

UEP 240: Urban Sustainability: *Raising animals as a part of Regenerative Agriculture*

Course Topic: Urban Sustainability: Raising animals as a part of Regenerative Agriculture

Semester: Fall 2025

Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 4:05–5:30 PM

Location: Classroom + FEAST Garden

INSTRUCTOR

Jordanne Dervaes
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626-372-4616
she/her/hers

Office hours: by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Class summary and goals: *Raising Animals as Part of Regenerative Agriculture* introduces students to holistic, regenerative approaches to animal care within urban food systems. The course emphasizes the interconnectedness of animal welfare, soil health, food security, nutrition, and social justice.

Hands-on, real-world learning is central to this course. Students will engage directly with animals and regenerative systems, with a focus on **holistic animal care**—addressing not only physical health and safety, but also emotional, behavioral, and psychological well-being.

Through work in the FEAST Garden, guest speakers, site visits, and applied projects, students will connect practical skills to broader environmental, cultural, and social challenges. By the end of the course, students will be equipped with foundational knowledge and perspectives to contribute to resilient, ethical, and equitable food systems.

Topics included: understanding animal welfare, legal aspects; California vs. US humane laws, chicken and duck facts and behaviors, setting up proper biosecurity and how to maintain it, creating your own feed and cost effective tricks, store bought vs. pasture raised, environmental enrichment, first aid / natural and holistic solutions, health management and overview of common illnesses, coop management and soil and composting.

Class structure and format:

- Weekly class meetings combining lecture, discussion, and hands-on activities
- Regular work in the FEAST Garden
- Guest speakers and occasional off-site field trips
- Service-learning components may be added as scheduled

This is a **Credit/No Credit** course, and active participation is essential

Class expectations:

Students are expected to:

- Attend class consistently and participate actively
- Come prepared for outdoor and hands-on activities

Required attire and supplies:

- Closed-toe shoes
- Clothing suitable for outdoor/garden work (clothes may get dirty)
- Sun protection (hat, sunscreen, long sleeves as needed)
- Water bottle on hot days

We will handle animals during class; manure, dirt, and physical labor are part of the learning experience.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

UEP 240 is a 2-unit course. As a pass/no pass class, you will start with 100 points. If you attend class and do your assignments you will keep those points and pass the class. We will subtract points for missing a class or missing an assignment. If you have not retained at least 70 points by the end of the semester you will not pass the class. Points will be deducted as follows.

Missing a class meeting	-10 points
Missing an assignment	-10 points

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*Note — You will be able to make up late assignments for partial credit. If you miss a guest speaker or field trip, you will have to do an additional makeup assignment (such as a reflection journal) in order to regain the points. We will also offer extra credit assignments throughout the semester for additional opportunities to earn points.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Below is the week-by-week schedule for the UEP 240 class. Please note, class topics may change CANVAS will have up-to-date changes.. You can also reference [Oxy's academic calendar](#) for more information on College-wide dates and deadlines.

*Please note that this syllabus is a living document subject to change at any time. You will be notified of any changes made.

Week 1

WED Aug 27	Topic(s): Overview/ Intro to <i>Urban Sustainability: Raising Animals as a part of a Regenerative Agriculture</i> This opening class introduces the core questions, values, and practices that will guide our semester together. Students will share their initial thoughts and reflections and we will explore what <i>urban sustainability</i> and <i>regenerative agriculture</i> actually mean in practice. Students will be introduced to the course structure, expectations, and hands-on components. This class also sets the foundation for how we will learn together: through curiosity, embodied experience, respectful dialogue, and critical reflection. Students will be invited to reflect on their
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	own relationships to food, animals, land, and sustainability, and to consider how systems of care, labor, culture, and power shape the food systems we participate in every day.
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Week 2

WED Sept 3	<p>Topic(s): <i>More than the little red hen: Demystifying the little known world of poultry</i></p> <p>This class introduces students to the biological, behavioral, and ecological roles of poultry—primarily chickens—within urban and regenerative food systems. We will move beyond common myths and cultural assumptions to examine chickens as complex, intelligent animals with distinct social structures, communication systems, and environmental needs.</p> <p>Students will learn foundational poultry knowledge, including basic anatomy, behavior, breed differences, and the role of chickens in soil health, composting, pest management, and food production. Attention will be given to humane care standards, housing considerations, and the differences between industrial and small-scale regenerative poultry systems.</p> <p>This session lays the groundwork for future hands-on learning by emphasizing observation, animal welfare, and responsible stewardship.</p>
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Week 3

