

E306 to add readings on racism

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Beginning this fall, students enrolled in English 306 will face new curriculum changes which include reading and writing about landmark civil rights and affirmative action court cases.

Joseph Kruppa, Department of English chairman, said the changes are being implemented to provide an understanding of the social implications of different cultures, customs and beliefs.

"The change came out of a desire to make the course more coherent and to give it a focus," he said. "Freshman composition will still basically be a course in argumentation — how to weigh evidence and build cohesive arguments."

Kruppa said the main reason for the change was to unify the readings under one topic. Traditional composition courses came from anthologies and collections of short stories that had little or no relation to one another, he said.

Civil rights and affirmative action cases were chosen as the singular theme because of what Kruppa termed a "side effect" of increased awareness in differences in race, ethnic background, gender, sexual preference, age and religion.

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change was not a reaction to racial tensions at the University last semester.

"We were thinking about this before the heat began on campus, but the two are not remote from each other," Kruppa said. "As things happened it seemed more appropriate. The problems made us more aware that it would be a good approach."

In addition to the court cases, supplemental essays, poems and personal narratives addressing "difference" will be included in the modified program.

Linda Brodkey, director of lower division English, said one supplemental reader — Paula Rothenberg's *Racism and Sexism* — was chosen to "steady students with respect to the topic of difference."

"This approach takes the students seriously, and it takes their civic responsibilities seriously," she said. "We're not asking them to be lawyers. We're asking them to read like educated citizens by looking at

primary documents such as [U.S.] Supreme Court decisions and analyzing how both the majority and dissenting opinions were argued."

Brodkey also noted the additional benefit of encouraging students to examine how the American judicial system deals with racism and discrimination.

Faculty members within the department have expressed a strong interest in the changes, Brodkey said. Although the teaching of college composition is often considered the dregs by English professors, eight faculty members — including new instructors from both Yale University and Penn State University — have already volunteered to teach the revamped course.

Ernest Kaulbach, associate professor of English, said he signed up to teach the revised 306 course for several reasons.

"I don't mind teaching freshman comp," he said. "I'm also curious how the new curriculum will turn out for the course."

Deirdre Hammons, chairwoman of the Texas Union Multiculturalism Task Force, said she was pleased with the revision.

"It's a move in the right direction, away from the Eurocentric teaching," said Hammons, an engineering junior. "I think it's warranted because of changes in society and Texas."