

## English 306 not for politics

Mr. McHargue, your editorial of July 20 ("Recomposition: Confusion reigns in the world according to Gribben") is hardly worthy of your name. It is disconcerting to see that a student of your caliber could have stooped to defending the new E306 proposal via an ad hominem argument. Your crude conflation of past controversy with present also displays poor logic. (The battle lines have shifted a great deal since 1985.) Anyone who knows Alan Gribben will find your characterization of him as a kind of Don Quixote laughably absurd.

But this, at least, is forgivable, Mr. McHargue: That you suffer from the misconception, generally promulgated in *The Daily Texan*, that it is only by the newly proposed E306 syllabus that students will be taught critical thinking — that the present syllabi are not "challenging students to think and rethink questions."

This is a serious charge. It is also untenable, which may be why we find it presented in *The Daily Texan* implicitly assumed rather than explicitly stated. Anyone who has taken E306 knows that we do not pass our days numbingly diagramming sentences. If E306 classes were not already concerned with critical thinking, we would have good reasons to protest their inadequate contribution to academic excellence. One must be able to think well in order to write well. The two processes cannot be separated. The only true subject for a writing course, then, is writing and, by extension, critical thinking. This is how I see it and how I teach it, and I am not alone.

Refocusing the writing course along particular lines, e.g., "difference," cannot in itself increase the challenge toward critical thought. Such a move could, however, severely limit instructors who strive to tailor their syllabi according to their own strengths as well as their students' needs. Can we have academic freedom or expect

academic excellence without this?

Teaching writing as writing gives both students and instructors an opportunity to dig at the roots of all ideologies, the good, the bad and the ugly, and to examine their underlying assumptions in the light of critical thought.

Racism and sexism (and many other isms) cannot live in this light, for they are, at their root, formed from attitudes and assumptions accepted without critical examination. If the focus of E306 is shifted to racism and sexism per se, there is a temptation to direct our attention away from the root of the problem and merely address its many branches. I do not think that we can afford this — the English department is already too far out on a limb.

Let us, on pain of idiocy, realize that much of what the new E306 proposal promises is already inherent or actually being delivered in the present E306 syllabi. The confusion that reigns on the editorial pages, by you, sir, and others, is inexcusable.

It is obvious, Mr. McHargue, that you have never taken an E306 course.

It is also obvious that you ought to.

Mark N. Taylor

Assistant instructor in English

## Fix E306 and stop bitching

As I have been keeping up with the articles concerning the E306 course, one question keeps coming back in my mind: has anyone bothered to think about what this is doing to the student/parent morale concerning attendance to the University? I have read all the comments that go back and forth between the members of the Department of English's faculty and wonder what I would think if I were sending my money and my child to Texas. There is nothing I find more aggravating than bitching for bitching's sake. What is the problem? Is diversifying the core curriculum such a terrible thing? Minorities have

had to listen to the administration's commitment to multiculturalism for several months now, and when someone has the nerve and initiative to do something positive that begins the move in the right direction, the University goes up in arms. If diversifying and helping the leaders of tomorrow become better, more tolerant and aware citizens is such an unimportant facet of Texas' commitment to higher education, I am glad to be out of the UT System. Thanks for helping me make my decision as to what graduate school I don't want to attend.

Ernest Garcia  
UT graduate

## English or indoctrination?

Predictably, *The Daily Texan* misses the point about E306, the freshman composition course which the English department wants to turn into a course on racism and sexism. Says Randy Kennedy in his editorial of July 19 ("Crash Course: E306 changes should get a trial run"), "opponents ... have agreed with supporters ... that educating students on racism and sexism is a noble goal .... Why then, are they not willing to give the course at least a semester's chance?" As one of the signers of "A Statement of Academic Concern," I can certainly tell you why I'm not willing.

Yes, education is a noble goal. But the indoctrination in bigotry is not. Grounds for suspecting that the new E306 is designed for the latter, not the former, are more than adequate. Consider the definition of racism offered in the textbook originally chosen for the new E306: racism, we are told, is not just racial prejudice, but prejudice "plus power." Get it? Whites, you see, have power; blacks don't. Thus (as the author kindly explains), for whites to hate blacks is racist, but for blacks to hate whites is not racist.

What we have here is an example of the manipulation of definitions in order to at-

tack the kind of bigotry one doesn't like, while excusing the kind of bigotry one does like. Imagine the Ku Klux Klan using the same technique to define racism as prejudice "plus inferiority." Since Klan members assume that blacks are inferior to whites, it would follow that for blacks to hate whites is racist, but that for whites to hate blacks is not racist.

Is serving the ends of hatred — whether white or black — what E306 instructors mean by educating students about racism and sexism? Is teaching the mangling of language by example what they mean by instructing students in composition? Apparently so, I object.

Jay Budziszewski  
Associate professor of government