Mission Statement:
Our mission is to serve as a leading center of Christian thought and action providing an excellent education from a biblical perspective and global context in pivotal professions to equip Christian leaders to change the world.

COURSE SYLLABUS

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & THE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM

JRN 613 MAD
FEATURE WRITING FOR PUBLICATIONS
ONLINE – SPRING SEMESTER 2013
(EACH CLASS BEGINS ON MONDAY AT 9 A.M.)

Dr. Bruce C. Swaffield
Phone: 757.352.4732
Fax: 757.352.4279
E-mail: brucswa@regent.edu
Office Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Office Location: 100B Communication Building

All students are required to read and have a thorough understanding of the syllabus. Any questions or concerns need to be addressed to the instructor.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

JRN 613: Feature Writing for Publications (3 credits)
Acquaints the student with the varieties of feature articles used by both secular and Christian magazines and newspapers and to help develop skills in producing these articles. Students will write feature stories and research scholarly articles on the topics covered during the course. A 45-hour lab experience in magazine and newspaper media is required.

RATIONALE/COURSE OVERVIEW

Preface
The most important part of this course is you. Your participation, involvement and enthusiasm are critical for a meaningful experience both for you and for others in the class.

As your professor, I want to further your understanding of the whole process of writing. But, more important, I want to help you become a better person and journalist. Your progress and development are my primary concerns. Let me know anytime you feel as though you are confused or do not understand the material. I will be happy to meet with you during my office hours or by appointment at your convenience. You may also call me at home if you wish.

Please know that I am always eager to help you. I see my role as both a teacher and a facilitator: I am a teacher in sharing with you what I have discovered (the hard way) through the years and I am a facilitator in helping you learn how to learn.

My goal for the course is for us to explore, study and talk about the process of writing in a way that allows you to understand the incredible responsibility and power you possess as a journalist and writer. The public is expecting you to be their eyes and ears in a complex society; you must always remember to treat this trust with care, integrity and sensitivity.

Introduction
The primary focus of this course is to help you develop and write feature stories. Be advised, though, that no course, book, or professor can give you a complete step-by-step formula on how to become a successful writer. The total process involves years of study on your own and in courses like this one.

Becoming a writer is difficult; you will be successful only if you persevere and learn from your mistakes. Never allow yourself to become discouraged by any criticism of your work. Listen carefully to such comments and accept those suggestions that seem most valid. Discipline yourself to write on a daily basis. It is extremely important that you set aside at least half an hour to an hour each day and use that time to work on a poem, play, short story, part of a novel, or even to write in a journal. Do not wait until you feel inspired to write something down. Remember that writers can only be writers if they write.

You may find the following words from Raymond Carver (1938-1988) helpful as you work on material for this course. Although Carver is talking specifically about fiction, his observations are applicable to the entire process of writing: "Evan Connell said once that he knew he was
finished with a short story when he found himself going through it and taking out the commas
and then going through the story again and putting commas back in the same places. I like that
way of working on something. I respect that kind of care for what is being done. That's all we
have, finally, the words, and they had better be the right ones, with the punctuation in the right
places so that they can best say what they are meant to say. If the words are heavy with the
writer's own unbridled emotions, or if they are imprecise and inaccurate for some other reason –
if the words are in any way blurred – the reader's eyes will slide right over them and nothing will
be achieved. . . . I have friends who've told me they had to hurry a book because they needed the
money, their editor or their wife was leaning on them or leaving them – something, some
apology for the writing not being very good. 'It would have been better if I'd taken the time.' I
was dumfounded when I heard a novelist friend say this. I still am, if I think about it, which I
don't. It's none of my business. But if the writing can't be made as good as it is within us to
make it, then why do it? In the end, the satisfaction of having done our best, and the proof of
that labor, is the one thing we can take into the grave."

Clearly, Carver is talking about integrity and doing our best no matter what the task. Both of
these things are important as we go through life, but they are extremely crucial for a writer. We
have a responsibility both to ourselves and to others to give 100 percent effort at all times.
Failure to do anything less compromises everything that we say and believe. When you write, do
so with honesty and integrity, knowing that someday others will look back and judge you for
what you write now.

