



2023 - 2024

ADULT EDUCATION CATALOG

We teach Participants ages 18 to 28 the mindsets to be forward thinkers, the insights to be aware of and command their own thought processes, and the social and vocational skills necessary to thrive in their communities, and in the workplace.

Welcome! Thanks for your interest in our programming!

Below, you will find descriptions for the various growth areas that our programming addresses. Each growth area is research-based and proven fundamental to the development of young adults.

Most of our courses are designed to address multiple growth areas, and many can be taken over multiple years, as the content and focus will change each time.

Because each young adult is different, each path to completion may look different as well. Some Participants may highlight specific areas of need. Some may attend full-day. Some may take advantage of our flexible enrollment. We will work with you in a supportive and non-judgmental space to determine the types of coursework that works best for you, for as long as it is beneficial.

Growth Areas

Community Participation: contributing to and participating in one's community is a key aspect to anyone's quality of life. Yet, social isolation is common among neurodiverse people. Our community participation coursework not only provides Participants the opportunity to participate in their communities, but gives them the tools and the knowledge to know how to be active and independent community participants into the future.

Employment Skills: employment skills are the hard and soft skills necessary to thrive in any work environment. Employment skills are built through the classroom as well as community-based, hands-on opportunities. In addition to building those skills, Participants will also increase their awareness of different types of employment and the challenges and opportunities that come with them.

Independent Living: independent living skills are the important life skills necessary to achieve the highest level of independence possible. Through hands-on and classroom learning, Participants will develop the skills necessary to take care of themselves (including their mental, physical, and emotional health), their home, their finances, and more.

Post-Secondary Education: Around $\frac{1}{3}$ of people on the autism spectrum now attend college, and yet colleges are often slow to catch up with their needs, leading to higher-than-average attrition rates. Our post-secondary study skills courses are designed to help Participants work on the study, organizational, communication, note-taking, and essay writing skills to be successful in college. We believe that everyone is a lifelong learner, however, and our post-secondary education coursework is also available to help our non-college Participants continue to build their fundamental academic skills and enrich and develop their minds.

Self-Determination: Self-Determination, simply put, is the ability of an individual to control their own life. Self-Determination is its own growth area at AOWL, and for good reason. We believe that a self-determined mindset is integral to one's ability to make choices, set goals, self-advocate, regulate one's behavior, engage socially, know oneself, problem solve, and so much more.

Social Recreation: Our social recreation classes allow Participants the opportunity to engage communally in fun and rewarding experiences. These experiences, both in the classroom and in the community, allow participants to engage with the broader world around them, to develop their social skills in fun and rewarding ways, to make friends, plan activities, and expand their horizons in a supportive learning environment.

Social Skills: Social skills are the skills we use to interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally. Our social skills coursework specifically targets many of the unspoken expectations of communication in a variety of settings, including the workplace. Our social skills coursework provides learners with the skills, mindsets, experiences, and confidence to engage with the world

Enrollment Options

Full-Day Enrollment: Experience all of our offerings at a deeper level. Highly recommended for first-year participants or those not yet competitively employed or attending another post-secondary institution.

Flexible Enrollment: For those who are competitively employed and/or attending additional post-secondary options, you can select specific courses to meet your needs and your schedule.

College Flex Program: Our College Flex enrollment option fits around the lives of college students. From 2:30 pm - 6:30 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays, students can benefit from programming that complements their academic learning with a focus on social-emotional learning, executive functioning, building relationships, and preparing for successful independence after graduation.

Community Engagement Days: Each Friday of the year (excluding holidays) and over breaks we offer full-day events from 9:30 am - 3:30 pm that involve engagement in the community of a social, educational, and/or vocational nature. We believe in the value of community and celebrating a week of hard work. Participants will meet as an advisory committee with our Community Engagement Planner to brainstorm and research various community engagement options 6 weeks in advance. Participants will learn to budget, practice their phone skills by checking prices, availability, and reservations as needed.

Full-day and all-day Participants receive at least 30 minutes of weekly social and/or academic mentorship from one of our trusted and qualified staff.

School Calendar: We operate on a full-year calendar with two semesters. Each semester is 22 weeks of programming (with 4-5 weeks of breaks mixed in.) Our regular schedule is from Monday — Thursday with Community Engagement Days on Fridays and over breaks.

Potential Courses (final course schedule will be determined by enrollment and level of need and interest)

GROWTH AREAS COVERED



Employment Skills



Community Participation



Post-secondary Education



Independent Living



Social Skills



Self-Determination



Social Recreation

Adulthood

2 credits



This course examines the specific differences between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. In both group and 1:1 settings, it encourages Participants to create their own definition of adulthood, to embrace the idea of maturation, and to consider the changing nature of things like self-care, friendship, finances, independence, and filial relationships as one grows into adulthood. The year will end with an individual research and/or writing project.

