



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

PAR 108 • Austin, Texas 78712-1164 • (512) 471-4991

Lower Division English Policy Committee Meeting

Agenda

April 10, 1990

- I. English 309 proposals
- II. Letters from J. Duban and J. Ruszkiewicz
- III. Proposal by John Ruszkiewicz

Please note that I have attached a time-sheet. Please indicate what hours you would be available for further discussion.





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April 4, 1990

Professor Linda Brodkey
Chair, Lower Division English Policy Committee
PAR 131

Dear Linda:

Because I felt that our Lower Division English Policy Committee had insufficiently discussed a textbook adoption policy for E.306, I yesterday abstained from voting on the motion to approve merely one book for use next year by every Assistant Instructor and student of E.306. I would like the minutes of the meeting to reflect the serious reservations which I voiced about the potential undermining of pluralism entailed in such a single-text policy.

While I continue to value the cordial tone of our discussion, I had more time to think about the issues last evening. In all good conscience, and with a deep sense of respect for the personal convictions harbored by the other members of the committee, I must now express a sense of regret for having failed to vote directly against the motion to adopt one text for every section of freshman English. Even a "pilot" course sets precedents, and I believe that this precedent would be an unfortunate one in its disregard for alternatives.

As you know, I voiced support for--and even tried to help formulate--a follow-up motion that would allow Assistant Instructors to propose a variant text once they have had a semester of experience with the prescribed book. While I continue to regard this motion as a step in the right direction, I now wonder if the element of choice would come too late to suit the diverse interests of many first semester freshmen and of those Assistant Instructors who may not deem the prescribed text appropriate for the most effective teaching of composition.

These queries reinforce my sense that we need more discussion. As you know, one of our colleagues missed the meeting because of an honest oversight in scheduling. Inasmuch as he, too, has reservations about a single-text adoption policy, I would like for our committee to reopen the matter for discussion next week. We stand to hear new perspectives, including his thoughts about at least eight other books for possible adoption. I would hope that, following this deliberation, we could then vote again on issues which will affect thousands of students and numerous teachers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim", written in dark ink.

James Duban
Associate Professor of English

xc: LDEPC



To: LDEPC
From: John Ruskiewicz
Re: New English 306 course
Date: April 6, 1990

I apologize for missing the LDEPC meeting of April 3. I had mistakenly thought the meeting was scheduled for Wednesday.

While I realize that the committee has already voted to approve Professor Brodkey's proposals for modifying English 306, I think the issues raised by the change weighty enough to merit more extensive discussion. Consequently, I am asking the LDEPC committee at its next meeting to consider (and reconsider) several matters of consequence to the implementation of this major course change.

At that next meeting, I request that the committee discuss the following propositions.

1. Any major modification of E 306, a university-wide required writing course, should emerge from a methodical process of syllabus design, revision, and approval. A significantly new E 306 course design should be tested in a small-scale pilot program before being implemented generally.
2. Any E 306 course syllabus should permit and encourage a diversity of approaches to teaching writing. At a minimum, experienced assistant instructors should be able to choose from among a variety of textbooks representing the major currents in composition theory and practice. The program ought not to require experienced assistant instructors using mainstream approaches to submit "variant course proposals" simply to follow methods or textbooks that have worked well for them in the past.
3. An anthology selected to raise the issue of "difference" should itself demonstrate an awareness of "difference." Its readings should invite balanced teaching, encourage full class participation, and evoke significant writing; the essays within such a collection ought to be sufficiently diverse to challenge the assumptions of instructors and students alike. The required anthology proposed for the new E 306--St. Martin's Racism and Sexism--is too narrow in scope to meet these criteria.

Textbooks that survey a broader spectrum of political and social opinions and address a wider range of issues than Racism and Sexism are available. (Please see the attached copy of a memo sent to the LDEPC office on March 27, 1990 listing eight alternative texts. Greenhaven Press also offers a series of inexpensive paperback anthologies on specific social and political issues; any volume of the series offers a wider and more challenging range of opinions than does Racism and Sexism.)

I would appreciate your patience in permitting me to speak to the LDEPC committee about these matters on April 10.

To: Linda Brodkey / LDEPC

From: John Ruszkiewicz

Re: Anthologies for English 306.

I've come up with the following list of eight current anthologies that present a range of social/political issues for classroom discussion. The books are listed from best to least successful according to my assessment of their ability to both cover and balance controversial issues and situations. Rereading America, the book at the bottom of the list, provides the most thorough treatment of multi-cultural issues. But by its editors' own admission, Rereading America pursues a particular political agenda at the expense of alternative views. In the classroom, it would need to be conscientiously supported by supplementary texts--most of which would entail copyright problems.

1. Barnet, Sylvan, and Hugo Bedau. Current Issues and Enduring Questions: Methods and Models of Argument. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford, 1989.
2. Hirschberg, Stuart. Strategies of Argument. New York: Macmillan, 1990.
3. Vesterman, William. The College Writer's Reader: Essays on Student Issues. New York: McGraw, 1989.
4. Otte, George, and Linda J. Palumbo. Casts of Thought. New York: Macmillan, 1990.
5. Hunt, Douglas. The Dolphin Reader. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1990.
6. Atwan, Robert. Our Times: Readings from Recent Periodicals. New York: Bedford-St. Martin's, 1989.
7. Madden-Simpson, Janet, and Sara M. Blake. Emerging Voices: A Cross-Cultural Reader. Fort Worth: Holt, 1990.
8. Colombo, Gary, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing. New York: St. Martin's, 1989.