Christian principles

Journalism in its truest form is a ministry of truth-telling. Along with the gospels of Matthew,
Mark and John, Luke provides an example of the great responsibility that journalists and writers
have in today’s world: “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have
been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were
eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated
everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you,
most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been
taught” (Luke 1:1-4).

In addition, we are reminded by St. Paul about our personal and professional responsibility to the
Lord: “. . . I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely
humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the
unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you
were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and
Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:1-7).

Integration of faith and learning

Education allows us to see more of the great and wonderful world that God has created.
Whenever we study any subject, we begin to understand the vast complexities and beauties of
creation. The poet John Milton once wrote that the true purpose of learning is to help us see,
with greater clarity, the world in all its fullness:
“Therefore nothing can rightly be considered as contributing to our happiness unless it somehow looks both to that everlasting life as well as to our life as citizens of this world. Contemplation is by almost universal consent the only means whereby the mind can set itself free from the support of the body and concentrate its powers for the unbelievable delight of participating in the life of the immortal gods. Yet without learning, the mind is quite sterile and unhappy, and amounts to nothing. For who can rightly observe and consider the ideas of things human and divine, about which he can know almost nothing, unless his spirit has been enriched and cultivated by learning and discipline? So the man who knows nothing of the liberal arts seems to be cut off from all access to the happy life – unless God’s supreme desire was that we should struggle to the heights of knowledge of those things for which he has planted such a burning passion in our minds at birth. He would seem to have acted vainly or malevolently in giving us a spirit capable and insatiably curious of this high wisdom. Scrutinize the face of all the world in whatever way you can. The Builder of this great work has made it for his own glory. The more deeply we search into its marvelous plan, into this vast structure with its magnificent variety – something which only Learning permits us to do – the more we honor its Creator with our admiration and follow him with our praise. In doing so we may be securely confident that we please Him.” Seventh Prologue by John Milton (1630)

In studying journalism, for example, we create a framework for telling the truth as well as presenting facts clearly and honestly. We have a calling much like those who have preceded us, especially those who were chosen by God to write down his Word.

**Departmental Program Outcomes**

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply Christian faith with biblical truth and principles to the study and practices of communication within a journalism context.

2. Students will demonstrate understanding and comprehension of the theory and practice of the evolving field of journalism.

3. Students will demonstrate practical applications of 21st century journalistic skills within the global marketplace.

**Course Outcomes for Feature Writing for Publications**

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply Christian faith with biblical truth and principles to the study and practices of communication within a journalism context.

*Assessments for achieving this goal: Writing a successful paper comparing various writings between Christians and those who are not; this assignment will analyze content in the two different types of articles.*

2. Students will demonstrate understanding and comprehension of the theory and practice of the evolving field of journalism.
Assessments for achieving this goal: Writing a comparative paper on the implementation of effective feature publications during the past century; this assignment will consist of analyzing the style and content of features both now and in the past.

Other course objectives

- To offer each student a thorough understanding of the complexities of how to tell a sound, meaningful feature story.
- To insure that each student understands the basic elements of a feature the story (plot, characterization, setting, and theme) as well as the narrative modes (dialogue, thought, action, description and exposition).
- To give each student the opportunity to write numerous kinds of features to gain practical experience in constructing an effective story.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required textbook

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance

Each student must participate in all class sessions. Clear effort should be made to notify me about any significant absence, especially in the Discussion Board, of more than five days. Absences for health reasons will require written verification of medical attention. Unexcused absences and/or tardiness will lower your final grade in the class automatically by one level for each occurrence (for example, from an A to an A-). Students are expected to keep up with class content and assignments despite absences. Participating in each class is your best opportunity to learn. When you are absent you miss critical discussions and explorations. In addition to lowering your class participation grade, not being active will impact how you perform on your assignments.

