

Opinion

Silly syllabus suit

A syllabus is designed to give students an idea of a course's structure, but interpreting it as a binding contract between professors and students is ridiculous.

A Canadian judge recently ruled that a Ryerson Polytechnical Institute student can sue the school for breach of contract because the professor deviated from the course syllabus.

A syllabus is defined as "a summary or outline containing the main points, especially of a course of study." The key word is "outline." The syllabus is not a rigid commitment, it's a guide for students so they can have an idea of what the course will be covering.

Some professors *do* seem to make syllabuses just to get in some typing practice, straying so far from the outline that students wish there was some type of legal recourse to get the professors back on track.

But a binding legal agreement in the form of a syllabus is absurd. Such a contract would not allow for such last-minute complications as illness, films that arrive late, prolonged class discussion, postponed lectures or guest speakers who cancel.

Students may become frustrated when a course does not follow the outline given to them on the first day of class — but deviation from the syllabus can be equally frustrating for the professors.

Although instructors should make every effort to stick to the syllabus, students should not interpret the syllabus as law.

The Battalion Editorial Board



MARGULIES
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United Feature Syndicate

Adversaries of new holiday ignore King's achievements

Today marks the first official recognition of the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. The establishment of this new national holiday signifies the recognition of King and his accomplishments and the impact they had on America.



Loren Steffy

Opposition to the holiday was strong, led by such conservative pillars as Jesse Helms. Even President Reagan originally was opposed to creating a national holiday to honor King.

Opponents of the holiday claim it is unfair to have a Martin Luther King Jr. Day when we don't even have holidays commemorating the birthdays of great presidents. The creation of Presidents Day means no other American heroes have a day of honor entirely to themselves.

Other opponents argue that King either knowingly or unknowingly was a pawn of the Communist Party, and

some King Day adversaries even claim King was not a man of non-violence as he preached, but actually depended on violence to get his message across.

Such opposition ignores the real issues. It ignores the accomplishments King and his followers made. It ignores the impact that King had on civil rights. It ignores the illogical accusations of communism and violence advocacy.

Many conservative groups have rallied against the establishment of the King holiday, labeling it a victory for communism and demanding the FBI files on King be released.

King did have ties to the Communist Party USA through friends who aided his movement. But King was hardly a subversive. He attempted to advance the rights of his people within the framework of the establishment.

If communists were using King to gain some sort of victory, they certainly couldn't have gained much. The last thing communists would want is *more* freedoms to have to suppress or *more* civil rights to have to violate. King wasn't trying to overthrow the existing

government or change its foundations. He was trying to change discriminatory policies and help fulfill the democratic ideals of equality — ideals which were the basis for our government. If anything, King's actions made our government

stronger, not weaker.

King's methods may stir some controversy among his opponents, but his goals are unquestionable. He helped America realize the full significance of the words "all men are created equal."

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The civil rights movement under King was based on non-violence. Even when his own home was bombed, King refused to advocate violent retaliation.

Opponents of the King holiday claim violence was an integral part of King's plan. Congressman Larry P. McDonald of Georgia, testifying before the House Census and Population Subcommittee on Feb. 23, 1982 said King "sought and provoked violence against his followers because he believed violence was necessary to achieve his ends."

McDonald supported his statement

by quoting King's article in the April 1963 *Saturday Review*, in which King wrote it was necessary to "dramatize the existence of injustice" in four steps:

1. Non-violent demonstrators go into the streets to exercise their constitutional rights.
2. Racists resist them by unleashing their violence against them.
3. Americans of conscience, in the name of decency, demand federal intervention and legislation.
4. The administration, under mass pressure, initiates measures of immediate intervention and remedial legislation.

King did not rely on violence, but he used the violent responses of opponents against them. Even if white civil rights adversaries had done nothing, King's tactics would have raised America's consciousness of social injustice. But by refusing to fight back physically, blacks

gained the respect of a nation. The whites who resorted to violence made themselves the villains, whose own tactics turned against them.