WED Sept 10	<p>Topic(s): <i>What's a Duck? - the beneficial world of agrarian ducks in regenerative food systems</i></p> <p>This class explores the role of ducks within regenerative and diversified food systems, with particular attention to their ecological benefits and unique behavioral characteristics. Students will examine how ducks contribute to pest control, soil fertility, and nutrient cycling, and how they differ from chickens in both care requirements and environmental impact.</p> <p>Through multi-media research, we will understand how agrarian ducks</p>
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	can support resilient food systems while enhancing biodiversity and ecological balance.
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Week 4

WED Feb. 17	<p>Topic(s): <i>Urban Beekeeping and Native Pollinators</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justin Dervaes <p>This class examines the role of bees and other pollinators in urban ecosystems and regenerative food systems, with a focus on how thoughtful stewardship can support biodiversity, food security, and ecological resilience. Students will explore the interdependence between pollinators, plants, and human food systems, and the ways urban environments can either hinder or enhance pollinator health.</p> <p>Topics include the basics of honeybee biology and behavior, the differences between managed honeybees and native pollinators, and the ethical considerations of urban beekeeping. We will also discuss the responsibilities and limitations of keeping bees in densely populated areas.</p> <p>Through guest expertise and applied discussion, students will gain an understanding of how pollinator care fits within broader regenerative practices, and how supporting pollinators is both an ecological and social responsibility within urban sustainability effort</p>
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Week 5

WED Sept 24	<p>Topic(s): <i>Growing Forage and Feed / Holistic Health and Foraging / Herbalism for Animal Care</i></p> <p>This class focuses on growing and sourcing forage and feed as an integral part of holistic and regenerative animal care. Students will explore how nutrition, plant diversity, and access to natural forage directly influence animal health, behavior, and resilience, while also supporting soil health and ecosystem function.</p>
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	<p>Topics include forage planning for small-scale and urban systems, the nutritional needs of poultry and other livestock, and the use of herbs and plants for preventative care and basic health support. We will discuss the benefits and limitations of herbal and natural remedies, emphasizing responsible, informed use alongside observation and proper husbandry practices.</p> <p>Additionally, we will learn how to create a “closed-loop” regenerative feeding system for the FEAST chickens that includes feed sprouting, insect farming and other solutions.</p> <p>This session highlights the interconnected relationship between plants, animals, and soil, reinforcing how regenerative systems rely on diversity, balance, and thoughtful stewardship rather than extractive inputs.</p>
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Week 6

WED Oct 1	<p>Topic(s): OFF-SITE TOUR: <i>The Urban Homestead</i></p> <p>This off-site class provides students with an immersive, real-world example of long-term urban regenerative agriculture in practice. During the visit to The Urban Homestead, students will observe integrated systems of food production, animal care, soil management, water use, and community education within a dense urban environment.</p> <p>The tour will highlight how regenerative principles are applied over time, demonstrating the cumulative impact of small-scale, intentional practices. Students will engage in a variety of fun hands-on activities on the Urban Homestead.</p> <p>This experiential learning opportunity encourages students to connect course concepts to lived systems, ask critical questions, and reflect on the scalability, challenges, and possibilities of regenerative agriculture in cities.</p>
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Week 7

WED Oct 8	<p>Topic(s): <i>Feeding the Soil: Composting and the World of the Soil Microbiome and Fruit Tree planting / education</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sanjay Gupta <p>This class examines soil as a living system and explores the essential role of composting and soil microbiology in regenerative agriculture. Students will learn why soil stewardship is foundational to sustainable food systems.</p> <p>Students will explore also basic principles of fruit tree care through a regenerative lens, including soil preparation, mulching strategies, root health, and the role of microorganisms in nutrient uptake. Emphasis will be placed on understanding fruit trees as part of an interconnected system that relies on living soil rather than external inputs.</p> <p>By the end of this session, we will learn how soil supports not only annual crops and animals, but also long-lived perennial systems, reinforcing the interconnectedness of soil, plants, animals, and human communities.</p>
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Week 8

