING the semester regarding your grades. Please do not wait until the semester is over to discuss grades.

In both undergraduate and graduate school, grades are earned according to individual student performance on described activities. Effort is important but the outcome of your effort is the product upon which grades are based. Final grades are assigned as follows using a weighted percentage points earned scale:

- ✓ Grades of A are reserved for students whose products are consistently exemplary and commensurate with the work of an accomplished graduate student. A products

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provide clarity of thoughts and ideas with no grammatical, structural, or spelling errors.

- ✓ Grades of B are earned by students whose products are good but not outstanding. B products provide detail and explanation; may have a few grammatical, structural, or spelling errors.
- ✓ Grades of C are earned by students whose products are limited but display sufficient understanding; may have major grammatical, structural, or spelling errors.

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Percentage toward final grade	Assignment/Activity
20%	Book Study Activity
35%	Module Assignments
35%	Resource Guide
10%	Professionalism and Good Conduct

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

1. Professionalism: It is expected that you demonstrate professionalism. For the purposes of this course, professionalism will be exhibited by the student: (a) completing all assigned readings, (b) submitting assignments by the deadline, and (c) adhering to the university student code of conduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating).

2. Writing Assignments: Prepare all written assignments according to the APA Publications Manual (7th ed.), as appropriate. You can access information regarding basic APA style at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu> or the Learning Center located on the main floor of the library.

- a. ***ALL WRITTEN WORK WILL BE SUBMITTED TO TURNITIN TO CHECK FOR PLAGIARISM (Turnitin will provide a score of the percentage of the paper that has been directly lifted from other sources). SCORES OF 30% OR MORE WILL BE IMMEDIATELY RETURNED TO THE STUDENT FOR REVISIONS. AFTER SECOND SUBMISSION, IF THE SCORE REMAINS 30% OR MORE, THE PAPER WILL AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVE A ZERO. The

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BEST way to avoid any potential confusion is to get very good at stating things in multiple ways--but most importantly, in a way that is different than the original source(s). Papers in this class will likely not require direct quotes. We will discuss when it is appropriate to use direct quotes in a paper (and it isn't very often).

b. I STRONGLY encourage you take advantage of the student resources ETAMU offers you. I will reward students with bonus points if you can provide documentation that you have utilized the Writing Center to help you improve the quality of your written work. Here is a link to the Online Writing Lab:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/colleges/humanitiesSocialSciencesArts/departments/literatureLanguages/writingCenter/onlineWritingLab.aspx>

Specific Requirements

1. Readings: To gain background knowledge, students will be required to complete a series of readings assigned on D2L.
2. Weekly Assignments: For weekly modules, students will have a series of activities to engage in and assignments to complete. Expectations and directions will be posted within the modules.
3. Book Study Activity: Students will be required to read *one* of the books suggested in this course. Opportunities for follow-up discussion with the instructor happen throughout the semester. At the conclusion of the semester, a synthesis paper will be due (details on D2L).
4. Resource Guide Repository: Students will be required to create a cloud-based repository where specific products and resources will be stored and shared with the instructor. The purpose of this assignment is to provide the student a professional resource repository to use while practicing as a service provider for individuals with social communication impairments, including ASD.
5. Professionalism, Participation, and Good Conduct: Students are in-training to be Masters level professionals; therefore, it is expected that all products are completed in a timely manner and free of spelling and grammatical errors. Additionally, students are expected to use professional vernacular of (dis)ability culture, which includes using person-first language at all times when referring to individuals with a disability (e.g., a child with autism or a student with behavioral problems). Respectful and culturally responsive discourse on discussion boards and interactions with the instructor are required! Professionalism in communications with the instructor and peers WILL BE EVALUATED—this is a course in social skills and students will be expected to display them throughout the course.

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Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, an East Texas A&M University campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

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COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://www.tamuc.edu/student-code-of-conduct/>.

If you believe someone has engaged in behaviors that do not align with the Code of Student Conduct or you have other concerns, please visit the File a Report page at <https://www.tamuc.edu/office-of-student-rights-and-responsibilities/concerns-incident-reporting/>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate student academic dishonesty policy
[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Undergraduate student academic dishonesty policy
[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

Graduate student academic dishonesty policy:
<https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesproceduresstandardsstatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf>

Graduate student academic dishonesty form:
<https://inside.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

East Texas A&M University Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage.

Artificial Intelligence

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East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, Chatbots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Services
Velma K. Waters Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5930

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: StudentDisabilityServices@etamu.edu

Website: <http://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/campusServices/StudentDisabilityServices/default.aspx>

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.

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Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M University Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

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COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Due Dates</u>
1 – 8/20	START HERE (Course Overview) and Introduction to Social Communication Impairments & Autism Spectrum Disorders	MA: Introduction Activities	8/30/2026
2 – 8/24	Learner Characteristics	MA: Neuroanatomy of ASD	8/30/2026
3 – 8/31	Theories of Etiology	MA: Debate Discussion	9/6/2026
4 – 9/7	Diagnostics and Assessment	MA: Assessment Stimuli	9/13/2026
5 – 9/14	Treatment & Programming Considerations	MA 1: AFRIM Intervention Selection MA 2: Social Validity Considerations	9/20/2026
6 – 9/21	Evidence-Based Practices	MA 1: Frontline Discussion MA 2: EBP Report	9/27/2026
7 – 9/28	Instructional Considerations & Cognition	MA: Response Competency Hierarchy	10/4/2026
8 – 10/5	Concepts & Principles of Applied Behavior Analysis	MA 1: Task Analysis MA 2: Preference Assessments	10/11/2026
9 – 10/12	Functional Assessment & FABI QABF	MA 1: Behavior Fact Sheet MA 2: Behavior Data Collection Sheets for Families Resource Guide Activity	10/18/2026
10 – 10/19	Functional Communication & AAC	MA: Communication Resource Guide Activity	10/25/2026

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11- 10/26	Social Skills, Social Cognition, & Pragmatics	MA: Social Skills Resource Guide Activity	11/1/2026
12- 11/2	Sensory Considerations	MA: Sensory Resource Guide Activity	11/8/2026
13- 11/9	Working with Families	MA 1: Parent Implemented Interventions MA 2: Home-to	11/15/2026
14- 11/16	Community Resources	MA: Community Resources & Parent Supports Resource Guide Activity	11/29/2026
15- 11/23	Thanksgiving Break		
16- 11/30	Post-Secondary Life	Finalize Resource Guide	DUE by or before 11:59 pm on 12/8/2026
FINALS WEEK 12/7	Book Study Activity due by or before 11:59 pm on 12/9/2026 Resource Guide Peer Evaluations due by or before 11:59 pm on 12/10/2026		

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