

Introduction to Deaf Culture

EDSE 115

Spring 2026 Section 01 Hybrid 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/28/2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Everett Smith

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Office: SH 221

Phone: 831.406.9632 (text message) / 408.217.6289 (voice message)

Class Days/Time:

- Tuesdays In-Person (Face-to-Face) Meeting 4:00PM - 6:45PM
- Classroom: SH 212

Contacting Me

Email is the best and quickest method of communication outside class for this course. I check my email often and will respond within 24 hours during weekdays. I generally do not respond to emails on the weekend unless it is an urgent situation.

- When you email me, it is helpful for you to include the course title in the subject line. I teach several classes and I may have difficulty remembering what course you are in, especially at the beginning of the semester. This is optional with Canvas messages.
- Please feel free to schedule an appointment to meet me in my office when you have additional questions or need help.

The next best method of contacting me is via mobile text number, which is provided above.

You may try calling me on the telephone, but if you need to leave a message, indicate who you are and how to contact you, as well as specifying the class you are taking from me.

Office Hours

By appointment, please. Advance notice via email is preferred to give me time to put in interpreter request.

Course Description and Requisites

This course is an introduction to the American Deaf Culture and provides a comprehensive analysis of how Deaf people are understood from a cultural perspective. The identities, contributions and experiences of Deaf people are explored in educational and linguistic context.

Prerequisite: EDSE 014A or EDSE 102

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Attendance / Participation

"Participation in class activities is crucial to your success in this class. The class forms a small community and your effort or lack of impacts the success of the group. Please make every effort to come to every class with homework done and ready to learn and participate. If you know you will be absent from class make arrangements for a classmate to take notes and collect handouts for you."
(Excerpt from Signing Naturally American Sign Language Curriculum)

Classroom Conduct

I will always be respectful and considerate of my students' needs, and I expect to be afforded the same courtesy. However, if I find a student or students engaging in distracting or disruptive classroom behavior that hinders other students' opportunity to learn, I will have to ask the student(s) in question to take a break outside the classroom, and return when ready to focus on course content.

Tardiness

1. Be on time for class. Late entrances can cause disruptions/distractions.
2. It is especially important to be on time for scheduled examinations/activities. Late arrivals may miss a significant if not entire part of the examination or activity. This can negatively affect your scores.

Mobile and other electronic devices

Unless you are asked to use your device during a class activity, please make sure your devices are turned off or in silent mode during class time. You can check your device outside the classroom especially in an emergency.

Program Information

LCOE Department of Special Education Mission

We prepare candidates to be transformative leaders in the field, and lifelong learners who respond to racism, ableism, bigotry, and prejudice in their schools and communities. To this end, we center anti-racist and anti-ableist policies and practices in our teaching, research, and service to disrupt systemic racism that has historically prevented full inclusion and equity for students with disabilities including our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students, staff, and faculty. We engage culturally sustaining pedagogies and the principles of UDL in our coursework and fieldwork, partnering with our local districts to push for the success of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

LCOE Department of Special Education Program Learning Outcomes

- **PLO 1** Assess and identify the educational needs and strengths of students with disabilities from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- **PLO 2** Critically evaluate pedagogy, curricula and instructional materials grounded in quality indicators of evidence-based practices for students with disabilities.
- **PLO 3** Plan, design, implement, and monitor linguistically and culturally appropriate instruction that meets the unique needs of students with disabilities.
- **PLO 4** Apply knowledge of the purpose, characteristics, and appropriate use of different types of assessments used for special education eligibility, placement, and service selection.
- **PLO 5** Utilize research-based knowledge and theoretical, conceptual and evidence-based practices related to individuals with disabilities to improve services and instruction in the field.

[Link to Education Specialist TPEs \(pps 13 – 42\). \(https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/education-specialist-standards-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=729750b1_45\)](https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/education-specialist-standards-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=729750b1_45)

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain important features of American Deaf culture including American Sign Language (ASL), cultural norms, and identities.
2. Recognize and analyze instances of oppression such as cultural appropriation, audism, linguistic discrimination, non-minority privileges, and ableism.
3. Understand and explain the role of ASL in maintenance and preservation of Deaf culture/community.
4. Demonstrate respect and appreciation of Deaf culture/community by using appropriate language/terms and culturally sensitive behavior when engaging.
5. Identify and describe notable Deaf individuals and their impact on the Deaf community.
6. Identify and trace the history of education and significant events within the Deaf community.
7. Recognize and explain the challenges facing the Deaf culture posed by technology, and through changes in educational policies.
8. Describe and present perspectives on cultural debates occurring within and between the Deaf and hearing community such as the role of cochlear implants, culture vs. disability, and access to language.

Discuss the experiences of minority groups within the Deaf community.

Course Materials

Introduction to American Deaf Culture, 2nd Ed.