WED Oct 15	<p>Topic(s): <i>A Holistic Life - Feeding our community through soul and spirit</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leigh Adams <p>This class explores holistic living as an integrated approach to sustainability that connects personal choices, community relationships, and ecological responsibility. Students will examine how daily practices—around food, health, consumption, and care—intersect with regenerative agriculture and broader systems of environmental and social well-being.</p>
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	<p>Through guest perspective and discussion, the class will consider how values-based living can inform regenerative work without perfectionism, emphasizing balance, adaptability, and long-term resilience. Attention will be given to how holistic practices can support both individual well-being and collective ecological health.</p> <p>This session invites students to reflect on sustainability as a lived practice rather than a fixed outcome, encouraging thoughtful integration of course concepts into everyday life and future professional pathways.</p>
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Week 9

WED Oct 22	<p>Topic(s): <i>Animal Welfare: Defining Welfare and Its Role in the Food Supply Chain</i></p> <p>This class examines the concept of animal welfare and how it is defined, measured, and applied across food systems. Students will explore ethical frameworks, welfare standards, and the responsibilities involved in raising animals for food, particularly within regenerative and small-scale agricultural contexts.</p> <p>Students will learn to critically evaluate claims of "humane" and "ethical" production, and understand how animal welfare fits into the broader food supply chain from production to consumption.</p>
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Week 10

WED Oct 29	<p>Topic(s): <i>Re-Envisioning the FEAST Chicken Education Area</i></p> <p>This class focuses on applied, collaborative design within a regenerative framework. Students will work together to re-envision and improve the FEAST chicken education area, integrating principles of animal welfare, environmental enrichment, biosecurity, accessibility, and public education.</p> <p>Drawing on knowledge gained throughout the semester, students will assess existing systems and propose thoughtful, practical improvements</p>
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	<p>that support animal health, soil vitality, and human learning. Consideration will be given to spatial design, material choices, interpretive signage, and how educational spaces can communicate values of care, responsibility, and sustainability.</p>
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Week 11

WED Nov 5	<p>Topic(s): <i>Decolonizing the Food System. From origins to plate, to the hands that touched it along the way</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Martinez <p>We will explore the historical, cultural, and social dimensions of food systems, with a focus on how colonization, power, and labor have shaped what we eat, how food is produced, and whose knowledge is valued. Students will examine the origins of common food practices and trace food from land to plate, considering the hands, histories, and systems involved along the way.</p> <p>This hands-on multi-sensory session invites critical reflection on how food systems reflect broader social inequities and challenges students to consider their roles and responsibilities within efforts to build more just, inclusive, and regenerative food futures.</p>
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Week 12

WED Nov 12	<p>Topic(s): <i>Goats and Sheep and small-scale livestock</i></p> <p>This class introduces goats and sheep as integral components of small-scale and regenerative agricultural systems. Students will explore how these animals contribute to land management, soil health, and food production, while also examining their unique behavioral traits and care requirements.</p> <p>Through hands-on experience, students will gain an understanding of</p>
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	these remarkable animals and their incredible contribution to civilizations for thousands of years.
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Week 13

WED Nov 19	<p>Topic(s): <i>Reflections and Integration</i></p> <p>This final class provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning throughout the semester and to integrate key concepts from the course. Through discussion and guided reflection, students will consider how regenerative agriculture, animal care, soil health, and food justice intersect, and how these systems relate to their own values, experiences, and future pathways.</p> <p>Students will be encouraged to reflect on how their understanding of urban sustainability has evolved, what responsibilities come with working in food and animal systems, and how regenerative practices can be applied beyond the classroom. This session emphasizes synthesis, critical thinking, and personal connection, reinforcing the course's focus on thoughtful, ethical engagement with land, animals, and community.</p> <p>The class concludes with space for collective reflection, feedback, and discussion of how course concepts can continue to inform students' academic, professional, and personal lives.</p>
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COURSE/CAMPUS POLICIES & SUPPORT

SERVICES Statement of the Shared Academic Integrity Commitment

- Academic Integrity is a shared community value. It is built around trust and respect between members of the Occidental Community, and embodies a commitment to honesty and integrity in every aspect of one's academic life.

