COURSE CONTENT:
This course is designed to foster reflective clinical problem-solving by using a case-based learning method wherein case descriptions are discussed and clinical decisions are made. Class members will work together on clinical cases to generate hypotheses, research and discuss alternative solutions, and come to assessment and intervention decisions. In the process you will enhance your problem-solving and analytic skills, as well as your ability to articulate ideas, communicate effectively, and collaborate with colleagues. The case analysis exercises aim to bridge your academic training in speech language pathology to the clinical practice of evidence-based decision making for communication disorders.

The course provides substantive knowledge of two major classes of neurodevelopmental disorders: autism spectrum disorders, and dyslexia and other learning disabilities. This understanding will be gained through readings and presentations by the professor and by guest clinicians on these populations, as well as by your active learning through the analysis of sample clinical cases, which will involve reviewing clinically relevant research.

As this course is taken during the last semester of your program, it provides the opportunity to synthesize many skills you have learned throughout the curriculum pertaining to assessment, intervention, critical analysis, research methods, establishing clinical validity, learning from each others' practica experiences, and independent learning and research skills.

A far-reaching goal of the course is to equip you with reflective clinical problem-solving and independent learning skills that can be applied flexibly throughout your SLP career. These skills are essential tools with which to face the challenges of an evolving knowledge base, changing contexts of practice, and the diversification of clinical populations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of this course you will:

**Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)**
1. Know the triad of symptom categories that define ASD
2. Identify factors that contribute to the etiology/causes of ASD
3. Understand key issues in the differential diagnosis and assessment of ASD
4. Categorize the classes of intervention approaches for communication in ASD and identify their strengths and weaknesses
Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities
1. Know of the characteristic symptoms of dyslexia and other learning disabilities
2. Identify underlying impairments that contribute to dyslexia and rank their importance
3. Understand key issues in the differential diagnosis and assessment of dyslexia
4. Be familiar with the content and methods of successful intervention for dyslexia

Reflective clinical problem-solving
1. Have developed and practiced reflective clinical problem-solving skills
2. Be able to apply principles of Evidence-Based Practice to novel clinical cases

Peer-based learning and teamwork in clinical practice
1. Have the opportunity to learn from your peers’ clinical and research experiences to date
2. Have improved interpersonal communication and teamwork skills, and an awareness of difficulties inherent to team-based clinical work

COURSE WEBSITE
You should check the course website at least twice each week for any course-related announcements, new web links, changes in the schedule and readings, etc. Students will be responsible for all material posted and emailed via MyCourses. Course information and materials will generally be posted to the website in electronic format rather than handed out in class in paper format. Please initiate all course-related correspondence (regarding assignments, absence from class, etc.) via MyCourses mail rather than by my McGill email address.

TEXT AND ARTICLES

Students will prepare for class meetings by completing the assigned readings in the class schedule. Readings are provided via the links in this syllabus or as pdfs on MyCourses. Note – to access linked articles you must be connected to the McGill network via VPN or by being on the campus network.

COURSE ORGANIZATION
This course depends heavily on active student participation, which comprises 10% of your final grade.
- You are encouraged to develop discussion questions by completing the assigned readings in a manner where you critically evaluate what is proposed and integrate other knowledge (from other classes and clinical or research experience) with the information presented. We will start each class by discussing questions provided by volunteers.
- To highlight the relevance of course materials to real life and clinical practice, online discussion topics will be posted on MyCourses. You are encouraged to contribute to the discussion threads whenever you have a relevant reflection or a question to bring up. Please do this at least once or twice over the course of the semester.

Guest Presentations
Four guest speakers will present on ASD or dyslexia assessment and intervention, and issues pertaining to working as an SLP with these populations. I have carefully selected these presenters to introduce different sectors of practice as no individual instructor could. As for other class meetings, students should complete the assigned readings before the presentation and come prepared to discuss the topic and readings.
**Clinical Labs**

There are 4 clinical labs loosely linked to the guest presenter topics of ASD assessment and intervention, and Reading disability assessment and intervention. Clinical case analyses will form the basis of these labs; they will be made available a week prior to the date of the clinical lab in the course schedule. The class will be divided into six groups of 4 or 5 members for these labs and will be assigned different cases or different aspects of one case (e.g., assessment versus intervention). Within your small group, you will identify and divide up topics you feel you need to know more about to make sound clinical decisions. In the week leading up to the clinical lab, you will do independent research (i.e., library searches, review of available tests, conversations with experts, etc.) to address your identified topic/question. You will bring this preparatory work, along with notes on a solution to either the assessment or intervention aspect of the case, to the class discussion. For **2 of the 4 case analyses (your choice) you will submit this preparatory research (2 to 3 typed pages double-spaced) for a grade at the end of the discussion.**

*Acknowledgement:* The guest speaker and case analysis format of this course is based, with some modifications, on courses developed and previously taught by Dr. Jim McNutt and Dr. Elin Thordardottir.