Book Club

2 credits



This course is designed to encourage communal reading through shared interests. Participants will collectively work on brainstorming book ideas, giving attention to the speaker, sharing their ideas and reflecting on the ideas of others. Depending on the needs and composition of the group, we may split into multiple reading sessions so that Participants can read with those at their level and with the same interests. The intent of the class is to both grow an appreciation for reading, and to promote verbal communication and social interactions.

Career Exploration

4 credits



This course is designed to research and explore different available vocational possibilities, including their career fields, requirements, opportunities for advancement, the vocational and social skills necessary to be successful, and much more. Participants will research the cost-benefit ratio of different employment options and discuss why certain jobs pay more than others. This course will involve multiple guest speakers and site visits. This course includes a 1:1 social mentorship opportunity with an employer in the Twin Cities area.

Career Research Lab

3 credits



For Participants who are competitively employed or have a strong interest in a specific career path, this semi-independent study allows Participants the freedom and hands-on opportunities to build specific skills. To the best of our ability, staff will work 1:1 with Participants to help them prepare for and find employment in a high-interest area.



Employment
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Post-secondary
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Independent
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Social
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Social
Recreation

Career Skills Lab

3 credits



Through hands-on vocational programming, Participants will have the opportunity to work in our vocational programming space to practice work in a variety of work fields. This will allow both exposure to areas of potential interest, but also the possibility to advance into our research lab where Participants can learn more about each field and work towards potential certification. **Areas for 2022-23:** Electricity, Animal Care, Law Enforcement, and Health and Nutrition.

College Success I, II, III

2 credits



For Participants who are currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution or for Participants who might be interested in doing so, this course is designed to assist Participants in the skills necessary to successfully manage a college courseload. This includes: note taking, time management, organization, avoiding procrastination, plagiarism, understanding instead of memorizing, writing critically and effectively, and test taking. Taught by someone with years of teaching at the university level, this course is designed to help Participants feel confident and prepared for what comes next.

Community Fitness I, II, III

4 credits



This course focuses on the importance of being physically fit and healthy, as well as its connection to our emotional and mental health. Participants will research and discuss how to take care of their bodies through exercise, diet, sleep habits, and avoidance of harmful additives. This course comes with a membership to the Williston Fitness Center where Participants will visit twice weekly, setting and following through on their individual fitness goals.

Communication Skills

3 credits



Communication is the study of how people share ideas, information, ideas, meaning, and culture. Through debate, presentation, and observation, Participants will learn both the verbal and nonverbal ways of effectively communicating their thoughts and feelings. Participants will study and select effective communication strategies to interact effectively in different scenarios.

Contemporary Issues

3 credits



Contemporary issues is a course that allows Participants to engage with and interact with the broader world around them. The course offers opportunities for Participant choice in topics, and encourages opportunities for Participants to discuss and reflect on the world around them. Special emphasis will be placed on respectful engagement, cultural and ideological differences and understanding, and active listening. Participants will complete the course with a better understand of themselves, their classmates, and the ability to respectfully engage in discussion and debates about the broader world.



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Culinary Skills I, II, III

4 credits



Culinary Skills is a course that has everything to do with food! Participants will practice in a hands-on environment menu planning, grocery shopping, food preparation, kitchen safety, and cooking skills. Participants will build a personalized portfolio with recipes of their choosing. Participants will practice planning healthy meals, identify and research safety precautions for cooking, preparing, and storing food.

Cultural and Global Awareness

3 credits



Looking at both the present and the past, Cultural and Global Awareness will help Participants develop the critical thinking and awareness skills to understand the world around them. Through the study of current events, history, music, food, economics, and other cultural touchstones, Participants will experience and examine various cultures both local and global. Participants will be encouraged to embrace difference and to reflect on their own sense of cultural identity.

Employment Skills-- Classroom Edition I, II, III

4 credits



Employment Skills-- Classroom Edition provides opportunities for Participants to research, discuss, reflect on, and explore situations that arise within the workplace. It examines strategies and tactics to acquire, maintain, and achieve promotion within the workplace. This begins with career exploration, through things like resume writing and interview prep and practice, and including the self-management skills needed to be successful in the work-place. Participants will research, read, write, and discuss their own experiences. Strongly recommended for all levels.