All members of the Occidental community are committed to uphold the highest degree of academic integrity. Unless stipulated otherwise, the academic work done for all

assignments is expected to be the student's own, and students give proper credit to the ideas and work of others.

Signing the Academic Integrity Commitment at matriculation and at the beginning of every semester represents a student's affirmation to uphold the shared values of honesty and integrity. When signing the Integrity Commitment associated with work in a course, students are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information; nor assisted others in these actions.

[Link](#) to Student Handbook (which includes the framing of the commitment, definitions of Academic Ethics, and Process for alleged violations of the commitment)

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- Title IX statement, and statement of role of faculty member as a mandatory reporter ([Link](#) to Title IX)
 - In the event that you choose to write or speak about having experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment, as a designated Responsible Employee, I must notify the Title IX Office. They will contact you to let you know about accommodations and support services at Oxy and reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options.

If you do not want the Title IX Office notified, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with the following people on campus:

- Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu)

The sexual misconduct policy, along with additional resources, can be found at:

<http://www.oxy.edu/sexual-respect-title-ix/policies-procedures>. If you would like to contact the Title IX Office directly, you can email Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at afulcher@oxy.edu or call 323-259-1338.

- **Language on Special Accommodations/Learning Differences** ([Link to Disability Services](#))

- Students with documented disabilities and learning differences who are registered with Disability Services are required to present their accommodation letter to the

instructor at the beginning of each semester, or as soon as possible thereafter. Any student who has, or thinks they may have, a physical, learning, or psychological disability may contact Disability Services at accessibility@oxy.edu to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>.

- **Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience** ([Link to the policy in Catalog](#)) ○ Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL website:
<https://www.oxy.edu/office-religious-spiritual-life>

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- **Equity & Justice in an Inclusive Learning Environment.**

This classroom is a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, national origins, political affiliations, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible identities. The wide array of perspectives that each of us contributes to this class is a resource that will strengthen and enhance our intellectual community. All members of this class are expected to co-create and engage in a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. In this context, we may speak as individuals or we may choose to represent ourselves as a member of a group. You need not represent any group, only yourself, though you may choose to represent a group, if you wish. Additionally, part of equity & justice work is to dismantle barriers to success for all people, particularly those who belong to groups that have been marginalized and minoritized. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your success or accurate assessment of achievement, or if there are ways we can improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally or for other students or student groups, please let me know. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity in this course are encouraged and appreciated.

- **COVID-Specific Policy on Masks.** Faculty have the option of stipulating that masks are required for a given course, even if local and College regulations at the time change as to no longer require universal indoor masking.

Students are expected to wear masks at all times during all indoor classroom activities. Students should not eat or drink in class; please step outside if you need

to remove your mask for even a brief period of time.

- **Week by Week or class-by-class calendar** (See <http://wcaleb.rice.edu/syllabusmaker/generic/> for a website that will generate selected calendar dates). Here are [Fall 2021 MWF](#) and [Fall 2021 TR](#) schedules. Here are the [Spring 2022 MWF](#) and [Spring 2022 TR](#) schedules.
[Oxy's 2021-2022 academic calendar information](#)
- **Links to Student Academic Support Resources** (faculty should include the ones that apply to their courses)

The College has a wide range of [Student Academic Support Resources](#).

If you'd like to take advantage of the College's Academic Coaching resource, which offers one-on-one sessions focused on supporting your time management skills, online learning strategies, and other study skills, you may schedule an academic coaching meeting by sending an email to academiccoaching@oxy.edu. Share what you'd like to work on, and an academic coach will schedule an appointment with you within a few days.

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The Library's Teaching, Learning, and Research Support (TLRS) offers [library research consultations](#). We also offer peer-to-peer support for learning technologies in the Critical Making Studio on the ground floor of the library (contact dcoaguila@oxy.edu for more information).