Writing requirements

You are expected to complete each one of the assignments (seven feature stories and eight miscellaneous exercises). Failure to turn in any work by the scheduled deadline will result in a 0 and you will not be allowed to complete a make-up assignment if one is offered. During the term you will have the opportunity to rewrite your feature stories for a possible increase in the grade. Rewrites will not be permitted, however, for any incomplete work or for late papers. The revision must show significant improvement from the original and there must be other changes in the paper than merely correcting errors which have been pointed out by me or by the Regent University Writing Center. If there is little or no improvement, the grade for the rewrite will not be increased. The grade you receive on the final rewrite is the one that will be recorded. The rewrite grade never will be lower than the original grade for that particular assignment; I am
taking this approach to encourage you to keep polishing everything you write. Each completed assignment will be returned to you by the following class as long as it is turned in on time. Whenever you are given the opportunity to rewrite a paper, the revision is due within the next seven days. You will be required to rewrite each feature story at least twice after I have reviewed it. Beyond the two rewrites, you may continue to rework the story as many times as you wish. You are strongly encouraged to take the advice of James A. Michener who said he rewrote his epic novel *Hawaii* six to seven times! I will be happy to go through and grade as many drafts you write. I believe that rewriting is the essence of great writing.

*45-Hour lab*

The emphasis in the course will be on writing successful features stories that are published. Therefore, you will be required to have six feature stories (of any type as studied in class) published in professional publications – those previously approved by the professor. The publications cannot include personal blogs or websites. You will need to do research in resources such as the Writers Market to find appropriate publishers for your material. In addition, you may submit your work to The Daily Runner, Regent’s online journalism site. Depending on your writing style and ability, you may take more or less time than 45 hours to complete this portion of the course. Your grade, however, will depend on how many stories you have published. Twenty-five percent of your semester grade will be for the lab requirement: you will receive an A if you have all six stories published; a B if you have five stories published; a C if you have four stories published; a D if you have three stories published; and an F for three or fewer stories published.

*Blackboard discussions*

When posting your comments and ideas, please follow these guidelines and tips that have been adapted from those found at [http://help.blackboard.com](http://help.blackboard.com):

- Use descriptive subject lines to make threads easy to follow and scan.
- Keep posts short, to the point and use uncomplicated language. Your audience is reading on-screen and may have several messages to read.
- Back up and support your statements with concrete details when you agree or disagree with others.
- Use professional language, including proper grammar, in academic-related posts. No slang, emoticons, or chat acronyms are allowed.
- Use attachments or links to websites for long, detailed information.
- Stay on topic. If you want to introduce a new tangent, start a new thread when appropriate.
- Be respectful of others’ opinions and remember the golden rule: “to treat others as you want to be treated.”

*Academic integrity*

The Regent University community of teachers and scholars affirms that the biblical principles of truth and honesty are absolutely essential. Indeed, the Bible contains numerous admonitions
against false witness, dishonesty and cheating. Upholding the standard of academic integrity with its reliance on honesty is a responsibility of both faculty and students. Conduct that violates academic integrity includes issues such as:

_Dishonesty_, which is the lack of integrity exhibited through lying, cheating, defrauding or deceiving. Examples of dishonesty include: copying from the research paper of another, allowing one’s own research paper to be copied, reading without the instructor’s consent a copy of the examination prior to the date it is given, submitting the same work product in more than one course without the express permission of the instructor(s); disclosing or accepting information if one takes a test at a different time than other students in the same course; using the same work or article for a class assignment and a professional publication without obtaining the prior permission of the instructor.

_Plagiarism_, which is stealing or using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own. It involves the failure to acknowledge material copied from others or the failure to acknowledge one’s indebtedness to another for the gist of important thoughts in a formal statement, whether written or oral. Charges of violating academic integrity shall be handled according to established student discipline procedures published in the Catalog and the Student Handbook.

_Tutoring_

If you would like additional help in this course, please contact me. I am available by special appointment to work with you on an individual basis to help you correct any difficulties you may be experiencing. Please talk with me whenever you need help, and do not wait until the end of the semester to become concerned about your lack of progress. By this time it may be too late! You also are encouraged to contact the Regent University Writing Center for additional assistance and advice.