**Final paper: Critical Appraisal of Treatment/ Diagnostic/ Meta-Analysis/ or Practice Evidence** (following Chapters 6 - 9 of Dollaghan (2007)). You will identify an open question relevant to your future practice that has come up in practicum experiences or classes. This is an opportunity for you to critically evaluate the clinical evidence available on that question. Both the answers you find and the skills you employ in completing the paper will have direct clinical relevance. To be able to learn from your classmates' critical appraisals, presentations on the “bottom line” of critical appraisals (2 minutes) will be given during the last 2 class meetings. I will also compile a pdf of the critical appraisal checklists for you to keep for future reference.

**EVALUATION**

1. Participation in the form of contributions in class and on MyCourses discussion topics  
   10 %
2. Written preparation for two of four clinical labs (your choice, 20 points each), format provided on MyCourses  
   40 %
3. Quizzes on ASD and Dyslexia (10 points each, completed on your time via MyCourses)  
   20 %
4. Paper using Dollaghan's Critical Appraisal for clinical evidence, on a question of personal interest and utility to you. Clinical bottom line (4-5 minutes) will be presented to the class at the end of the semester. Final papers and checklists are due April 24th.  
   30 %

**McGill Policy Statements:**

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest)) for more information).*

*In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.*

Prof. Nadig SCSD 669
SCSD 669 -- CLASS SCHEDULE and READINGS

Note: this schedule is subject to change, and readings will be updated over the semester. The most up-to-date syllabus will be available on MyCourses.

JANUARY 9
- Overview of course format and evaluation methods
- Introduction to neurodevelopmental disorders
- Formulation of targeted clinical questions for Evidence-Based Practice

Readings

JANUARY 16
Diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorders
Language and communication in ASD
Assessment and differential diagnosis

Readings
Available at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/120/5/1183


JANUARY 23
Assessment of language in young children with ASD:
Guest presentation (by video) by Françoise Brosseau-Lapré, S-LP (C)
Class facilitated by Janet Bang, Doctoral Student

Readings


JANUARY 30
Additional topics on language assessment and intervention in ASD

Readings
TBA

FEBRUARY 6
Clinical lab 1 – assessment and intervention for toddler with possible Autism Spectrum Disorder

FEBRUARY 13
Autism Intervention: Guest Presentation by Sarah Levitt, MA, S-LP CF

Readings

Available at: http://cdq.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/31/1/15

(continued)  social and communicative behaviour of young children with autism spectrum disorders: A review of parent-implemented intervention services. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 29(2), 90-104. Available at: [http://tec.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/2/90](http://tec.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/2/90)

**FEBRUARY 20**  Clinical lab 2 – assessment and intervention for adolescents or adults with autism spectrum disorders

**Online ASD QUIZ this week**

**FEBRUARY 27**  Dyslexia: core deficits of a learning disability

**Readings**


**MARCH 6**  NO CLASS

**MARCH 13**  Clinical lab 3 – assessment of reading difficulties

*Tuesday /
MARCH 17
3-5 pm*  Predictors of reading disability and the assessment of dyslexia: Guest Presentation by Caroline Erdos, S-LP(C), PhD, Montreal Children’s Hospital


**submit PICO question for final clinical appraisal via MyCourses**

**MARCH 27**  Preventative reading intervention and the SLP's role in schools: Guest presentation by Manon Daisomont, S-LP (C), Eastern Townships School Board

**Readings**


**APRIL 3**  Good Friday holiday- no class

**Online DYSLEXIA QUIZ this week**

**APRIL 10**  Clinical lab 4 – Intervention for reading difficulties

**Friday /
APRIL 17th
10-2:30**  *Presentation of final critical appraisals*

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Prof. Nadig SCSD 669
**Readings**
