

# Faculty supports new E306 theme

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The committee that redesigned English 306 received a vote of confidence Friday from members of the English Department when a secret ballot resulted in a large majority of the faculty approving the committee's work.

The new theme for the mandatory writing course, which will attend to issues of race and gender, was postponed until fall 1991 after the UT administration intervened in a rare instance of high-level interference with a UT department's course. The administration canceled the changes for the class for fall 1990 and spring 1991 during a summer's worth of controversy over the class.

Standish Meacham, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, who announced the postponement of the changes to the writing course on July 23, said the decision was made because he "felt a need to respond to the concerns of the University community."

But UT President William Cunningham may have had some involvement in the course's cancellation at least one week before Meacham made his announcement, according to the investigative alternative publication, *Polemist*.

In response to a letter from a Dallas woman upset about the implementation of the course, a letter dated July 11 — 12 days before Meacham's announcement — and signed by Cunningham states: "After careful consideration, the Department has decided that the course will not be modified this fall," *Polemist* reported.

Joseph Kruppa, English Department chairman, said he was on vacation from July 11 to July 18.

On July 20, Kruppa was informed by Meacham and Gerhard Fonken, executive vice president and provost, of the UT administration's decision to postpone the change in E306, according to *Polemist*.

Cunningham could not be reached for comment Sunday.

Kruppa said Sunday that "any intervention by the upper administration in the curriculum and syllabus functions of a department is regrettable and could constitute a dangerous precedent."

He said he was pleased by the department's 46 to 11 vote in favor of supporting the Lower Division English Policy Committee and its tentative syllabus. Three abstained from the vote.

Alan Gribben, a professor of English who has adamantly opposed the changes, said he was greatly disappointed by the vote and "still can't believe that this is the freshman writing course that other colleges will be enthusiastic about."

The course, titled "Writing About Difference" and designed to teach freshmen composition and rhetoric while heightening their awareness of race and gender issues, generated its share of divisiveness over the summer.

Some English Department faculty voiced strong opposition to the new theme, saying it would fail to instruct students in the basic elements of style and grammar.

Linda Brodkey, professor of English and chair of the committee, has repeatedly disputed those claims. She had considered resigning from the committee after the administration's decision.

Brodkey could not be reached for comment Sunday.

Gribben repeated his claim that the originally proposed textbook for the modified course had a "Marxist line of questioning." That textbook, *Racism and Sexism* by Paula S. Rothenberg, has been cancelled.

A secret ballot on Friday to vote on a proposal that would have created a committee to oversee the Lower Division English Policy Committee was voted down by a show of hands, about 30 to 27. Brodkey said the creation of an oversight committee would be unacceptable. In a vote by show of hands on the additional committee, six voted for the proposal, but a clear majority voted against the item.