Author: Thomas K. Holcomb

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Edition: 2023

ISBN: 9780197503232

Availability: Campus Bookstore and other sites

Other - Technology and Materials

Films

Each student will watch four main films in class on separate days this semester. Then, upload a report on the film to Canvas. One report per film.

Readings/Viewings

The instructor will distribute additional materials relevant to Deaf culture topics. These selected materials will be available on Canvas.

Technology

A computer with high-speed Internet connection is required for research purposes, assignment submissions, etc.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Course Format

For the Spring of 2026 this class meets in person at the designated class time in Sweeney Hall 212 once each week on Tuesdays except holidays.

Unless otherwise notified, we will not meet on Zoom this semester.

Except for the required workbook, all course materials such as the syllabus, videos, pop quizzes, assignments, and guidelines are to be found on the course site in Canvas. You are responsible for regularly checking our course site in [Canvas](http://sjsu.instructure.com) [http://sjsu.instructure.com] as well as messages via Canvas or SJSU email to stay on track and learn of any updates.

Classroom Instruction Method

EDSE 115 students are not expected to possess knowledge of sign language. However, the Deaf instructor will conduct the class in American Sign Language and voice interpreting is provided in each session. It is crucial to understand that interpreters do not serve in the capacity of instructors. Rather, interpreters are provided to facilitate communication between the instructor and the students.

Therefore, please address the instructor in the second-person point of view (e.g. "can *you* please help me?"), not in the third-person (e.g. "can *he* please help me?"). Likewise, the instructor will address the students directly through interpreters.

Participation (50%)

In order to do well in this course, regular class participation is expected. Each student should be prepared to assimilate new information through lectures, presentations, etc. as well as sharing research findings and individual experiences. Students are expected to engage in discussions and to collaborate with one another when prompted, while being respectful and inclusive of others who have different ideas and/or abilities. I will recommend/suggest attendance at an event or events relating to Deaf culture issues, depending on event schedule/availability during the course semester. One of the important aspects of Deaf culture is communication and face-to-face interaction, and the instructor strives to simulate this aspect in classroom setting.

Participation

On Tuesdays (face-to-face):

1. **Instructor prompt response:** Respond to the weekly prompt by the instructor. The response should be in the length of a paragraph (four sentences minimum). You also will have the opportunity to share your personal experience when applicable.
2. **Chapter reflection/discussion:** For each assigned chapter students reflect on any parts of the chapter personally deemed important/noteworthy. A reflection does not necessarily encapsulate the whole chapter.
3. **Miscellaneous activities:** During the course of the semester, I will also assign various activities in class to further engage with the learned content to cover the remaining points such as **group/individual activities and engagement, and reflections on films and videos shown in class.**

Cultural Film Reports (20%)

We will watch four Deaf culture films over the course of the semester (see dates in the schedule section of the syllabus). Students each will write one report per film and submit it via Canvas. The report should be a page in length minimum (excluding references page), double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman. Worth 5% each, 20% total of the course grade.

We will watch the following films for our cultural film reports.

For first report, we will watch **No Ordinary Hero: The SuperDeafy Movie** (2013)

Second report: **Deaf President Now!** (2025)

Third report: **Sound of Metal** (2019)

Fourth report: **Audism Unveiled** (2008)

We will watch other various films (both short and feature lengths) throughout the semester for in-class discussion as part of regular class participation, such as **What?** (2021), **Through Deaf Eyes** (2007), **CODA** (2021), **The Silent Child** (2017), etc.

Deaf Culture Topic Presentation (10%)

This presentation comprises the first part of the Final Deaf Culture Poster Project. You will do a "verbal" presentation on the topic you selected for the project to help expand my understanding of the topic through your perspective. This assignment is worth 10% of course grade. Each presentation should be no more than 5 minutes long. Slides or other visual aids during presentation are welcome.

Final Deaf Culture Poster Project (10%)

Each student will select a topic from instructor-compiled list, or come up with unique one. The topic can be about one of the following: 1) A notable person (living or passed) in the Deaf community, 2) An important event in Deaf history, or 3) An important issue related to a core value of Deaf culture. There will be one person/event/issue per student, with no overlaps.

The Poster Project is essentially a visual summary of your topic presentation. For this poster project, give detailed information (and images) about the selected topic.

Your creativity is most strongly encouraged! You will have an opportunity to very briefly share one favorite/best thing about your poster.

As for how much information to include on your poster, I simply ask that the content be at least equivalent to what could be fit on one side of a standard 22-by-28-inch cardboard poster.

Final Deaf Culture Poster Project is worth a maximum of 10 points.

Examinations: Midterm and Final (10%)

A midterm and a final quiz will be administered online in Canvas. These quizzes are composed of multiple choice, fill-in-blanks, and essay questions. They will be based on the course text, selected articles, and lectures. A study guideline will be provided prior to each quiz. Please refer to the course schedule at the end of the syllabus for examination dates. 5% per quiz.