Essential Math I, II, III

4 credits



Essential Math allows Participants to continue to maintain and develop their essential life math skills. Specific skill development will be based on the Participants' individual plan, but the course is designed to focus on topics such as: Money Management, Time Management, Measurement, Making calculations in your head, Calculator usage, Solving Word Problems, Estimating Correctly, Fractions, Graphing Points on a Coordinate Plane, Converting ratios and measurements, area, volume, and surface area.

Essential Reading and Writing I, II, III

4 credits



Essential Reading and Writing allows Participants to maintain and develop their essential reading and writing skills. Specific skill development will be based on the Participants' individual plan, but the course is designed to focus on topics such as: Taking effective notes, Researching and reading job ads, managing email correspondence, conversating through text and social media, obtaining key information, summarizing the plot and themes of a reading, understanding point of view in authorship and bias, understanding and identifying figurative and connotative language.



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Social Recreation

Film Studies

2 credits
½ year



This course covers both the classics and modern films. Participants will explore and discuss the themes, character development, moral and ethical message, social commentary, imagery, technique, and historical significance of each film. Participants will demonstrate their understanding of these themes and their critical thinking skills through guided discussion, group activities, and reflection.

Friendships and Relationships

3 credits



This course is all about establishing and maintaining close relationships with others into and through adulthood. Participants will discuss the qualities they desire in a friend and/or partner, dating, the different levels of friendships and relationships, recognizing and responding to the intimate feelings of others, and the rights and responsibilities of a friend and a partner. Special emphasis will be placed on the interpersonal skills that we look for in others, and the things people will look for and expect in us. Participants will research, read, write, reflect, roleplay, and discuss all of the aforementioned topics (and more).

Getting Aware. Getting Involved I, II, III

3 credits



This Participant-driven, community-based course gives Participants the opportunity to research and explore the world around them. Participants will practice community-based activities like: going to the laundromat, shopping at the mall, visiting museums and the library. Separate from our social recreational events, Getting Aware, Getting Involved is about exploring the resources and information available to navigate and thrive in the world around us.

Getting Started

3 credits



The secret to getting ahead is getting started, yet for professional procrastinators that can be the most difficult part of achieving success. This course is focused particularly on procrastination: why do we procrastinate, how can we resist procrastination, and what strategies can help use work our way out of procrastination. Participants will work on developing positive mindsets around achieving success, how to structure our routines, schedules, and activities around being productive and getting “unstuck”, and how to use positive growth strategies to follow through on our goals.



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Hands-On Integrated Work Opportunity I, II, III

4 credits



More than any other approach, integrated work experiences have a proven track record of preparing neurodiverse populations for competitive employment. These work experiences, with employers in the West Metro, allow our Participants the opportunity to practice the skills necessary to achieve and maintain competitive employment in similar work environments and fields. The work experience is voluntary (unpaid), but allows for substantial experiences, resume building, and long-term opportunities. It is also accompanied by an instructor and/or job coach to provide support and instruction. This course is strongly recommended for all of our participants, but particularly those not currently competitively employed.

Home Maintenance and Safety

3 credits



Home Maintenance and Safety helps participants learn and practice safe ways to care for and maintain a home or apartment. This includes but is not limited to: routine cleaning and maintenance, identifying and using tools, identifying and using cleaning products, knowing when to and when not to call a professional, securing your home/apartment when you are away, disposing of waste properly, using, purchasing, and maintaining appliances, and performing other basic home care tasks.

Housing Options

3 credits



Housing options is a course specifically designed to examine the available housing options that exist in the Twin Cities area. We will research, discuss, and explore the financial, legal, personal, romantic, mental, and physical benefits of different types of housing options, including having a roommate, living with a partner, living independently, living at home, assisted and group living options and renting vs. owning. We will visit different apartments, group home options, and homes (guided by a professional realtor) to understand how to navigate the housing market and make the most holistic and beneficial individual choice.

Mindsets

3 credits



This course specifically focuses on our mindsets and the ways in which we can control and/or choose to live with and manage potentially negative frameworks. Left unaddressed, negative frameworks can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Participants will research and discuss the malleability of the brain, and how a more positive and growth-oriented mindset can help us lead more productive, fulfilling, and self-actualized lives.



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Neurodiversity Seminar

3 credits



Neurodiversity seminar explores what it means to be neurodiverse and how one's neurodiversity can affect them in life (in both positive and negative ways). It encourages and develops self-awareness skills, self-advocacy skills, interpersonal relationship skills, and self-monitoring skills. Participants will research and discuss successful neurodiverse individuals, participate in group discussions, write and reflect on personal essays, and roleplay real-life scenarios. By the end of the year, participants will have a better understanding of themselves and their strengths and challenges.

