

New syllabus looks like a Trojan horse

English Professor Alan Gribben recently resigned from his tenured position at the University because of the adverse reaction he received from some of his colleagues to his principled opposition to the politicization of the Department of English. The June 3 edition of the *The Daily Texan* reported that he regarded the 1991 syllabus for E306, Rhetoric and Composition, as a victory for himself.

The same article reported that he said he was "leaving with some gratification, knowing that students won't have to submit to strange teachings." However, a careful reading of the new E306 syllabus shows Professor Gribben to be optimistic.

It would be wrong to predict or prejudice what the Department of English faculty shall actually do with the new syllabus beginning this fall. However, it may turn out to function as a Trojan horse for the 1990 syllabus, which caused such dismay among the well-informed who believe in integrity in the classroom.

The danger of this happening is great because only a tiny part of the general public and a slightly larger portion of the University community has learned the true nature of the 1990 syllabus. This is so because nearly all news coverage and public discussion has been uninformed, garbled and deceptive either intentionally or unintentionally.

The result is that the vast majority of those

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Texan
6/12/91

who have an opinion about it have formed that opinion based on misinformation. We should be suspicious about the 1991 syllabus because everyone who was on the committee that produced it was part of the radical faction that voted for the 1990 syllabus. They remain unrepentant and still defend that syllabus. This new one was produced in the face of what the E306 Ad Hoc Committee Report to the Department of English called "constraints."

Among the constraints listed are:

- The syllabus must function under the current E306 description in the catalog. So if they have a syllabus that doesn't meet the description in the catalog, they could be challenged on the basis that it is a new course.

- The syllabus should reflect the 46-11 departmental vote in support of the spirit and substance of the proposed 1990 syllabus.

- It must be acceptable to the University community.

The new standardized syllabus also has loopholes. The 1991 syllabus is attached to a memorandum dated May 17 from the director of lower-division English and addressed to the fall 1991 instructors of E306. The memo advises experienced assistant instructors that they may

submit a variant text proposal within the spirit and substance of the new syllabus. Of course any variant proposal which is approved shall not be a matter of public record. Another loophole is on page 8, unit 3 of the syllabus which states that students may choose entirely new topics for their arguments. The loopholes can be utilized in combination and be mutually reinforcing.

In considering how the loopholes might be used, one could consider the constraints section of the committee report. The rationale for the new syllabus contains further evidence of the unrepentant spirit of the radical faction and supports a reasonable suspicion that the new syllabus may be a Trojan horse for the old. The rationale indicates that the old syllabus has strengths which included rich and challenging readings, and is part of a justified national trend.

Professor Gribben was focusing on the better side of human nature when he expressed his optimism. Whether or not one professes Christian faith, it is natural for him to associate Professor Gribben with what Jesus Christ is reported to have said in the Gospel of St. Matthew 5:10-12 as follows:

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

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