Perhaps violence was part of the King plan, but never violence by his followers. Such a "use" of violence can hardly be considered subversive — smart as more accurate description.

King's methods may stir some controversy among his opponents, but his goals are unquestionable. He helped America realize the full significance of the words "all men are created equal."

True, King may not have been perfect. Few of the people we honor with national holidays were. But it's not the personal shortcomings of these men that honor, but their accomplishments and what they stood for.

King is gone, and his personal affections and other imperfections are gone with him. What remains is his message and his achievements — which are based in violence or communism, but peace and humanism.

Loren Steffy is a junior journalism major and the Opinion Page Editor of *The Battalion*.

What does it take to be a great teachernaut?

On Jan. 24, or thereabouts, Christa McAuliffe, of Concord, N.H., will be the first public school teacher to go into space. I say thereabouts because shuttle flights are now as dependable as the Long Island Railroad. In any case, Mrs. McAuliffe beat out 11,000 applicants for the ride.



Art Buchwald

If you're like me you will not be thinking of Mrs. McAuliffe at liftoff, but your own schoolteachers, and wondering what kind of fliers they would have been had they applied for the trip.

As much as I admired her, I don't think Mrs. Dunlap would have made a good teachernaut. Her subject was geography. Although she would have been a great help pointing out the interesting mountain ranges and rivers on earth to the captain, Mrs. Dunlap was a very tough disciplinarian and I fear she would have made the crew stand in the corner most of the trip for whispering without permission. She also had a practice of making students who didn't do their homework leave the classroom. Since no one ever dared disobey, I'm afraid half the astronauts would wind up hanging on the outside of the shuttle waiting for permission to come back in.

Our homeroom teacher, Mrs. Amos, would have been another story. She might have been just the right person for the shuttle ride — except for one thing. Mrs. Amos was very broad in the hips — too broad, I'm afraid, to have squeezed into the cabin — certainly too broad to be weightless in space. You

don't have to take my word for this. Just ask Milton Stevens, who made a sketch once showing how broad Mrs. Amos was. One of the worst threats a seventh-grade student could make to another was, "I hope you get caught in the coat closet with Mrs. Amos."

What of Miss Gomez? She would have been a good choice except she was already famous. Her brother was Thomas Gomez, the movie actor. As long as I knew her, Miss Gomez was never introduced by her own name, but always as "the sister of Thomas Gomez." So while Miss Gomez might have been excellent, I'm certain NASA would never let a teacher who had a famous brother lift off from the Cape.

The next person that comes to mind is Miss Adams. She would have had a lot going for her as a candidate because she taught science. (It doesn't hurt to have someone on a shuttle trip who knows a little on the subject.) The down side of Miss Adams is that she would insist on taking her ruler with her. I don't believe Miss Adams would willingly

strike any of the astronauts. But if she hasn't lost her touch, her ruler would get much closer to their fingers than NASA regulations permit.

The next candidate that would have been considered if the shuttle flight had taken place 47 years ago is Mrs. Egorin, my English teacher. If she had a fault it was that she always insisted on being in charge. I don't believe Mrs. Egorin would go on the space trip unless she was assured in writing that she would be captain of the mission.

Mrs. Egorin's other weakness was

she would never let anybody go to the bathroom unless they raised their hand.

My mind drifts to the final nominee — Mrs. Laub, a potential winner. Mrs. Laub would have met all the NASA public relations criteria. First, she was adored by her pupils. Second, she would have looked great in an astronaut's suit. She would have had no problem posing upside down for the cover of *People* magazine, or walking along Cocoa Beach with Barbara Walters telling what it's like to be a wife, mother and teacher — and still have

time to orbit the earth. If she had a flat it was that she would never go on space mission if it interfered with going to a rest.

Well, there is my list of candidates. Every child and grown-up has some educator he or she would like to send into space. What makes America great is that not only you, Mrs. McAuliffe, but every teacher in the country has, what call for lack of a better name, "The Right Stuff."

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.
The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.
Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.
Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.