✓ Grading Information

Breakdown

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Participation (prompts, discussions, individual/group activities, etc.)	50%
Four Cultural Film Reports	20%
Deaf Culture Topic Presentation	10%

Final Deaf Culture Poster Project	10%
Online Midterm Quiz	5%
Online Final Quiz	5%

Total:	100%
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Grading Scale (percentage = letter grade).

93 percent - 100 percent = A

90 percent - 92.9 percent = A minus

87 percent - 89.9 percent = B plus

83 percent - 86.9 percent = B

80 percent - 82.9 percent = B minus

77 percent - 79.9 percent = C plus

73 percent - 76.9 percent = C

70 percent - 72.9 percent = C minus

67 percent - 69.9 percent = D plus

63 percent - 66.9 percent = D

60 percent - 62.9 percent = D minus

0 percent - 59.9 percent = F

Extra Credit: No extra credit offered in this course.

Late Policy / Make-Up Exams

Late assignments will be permitted within reason. Notify me by email (preferred) or phone ASAP if you must miss an examination, assignment, or an in-class activity. It is your responsibility to contact me if you need a make-up. You should be able to provide a university-approved verification, written note from physician, or other legitimate reason(s) to document need for these alternatives.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1 01/27/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Read Syllabus and Check Welcome Module	Participation Session 1: First day of class <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peruse syllabus and familiarize yourself with Canvas• Read the Welcome Page in Week 1 Welcome Module• Introductions and Icebreaker Activity -- Reading (due by Week 2): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holcomb Ch. One: Introduction• Holcomb Ch. Two: Culture Defined
Week 2 02/03/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lecture and engagement (activity and discussion) -- Reading (due before Week 3): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holcomb Ch. Three: Who Are the Deaf People?

When	Topic	Notes
Week 3 02/10/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and engagement (activity and discussion) -- <p>Reading (due before Week 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Four: Deafhood: A personal Journey Toward Self-Actualization
Week 4 02/17/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and engagement (activity and discussion) Watch the following film to take notes on for your report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Ordinary Hero: The SuperDeafy Movie (2013) -- <p>Reading (due before Week 5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Six: Deaf Culture Redefined
Week 5 02/24/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and engagement (activity and discussion) -- <p>(Report due by 2/27):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Film 1 -- <p>Reading (due before Week 6):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Seven: American Sign Language –The Language of the Deaf Community

When	Topic	Notes
Week 6 03/03/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 6: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and engagement (activity and discussion) -- <p>Reading (due before Week 7):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Eight: Deaf Lit
Week 7 03/10/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and engagement (activity and discussion) Peruse Study Guide for Online Midterm -- <p>Reading (due before Week 8):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Nine: Deaf Art
Week 8 03/17/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Midterm/Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and engagement Watch the following film to take notes on for your report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf President Now! (2025) -- <p>(3/18 - 3/20): Online Midterm Quiz (available Wednesday through Friday in Canvas)</p> -- <p>Reading Reminder (due before Week 9):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Nine: Deaf Art

When	Topic	Notes
Week 9 03/24/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and Engagement (activity and discussion) -- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Report due by 3/27): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Film 2 in Canvas
Week 10 03/31/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Spring Recess - No Class!	Campus is Closed 3/30 through 4/3
Week 11 04/07/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and Engagement (activity and discussion) -- <p>Reading and Assignment (due before Week 12):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Ten: Rules of Social Interaction Sign up for Presentation Topic in Canvas
Week 12 04/14/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 11: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and Engagement Topic Selection Finalization Confirmation in Canvas Watch the following film to take notes on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound of Metal (2019) -- <p>Reading (due before Week 13):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Eleven: Technological Advancements: A Boon or Bane for the Deaf Community?

When	Topic	Notes
Week 13 04/21/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 12: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and engagement (Activity and Discussion) -- (Report due by 4/24): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Film 3 in Canvas -- Reading (due before Week 14): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holcomb Ch. Thirteen: Diversity in the Deaf Community
Week 14 04/28/2026 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM SH 230	Activity/Assignment/Reading	Participation Session 13: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture and Engagement (activity and discussion) -- Reading and Assignment (due before Week 15): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. Fourteen: Multiple Identities of Deaf Individuals
Week 15 05/05/2026 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM SH 230	Deaf Culture Presentation and Poster	Deaf Culture Topic Presentation and Poster Project Watch the following film to take notes on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Audism Unveiled (2019)
Week 16 Monday, May 11 - No Class - Film Report Due Online		NO Class! (5/11): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Film 4 due in Canvas.
Final 5/13 - 5/20 Online	Online Final Quiz	This online quiz may be taken at any time during the SJSU Final Examinations week (5/13 - 5/20).