Peer Tutors are available to assist students on [discipline-specific peer tutoring for coursework](#), and content review and study skills support in a variety of academic departments. Information about tutoring for all subject, including languages, can

found at: <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/student-success/peer-learning> The Writing Center offers opportunities to work on all forms of writing for any class or other writing tasks such as personal statements, proposals, senior comprehensives, etc. We offer peer-to-peer consultations with knowledgeable Writing Advisers and sessions with Faculty Writing Specialists. For Fall 2021, most of our appointments will be synchronous in-person sessions, with some availability for Zoom virtual meetings and asynchronous feedback. We are located on the ground floor of the Academic Commons. See the [Writing Center website](#) for more information about our hours and how to sign up for appointments. Please contact the Writing Center Director, Prof. Prebel (jprebel@oxy.edu; x1307) for more information on how the Writing Center can work with you.

The [Academic Mastery Program](#) provides challenging workshops for students enrolled in general chemistry, organic chemistry, introductory physics, cellular biology and molecular biology. These workshops are led by upper-level students and provide an opportunity to test knowledge and skills in the context of new and

challenging problems. The workshops provide a time to work intensively and collaboratively with other committed students in an atmosphere that is demanding yet relaxed.

The [Scientific Scholars Achievement Program \(SSAP\)](#) is a student-initiated, student-led academic support program that supports the development of a diverse body of individuals who will advance and enhance STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) professional fields in an endeavor to meet the complex and evolving demands of a culturally heterogeneous society. SSAP provides tutoring in introductory and gateway STEM courses and encourages collaboration among classmates. All questions and learning styles from students are welcomed and encouraged. Through educational and social events, SSAP aims to build community between faculty and students studying math and science at Occidental.

- **Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation policy:**

<https://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/general-college-policies/discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation>

I strive to foster an inclusive classroom environment. Consistent with College policy on [discrimination, harassment, and retaliation](#), I seek to maintain an environment of mutual respect among all members of our community. Please come to me with any concerns.

- **Land Acknowledgement.**

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Occidental College occupies the traditional territory and homelands of the Tongva people. Please click through to read more about the [Gabrielino-Tongva tribe](#) and about the practice of [land acknowledgement](#).

- **Intercultural Community Center**

The Intercultural Community Center (ICC) seeks to uplift and support the experiences of students who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, low income or first generation college students. The ICC also aims to reduce institutional barriers for minoritized groups through intersectional programming, identity-specific services and structural resources. To learn more, contact icc@oxy.edu, or reach out directly to Chris Arguedas, at carguedas@oxy.edu.

- **Lived name policy**

Occidental College seeks to provide an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment by making it possible for students to use [a lived first name](#) and pronouns on college records when a legal name is not required. Students are encouraged to use Zoom to display their lived name and pronouns. These can be set at <https://occidental.zoom.us/profile>.

- **Emmons/ Student health**

Your health and well-being has always impacted learning and academic success, and this

reality is only heightened as we enter a new season of the pandemic and transition back to campus. Symptoms such as anxiety, depression, loss of motivation, difficulty concentrating, strained relationships, and feelings of not belonging can occur. Emmons Counseling staff are committed to supporting the mental health needs of our students. Due to the nature of our work and the safety for all, Emmons counseling services will continue via teletherapy. Emmons will provide ongoing individual therapy, walk-ins, support groups and consultations through a virtual platform. Emmons staff will also support students with finding local therapy referrals. In case of an emergency or a crisis, there will be counselors onsite to assist the Oxy community. All students continue to have access to the 24/7 confidential hotline at (323) 341-4141. To get connected to any of the free, confidential services at Emmons call (323) 259-2657 or schedule an appointment online at <https://myhealth.oxy.edu> using your Oxy login credentials.

- **Recordings**

Classes may be recorded by your instructor. This means that some or all portions of the class may be recorded and then stored on the College's servers. Recordings will be made available through Moodle (or another secure platform), but only for the express and sole use of those registered in the course. No other recording of classroom instruction is permitted. The sharing, altering, or distorting of any audio-visual capture of a class session is not permitted. All content contained in the records shall be subject to the College's Policy on Intellectual Property.

- **Reminder that things can change.** Whether due to COVID-19 or other circumstances, faculty may find it appropriate to update their syllabi. A statement indicating that the syllabus may change can be useful. If you do end up changing your syllabus, marking the change and the date of the change can be a best practice. It is possible that, during the semester, there may need to be updates to how the course is taught. I will keep you apprised of any changes to the syllabus.