_Plagiarism_

Please familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism (see the Regent University Student Handbook) as well as the penalties for being found guilty of stealing material from another person. As a journalist, you must know how to document and quote the work of other persons. Make sure that you attribute properly and give credit where credit is due. Penalties for plagiarism can range from failing an assignment to failing an entire course.

_Format for all writing assignments_

Unless otherwise directed, assignments must be in MS Word, double-spaced with one-inch margins, and in 12-point, Times New Roman type. All papers must be received by the deadline.

_Meeting deadlines_

Journalism is a deadline-driven discipline. Late assignments are not automatically accepted. If a late assignment is accepted (based on professor’s discretion), it will be accepted only within 24 hours of the deadline and will be reduced automatically by 10 percent. Except in the most
extreme and excused circumstances (i.e., hospitalization, family emergency), assignments will not be accepted 24 hours after deadline.

Assignment changes and announcements

Any changes will be announced well in advance in writing either by e-mail or in Blackboard. It is your responsibility to make sure you keep current with any changes or modifications.

Blackboard access and requirements

Please keep in mind that it is your responsibility to access Blackboard on a regular basis and to check all sections: Announcements, Discussion Board, Course Materials, Assignments, Gradebook, etc. Detailed information on each assignment will be posted every week. The requirements for all exercises will be included in Blackboard, especially how to participate in the regular Discussion Board. Should you have any questions, please contact me by phone or e-mail and I will respond, in most cases, within 24 hours.

Reservation of right to make modifications

The School of Communication and the Arts has attempted to provide information which, at the time of preparation of the syllabus, most accurately describes policies, procedures, regulations and requirements of the school and this course. The current syllabus, however, does not define the complete nature or parameters of the course. Please note that the professor reserves the right to add to, cancel, alter or change any statement, requirement, assignment, deadline or element of this course without prior notice.

Circulation and use of student material within the course

Be advised, students will routinely critique each other’s work in course exercises. All work submitted in this course may be circulated and used in course critiques and exercises. Submission of materials in this course implies the student’s full permission to copy, circulate and use student material in course discussion and exercises.

Course readings

You need to complete all of the assigned readings on the following pages by the beginning of the class period listed on the schedule. Please do not fall behind because it will be difficult to catch up.

E-mail guidelines and etiquette

I ask that you conduct all correspondence with me using Regent e-mail addresses. Please, however, use the Digital Drop Box under Blackboard Assignments for homework. Make sure you follow proper e-mail etiquette when you write a message or a response. See the following site, which is maintained by the Purdue Online Writing Lab, to learn more: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_emailett.html
Discussions with professor

Please let me know whenever you would like to meet with me. I am available during office hours, by special appointment and by phone at the office or at home. I want to help you do your best so please talk with me about your ideas and concerns.

Journalists and writers as mirrors

Being a journalist and a writer will allow you to see and experience the many facets of our world. As such, you are recording today’s events that will become tomorrow’s history. You have a duty to reflect the diversity of cultures, races and religions that are found throughout the earth.

Henri Nouwen once wrote that the world is a giant mosaic of people, each of whom shines a little differently. Allow the light of their beauty and individuality to shine through in all of your stories and writing.

“Community is like a large mosaic. Each little piece seems so insignificant. One piece is bright red, another cold blue or dull green, another warm purple, another sharp yellow, another shining gold. Some look precious, others ordinary. Some look valuable, others worthless. Some look gaudy, others delicate. As individual stones, we can do little with them except compare them and judge their beauty and value. When, however, all these little stones are brought together in one big mosaic portraying the face of Christ, who would ever question the importance of any one of them? If one of them, even the least spectacular one, is missing, the face is incomplete.

“Together in the one mosaic, each little stone is indispensable and makes a unique contribution to the glory of God. That’s community, a fellowship of little people who together make God visible in the world.” – Henri Nouwen from Can You Drink the Cup?

