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New E306 syllabus able to unite divided English Department

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Both sides are claiming victory over the revised English 306 syllabus which was drawn up by a new seven-member committee and unanimously approved last month after a year of controversy and heated debates.

The new syllabus, approved by the English faculty 36-0 on May 3, has been praised both by faculty members who opposed the initial syllabus and by those who originally

supported it.

"I see it as a compromise and I think it's good. The people who wrote it wanted to accommodate different points of view in the department and I think they accomplished that," said Maxine Hairston, professor of English.

Hairston was among several professors who opposed the original syllabus, which critics charged would "politicize" the curriculum. But Hairston said she does not think the new syllabus is politically focused.

"I think it offers the student and the

teacher lots of choice in what they want to teach. It emphasizes the writing process, it makes writing the center," she said.

But some faculty members who supported the original said they see no compromise in the new syllabus. James Kinneavy, chair of the committee, and Alison Regan, committee member, said they feel the new version retains the intentions of the previous one although it differs in substance.

"The readings are very different. They cover a wide range of topics," Kinneavy said. "The readings are not 'diversity-based' although there is a suggested term

paper on multiculturalism."

While Kinneavy said he did not feel the original syllabus was "too radical," he said the new one retains the emphasis on argumentation, rhetoric and vocabulary.

"I voted for the original so I didn't think it too radical. This one retains some of the features and if you want to call it a compromise you can," he said. "I don't think it's an academic compromise."

The most common complaint cited against the first syllabus was that the readings were one-sided and politically biased, and that the focus of the class was on issues

rather than writing skills.

Both Kinneavy and Regan emphasized that the new syllabus stresses writing assignments and contains readings on a wide range of topics from euthanasia to abortion and multiculturalism.

"The English Department needed a 306 for the fall. So we honored the intentions of the proposals to the committee and made it acceptable to the department," Regan said.

The assigned readings, a sore point for the opposition, will not be fixed, according to Betty Sue Flowers, committee member.