

# Gribben quits amid departmental debate

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**Francine Bosco**

Daily Texan Staff

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A controversial professor who criticized proposed changes in the English 306 syllabus is giving up his tenured position and moving to a smaller school outside Texas because he says he feels ostracized and persecuted for sticking to his beliefs.

Alan Gribben, professor of English at the University for the last 17 years, resigned earlier this month and will head the English and Philosophy Department at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala., in the fall.

Gribben said that colleagues in the UT English Department started to shun him in 1987 after he voted against implementing a master's degree in ethnic and Third World literature.

"I was one of the first to teach Wharton and I've heard me described as sexist. I've

championed civil rights and because of the vote in December 1987 I've been designated as racist," he said.

However, some faculty members think Gribben is trying to portray himself as a victim because his views are not the dominant ones.

"The English Department reflects debates going on nationwide. I actually find what Gribben is doing is appropriating the rhetoric of dissent," said Barbara Harlow, associate professor of English. "I find it peculiar when people of power choose to represent themselves as victims."

Gribben and other critics had charged that the proposed changes in the English 306 syllabus would "politicize" the curriculum. But proponents of the reform said the syllabus would still emphasize writing skills while including readings on race, gender and other

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# Gribben

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issues of "difference."

Gribben said the heated debate surrounding the class was both the peak of his ostracism and the point at which he decided to look for employment elsewhere.

He said he opposed the changes to the syllabus not because they included controversial topics, but because they presented one-sided arguments of the issues.

"I decided I was going to leave and that gave me the strength to oppose E306. The first year I looked for a job I still hoped. I felt if people weren't wild about the politicization of E306, I thought there'd be hope."

The English Department voted 46-11 in favor of the changes last September. However, the seven-member committee charged with creating the new syllabus resigned in February, protesting the administration's "indifference" and the misrepresentation of the course's purpose by opponents.

Joseph Kruppa, chairman of the English Department, appointed a new committee to work out a compromise proposal. On May 3, the English faculty passed 30-0 a new syllabus, which emphasizes style, grammar and rhetoric but includes a broad range of reading materials.

"It is still a course in rhetoric and expository writing. It focuses on argumentation and will cover a wide range of issues from euthanasia to discrimination," Kruppa said Saturday.

Gribben said he thinks the new syllabus is good and only wishes the debate could have been resolved earlier.

"The new syllabus has a range of readings with attention to style and grammar. It is still 'politically correct' but that's not the question. The question was shouldn't the student have instruction on grammar and writing skills," he said.

The focal point of the syllabus was the reason Gribben opposed the initial changes. He said he is not opposed to teaching literature by women and minorities, but that he felt a freshmen composition course should focus on rhetoric and composition rather than on content of reading materials.

"The fact of the matter is, I'm liberal in every respect. I'm academically conservative if that means thinking a required composition course for those who didn't do well on the SAT should have an editing log in it," he said.

Because of his opposition to the initial proposed changes, Gribben said he has been the target of hate mail, character assassinations and isolation. He said the faculty became so intolerant of a dissenting member that they designated him "as a thing to abhor."

Gribben said he wrote letters to Kruppa dating back to 1987 asking the chairman to address the problems, but he never received a reply.

Kruppa refused to comment Saturday on the letters and Gribben's resignation.

Some faculty members agree that Gribben was a target of alienation by the "politically correct."

"It seems to me that he has been ostracized by a vast majority of the department," said James Duban, professor of English.