A writer’s purpose

In my opinion, one of the greatest writers of the past century is Isaac B. Singer, who won the 1978 Nobel Prize in Literature. I had the honor of studying with Mr. Singer when I was a graduate student at the University of Miami in Florida. Read what Mr. Singer said in his Nobel Lecture Banquet Speech (Dec. 8, 1978) about the purpose of a writer:

“The storyteller and poet of our time, as in any other time, must be an entertainer of the spirit in the full sense of the word, not just a preacher of social or political ideals. There is no paradise for bored readers and no excuse for tedious literature that does not intrigue the reader, uplift him, give him the joy and the escape that true art always grants. Nevertheless, it is also true that the serious writer of our time must be deeply concerned about the problems of his generation. He cannot but see that the power of religion, especially belief in revelation, is weaker today than it was in any other epoch in human history. More and more children grow up without faith in God, without belief in reward and punishment, in the immortality of the soul and even in the validity of ethics. The genuine writer cannot ignore the fact that the family is losing its spiritual foundation. All the dismal prophecies of Oswald Spengler have become realities since the
Second World War. No technological achievements can mitigate the disappointment of modern man, his loneliness, his feeling of inferiority, and his fear of war, revolution and terror. Not only has our generation lost faith in Providence but also in man himself, in his institutions and often in those who are nearest to him.

“In their despair a number of those who no longer have confidence in the leadership of our society look up to the writer, the master of words. They hope against hope that the man of talent and sensitivity can perhaps rescue civilization. Maybe there is a spark of the prophet in the artist after all.

“As the son of a people who received the worst blows that human madness can inflict, I must brood about the forthcoming dangers. I have many times resigned myself to never finding a true way out. But a new hope always emerges telling me that it is not yet too late for all of us to take stock and make a decision. I was brought up to believe in free will. Although I came to doubt all revelation, I can never accept the idea that the Universe is a physical or chemical accident, a result of blind evolution. Even though I learned to recognize the lies, the clichés and the idolatries of the human mind, I still cling to some truths which I think all of us might accept some day. There must be a way for man to attain all possible pleasures, all the powers and knowledge that nature can grant him, and still serve God - a God who speaks in deeds, not in words, and whose vocabulary is the Cosmos.

“I am not ashamed to admit that I belong to those who fantasize that literature is capable of bringing new horizons and new perspectives - philosophical, religious, aesthetical and even social. In the history of old Jewish literature there was never any basic difference between the poet and the prophet. Our ancient poetry often became law and a way of life.”

**Evaluation and Grading**

*Grade percentages*

Student grades will be evaluated on the following weighted criteria (approximate values):

- **20%** for attendance, active participation and Discussion Board
- **80%** for various papers, projects and exercises

*Assignment grading*

Unless otherwise specified as “pass-fail,” all assignments will be graded according to the following percentages:

- **A** = 96-100
- **A-** = 93-95
- **B+** = 90-92
- **B** = 85-89
- **B-** = 81-84
- **C+** = 78-80
- **C** = 75-77
Grade quality points

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Incomplete grades

Students desiring an incomplete must submit their request to the course instructor and academic dean prior to the end of the term. An incomplete grade will be given in a regular course only for legitimate deficiencies due to illness, emergencies or extraordinary reasons acceptable to the professor, including equipment breakdown or shortages, and not because of neglect on the student’s part. Incompletes require the final approval of the school dean or his/her authorized representative. A regular grade will be given by the instructor if all requirements for the course are submitted by the end of the following academic term. The instructor will submit the new grade to the Register’s Office no later than two weeks after the beginning of the subsequent term. If all work is not submitted by the end of the term following the granting of the incomplete, a grade of FX (NP for pass/fail courses) will be posted automatically unless a Request for Extension of Incomplete has been approved and submitted to the Registrar’s Office. The FX shall be counted as an F in the computation of the GPA. Any student desiring reinstatement to the course after an FX or NP has been posted must register for the course in a subsequent term and, in addition, pay the full current tuition for the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE
(Semester overview only and subject to change prior to the official beginning of the semester)

