

Minutes, Freshman English Policy Committee Meeting

October 16, 11:00 - 12:00

Parlin 8B

Members present: Kinneavy, Trimble, Ruskiewicz, Witte, Newcomb, Cameron,
Creel, Byars, Hart

Agenda: none established

1. Minutes of May 3, 1978, were approved as written and those of May 10, 1978, and July 19, 1978, as amended.

2. Dr. Kinneavy explained that the FEPC's chief problem this year would be to rethink the 398T requirement perhaps in consultation with the Graduate Program Committee--a task which needs to be completed by January. Our latest information shows that according to both Graduate School and departmental regulations we can legally require only one 398T of our instructors and that only one can count toward their degrees, though we have traditionally asked them to take two. Thus, for instance, if we were to hire an AI who had taken a 398T in the German Department, we could not require him to take one from us. Moreover, Graduate School policy requires incoming AI's to take a 398T only if they have no teaching experience, but we do not hire inexperienced AI's. Mr. Creel asked whether 398T would have to become a degree requirement in order to guarantee that AI's take it. Dr. Kinneavy responded that we could make it a condition for appointment and suggested that we require one 398T geared to 306 and then have an optional 383L geared to 307, 308, and 314K.

3. Dr. Kinneavy ^{Kinneavy} asked that we discuss four items, time permitting: subcommittee appointments, the Witte-Cameron evaluation project, the possibility of making an omnibus evaluation report on our programs to the University Council, and a request from Hugh Burns to use four of our sections in a research project. (The Burns request was later deferred.)

4. Dr. Kinneavy read the list of standing subcommittees and described some topics each might wish to consider this year: ^{In the last several years,}

Admissions and Placement: What, if anything, should we do about the increasing number of remedial-level students in our program? One-third of our incoming freshmen score below 450 on the ECT, one-third between 450 and 550, and one-third above 550.

398T: How might we restructure our 398T program? (cf. item 2 above.)

New and Variant Course Proposals: Dr. DeCamp is enthusiastic about the experimental 306 section in which he's using Daiker's new sentence-combining text. Would it be advisable to make sentence combining a regular part of 306?

Personnel: Each spring this committee selects an Assistant Director for the coming year and sends a list of prospective FEPC members to the EC.

Program Evaluation: Since some members of the University Council have shown an interest in seeing our courses evaluated and since several studies have already been or are being conducted, this subcommittee might collect the findings and present them to the UC. These studies include the following:

- (1) The Carver experiment of 1976-77. A group of ⁴⁶⁷ (180) students was given pre and post mechanics tests and compositions. The composition results were deemed inconclusive, but the mechanics tests showed that our students were not learning mechanics. Subsequently, a

handbook was added to our text lists.

(2) The Dreussi study. This evaluation of the 306 expressive writing unit showed that this component improves students' attitudes but not their compositions.

(3) The Tomas study. Four hundred students were given Nelson-Denny tests to determine whether the 306 reading component improves student reading and writing skills. The data has not yet been compiled.

(4) Lynn Phillips' dissertation. Basically, this study investigated what kinds of writing assignments are given in the upper-division courses outside the English department, how these assignments compare with Freshman English assignments, and whether the two kinds of assignments are normally evaluated according to the same grading standards. Phillips found that other departments require more writing than we might have expected; that 40% of their writing assignments are informative, 24% argumentative (proving a thesis), and 24% exploratory; and that though instructors in other departments use essentially the same grading criteria we do, they apply them less leniently.

(5) The ^{Kinneavy} Witte-Cameron study. Dr. Witte described this elaborate in-progress experiment designed to determine whether the Writing Lab is achieving its goals. The two key elements of the lab course, tutorial instruction and Christensen-based material, are being compared with the corresponding elements of regular 306, traditional classroom instruction and Kinneavy-based material. Supporting elements of the lab course, computerized instruction, English 3200, and Steps to Structure, have also been singled out for assessment. Five hundred students (20 sections) will complete pre and post standardized reading and writing tests and two pre and post writing samples, although only 750 of the 2000 themes generated in the study will need to be read. Final approval of funding for the project has not yet been granted. FEPC members will receive copies of the research proposal.

(6) The library study. Recently conducted by the librarians, this study shows that the library component of our courses has improved students' library skills.

Textbook. This subcommittee should have less work than in some previous years. It might need to consider adopting a sentence-combining text for 306, publishing the 306 syllabus for students (or even replacing Adelstein and Pival with the syllabus), and dropping either Fiction 100 or the Norton Anthology of Short Fiction from 307 to avoid overlapping the new 314K reading list, which will include a fiction anthology. Also, recent criticism that 308PC misleads students to expect an easier course than they actually get may warrant some changes in that course.

5. Dr. Kinneavy asked members to volunteer for subcommittees, and the following list of tentative assignments emerged:

Admissions and Placement: Witte, Ruszkiewicz, Hart

398T: Newcomb, Witte, Byars, Kinneavy

New and Variant Course Proposals: Newcomb, Byars, Hart, Cameron

Personnel: Trimble, Kinneavy, Creel

Program Evaluation: Witte, Cameron, one outside member

Textbook: Trimble, Ruszkiewicz, Creel, Hart

the 306 classes