Performing Arts

3 credits



Multiple studies have shown that the performing arts can be a key element in helping neurodiverse learners practice social skills, verbal expression, and empathy for others. Using a variety of dramatic techniques, Performing Arts helps Participants communicate and image through the creative process. Through improvisation, Participants learn flexible thinking and social skills. Through storytelling and playwriting, Participants learn the skills necessary to communicate their ideas effectively. This class is for any student interested in the art of performance.

Permit Prep

2 credits

½ year



Permit prep is a course designed to help Participants prepare for the written portion of their Minnesota Driver's Exam. The course is designed to take the pressure off of the Participants, to instill them with confidence and knowledge instead of fear, and to prepare them in the most hands-on way possible by visiting and discussing real-life road situations. Using the official study and drivers guide from the DVS, as well as other phone apps and practice tests, participants should finish the course highly prepared to earn their permit. Optional opportunities to take the written permit test at a driver's license exam station will be provided during the semester.

Problem Solving

3 credits



How do we work our way out of difficult situations? What steps can we take to avoid those situations in the first place? This course will help participants develop the skills and mindsets necessary to determine why an issue is happening and potential pathways to resolve that situation. Participants will work on uncovering their own unique personalities, including their strengths and challenges, and how those might play into different approaches to the same problem. Participants will read, research, and discuss problem-solving strategies, write and reflect on responses to different situations, and role-play scenarios to be active problem-solvers.



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Safety and Emergency Preparedness

3 credits



This course covers safety preparedness and knowledge to protect our physical, mental, financial, and emotional selves. Participants will research and discuss the appropriate balance between being open and vulnerable, while still knowing and maintaining one's boundaries in different situations. Using Red Cross Certified materials, Participants will also research, practice, and prepare for different safety and emergency situations in the home, at work, and in the community. After completing this course, participants should be able to more confidently and effectively care for and protect themselves and others.

Self Care I, II, III

4 credits



A term that has come to take on multiple meanings, self-care in its most literal sense (and what we will be discussing in this course), is simply the act of understanding and anticipating your needs and wants (be they physical, emotional, social, mental, etc) and how best to actively and conscientiously look after yourself. Participants will explore and discuss the importance and changing nature of self-care as an adult, and how self-care depends on an honest assessment and understanding of one's self. By the end of the course, Participants will have identified, practiced, and strategized various self-care techniques to carry with them into adulthood.

Social Skills in the Workplace

4 credits



More focused than the broader "employment skills"-- this course looks specifically at the social skills necessary to acquire and maintain employment in almost any occupation. These skills involve knowing both ourselves and understanding the behavior and expectations of others. Through research, discussion, and roleplay, Participants will better understand the importance of behavior observation, open-ended questions, anticipating needs, respectfully handling disagreements or complaints, empathy, hygiene, and much more. Recommended for Participants both competitively employed and otherwise.

Social Strategies

4 credits



This large and flexible course is designed to address many different levels of social skills and the strategies necessary to adapt and thrive in the adult world. Participants will research and discuss social norms, including: body language, shared conversations, and unspoken rules. Participants will learn more about themselves and what they bring into different social situations. Special emphasis will be placed on how to engage in social conversations, particularly the subtleties of conversation, such as non-verbals, verbal expressions that are inconsistent, and tone.



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Stress Management

3 credits



How can we best deal with stress? How do we identify our good stressors and our bad stressors? What's the difference between stress and anxiety? This course is all about how we manage, accept, channel, mitigate, and sometimes even embrace the stressors that come with adult life. Participants will research, discuss, and practice different stress-management techniques such as: mindfulness, exercise, being in nature, pet therapy, creative activities, expressive gratitude, guided imagery, and more. Participants may not feel stress less frequently by the end of the course, but they will be better prepared and equipped to handle stress when it comes.

Technology and Employment

3 credits



This course focuses on the importance of technology in the workplace, as well as in the acquisition and maintenance of employment. Participants will be introduced to the necessary skills in technology used in competitive work environments such as Google's G suite and Microsoft Office 365. Participants will also research and discuss the use of social media, social networking, and phone apps both as a way of boosting and hindering productivity and networking potential. Participants will research and discuss how to avoid scams, phishing, and other unsafe uses of technology and the internet. This course includes a 1:1 social mentorship opportunity with an employer in the Twin Cities area.

Transportation Essentials I, II, III

4 credits



Transportation essentials is for Participants who will need to know how to use public transportation, Metro Mobility, rideshare, or other non-driving options. Participants will practice reserving and taking trips, as well as troubleshooting potential issues. This course will help Participants gain awareness and confidence in the use of public transportation and other transportation options through hands-on practice, researching itineraries, using maps and navigation apps, and traveling in the community with peers.



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