Week One – The purpose of a feature story
  Course introduction
  Feature story philosophy

Week Two – Principles and methods
  Discussion question on fiction and nonfiction writing

Week Three – Different forms of stories
  Discussion question
Memoir feature due

**Week Four – Using the proper format for the subject**
- Discussion question
- Profile feature due

**Week Five – Attitude and tone in stories**
- Discussion question
- Travel story due

**Week Six – Critiquing stories**
- Discussion question
- Reading assignment TBA
- Science/technology story due

**Week Seven -- Midterm**
- Discussion question
- Reading assignment TBA
- News feature story evaluation

**Week Seven – Revising**
- Discussion question
- Reading assignment TBA
- Sports feature due

**Week Nine – Controlling the story**
- Discuss and review stories
- Reading assignment TBA

**Week Ten – Evolution of the feature story (past, present and future)**
- Discussion question
- Review feature due

**Week Eleven – The elements of great features**
- Discussion question
- Identifying elements of great features
- Reading assignment TBA

**Week Twelve – The five parts of discourse**
- Story of your choice due
- Reading assignment taken from *Classical Rhetoric* by Edward P.J. Corbett

**Week Thirteen – Pathos, ethos and logos**
- Discussion question
- Business feature due

**Week Fourteen – Getting to the heart of the matter**

**Week Fifteen – Final Exam**
- Last feature due
Please review the following links for important information on university policies:

- **Academic Calendar/Registrar Information**
- **Bookstore**
- **Honor/Plagiarism Policy**
- **Regent Library**
- **Student Services** (includes links to student handbook, disability services, University calendar, University Writing Center, etc.)
- **Technical Support – University Helpdesk**
- Grading Policies (incompletes, extensions, IPs, etc.) are set forth in this syllabus as well as in the Regent Student Handbook.
- **The Writing Center** at Regent University for both online and on-campus students
- Student Course Evaluations must be completed by each person enrolled in a course. Please make sure you take advantage of this opportunity to give us valuable feedback about your experience during the term. University policy requires that “all students submit a formal student evaluation of teaching form at the end of the academic term. This mandatory requirement must be completed before students will be able to access their final course grade.”
- Disability Statement – the student is responsible for contacting the assistant director of Student Services at 757.352.4486 to request accommodations, provide necessary documentation, and make arrangement with each instructor. The following website is designed to help our disabled students learn of their rights and responsibilities with regard to disability services. The site also has resources for faculty to become better informed of their responsibilities toward the disabled students in their classes.
  - [www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm)
- Once you have read this syllabus, please indicate that you are familiar with and understand all of the course guidelines and policies by initialing here ________.
  
  For those of you in online sections, please cut and paste this section into an email and send it to me using your Regent email account.

**Special needs**

The classroom is similar to a community or a family; each one of us is different, yet we function together as a group. We all need to learn from and encourage one another. It is important to remember that each person has individual strengths and weaknesses; however, by working together we become a complete community. Learning and living are corporate, shared responsibilities.

Keep in mind what George Washington Carver once said: “How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because some day in life you will have been all these.”
No matter what we do, where we go or how we think, we are all brothers and sisters as we travel through this journey of life. Treat everyone in a way that shows respect, concern and compassion.

Regent University's policy on accessibility

The policy and intent of Regent University is to fully and completely comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, to the extent that they apply to the university.

Regent University will not discriminate against qualified student, faculty or staff members with a disability in any academic or employment activity, including examinations, student oriented services, recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, lay-off, pay, firing, job assignments, leave, benefits, or any other employment related activity.

Regent University will provide reasonable accommodation to the known physical and mental limitations of a qualified individual with a disability, unless to do so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the university (42 USC 12102 et seq.). It is also the policy and intent of Regent University to comply with the Virginians with Disabilities Act (VA Code Sec. 51.5.5-41). See http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities/policy.cfm.

Last Updated: 10/25/2012

At times, due to unforeseen circumstances, course content may be subject to change. Please check with your professor to insure you have the most recently updated syllabus for this course.