

Minutes, Freshman English Policy Committee

March 7, 1979

Parlin 214

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

Agenda:

Approval of minutes
Athletics, a report
Report on motion requesting ad hoc members
Textbook Subcommittee report
Staffing problems for next year
306 syllabus
Gross request
Cameron report

1. After agreeing to the above agenda, the committee corrected and approved the minutes of March 2. (The meeting that week had been rescheduled to enable Dr. Kinneavy to attend an emergency EC meeting.)
2. Dr. Kinneavy reported that Ann Cain had come to see him about a male tennis player in one of her sections who had missed five classes to meet the tournament schedule and would miss a total of seven during the semester. After copies of the tennis schedule were passed around, Dr. Kinneavy demonstrated that this student would miss 17 class days altogether, assuming that he had both TT and MWF classes--far too many.
Dr. Trimble asked whether we might make use of the 10% rule Dr. Lopiano had cited in her schedule-limiting memo, but Dr. Kinneavy said that he had not heard of such a rule before receiving Dr. Lopiano's letter. He asked Mr. Hart to call the Dean of Students for information about it.
3. Dr. Kinneavy next reported that Dr. Abrahams had been hospitalized for a serious operation and would thus not be appointing any committees during the next few days. Dr. Moldenhauer, though, to whom Dr. Kinneavy had showed our motion, thought that a separate ad hoc committee would be advisable since the array of issues involved concerned not only the FEPC but the GPC, the TAC, and the EC as well.
Dr. Witte speculated that Dr. Moldenhauer might have misread our motion, since it explicitly states that we seek ad hoc members to help us consider the issues "as they relate to the teaching of freshman English." Whatever the case, Dr. Kinneavy said, there will be a committee if Dr. Abrahams agrees with Dr. Moldenhauer, and we will have to be content to make recommendations to it, to the EC, and to the chairman. Yes, Dr. Witte said, but it would still

be good to have outside information coming into our committee on these issues.

4. Dr. Trimble reported that the textbook group had held an informal meeting during which it had considered, among other things, offering 306 instructors some text options, perhaps on the handbook and the reader, which are less integral to the course than is the rhetoric. He added (as copies of Dr. Ruszkiewicz's questionnaire tally were passed around) that we had received few complaints about the 307 fiction readers, texts for which instructors had been given a choice. Perhaps, he inferred, providing choices might forestall future complaints.

Were instructors to be given a handbook option, he continued, they could be bound to their choices for an academic year in order to reduce work at the Co-op. Dr. Witte, however, said that student familiarity with a handbook is as important as instructor familiarity. But, Dr. Trimble said, our questionnaire produced a strong polarity of comments on the handbook. These are typical of comments on any handbook, Dr. Witte rejoined.

Dr. Kinneavy then listed some issues for the committee to discuss: the reader, the handbook, some suggestions from Dr. Moldenhauer about 306, and the 306 syllabus. To these Dr. Trimble added Daiker's sentence-combining text, which the 310 staff thinks highly of.

Dr. Ruszkiewicz pointed out that instructor opinion mandates replacing the rhetoric and perhaps calls for one which can contrast with the syllabus. Looking over the tally, Dr. Kinneavy observed that we have used some of the suggested texts before, McCrimmon and Tibbets, for example. Laying the tally aside, he went on to say that Dr. Moldenhauer thinks that though the Rodi syllabus may suit AI's, it might not do for the approximately 35 regular faculty members coming into the program next year. Specifically, he thinks it might seem juvenile to regular faculty, whereas a six-page version in a different tone might not. He had suggested to Dr. Kinneavy, moreover, that a departmental committee should be appointed to study the 306 syllabus, but Dr. Kinneavy had told him that the FEPC would no doubt consider the syllabus strictly its own concern.

Dr. Ruszkiewicz asked whether Dr. Moldenhauer knew that the Rodi syllabus had been designed for distribution to students, but Dr. Kinneavy could not say. He did, however, report that Dr. Cable had suggested that the previous syllabus was more useful to instructors than Ms. Rodi's. The complaints from Dr. Cable and Dr. Moldenhauer are unfortunate, Dr. Kinneavy continued,

since he had hoped that we could spare our secretaries a massive typing job by using the Rodi syllabus again next year.

Dr. Witte then asked how hard it would be to return to the previous syllabus, and Dr. Kinneavy replied that it would not be hard at all. Dr. Ruszkiewicz mentioned that he had used both syllabuses and had found that the Rodi one solves numerous problems in 398T. With better examples, Dr. Kinneavy said, the Rodi syllabus might serve well. Could we have two syllabuses, Ms. Byars asked, one for the new regular faculty and the familiar version for the old hands? Some of the regular faculty will be teaching composition for the first time, though, Dr. Trimble said, and might find the full Rodi helpful. Still, Dr. Kinneavy said, we could offer a skeletal version giving assignments, readings, etc. for each unit--perhaps nine pages. A new rhetoric, Mr. Cameron added, will require some revision of the syllabus anyhow.

Dr. Ruszkiewicz then said that we have never found a rhetoric which perfectly matches the syllabus. Is it wise, he asked, to require instructors to work a book into the syllabus? Dr. Newcomb replied that there is a problem only insofar as the current syllabus is textlike. Dr. Kinneavy replied, too, saying that he had simply ignored The Writing Commitment. Alternatively, Mr. Cameron added, some instructors had ignored the syllabus.

This discussion prompted Ms. Byars to speculate that we might need to include regular faculty in training to avoid dissolution of the 306 course. Dr. Kinneavy responded with information that the dean will require us to train pool people, at least, and will obligate them to cooperate.

Next, Dr. Trimble said that we cannot offer textbook options to staff hired at the last second. Is there any way to change departmental staffing procedures? he asked. Dr. Kinneavy responded with more information about the dean: he wants the staffing problems solved right away. Each week, the dean has been meeting with Dr. Hershey and Dr. Kinneavy with an eye toward staffing next fall's extra sections this spring. Similarly, Dr. Kruppa is already scheduling regular faculty for composition courses next fall since the dean wants a speedy report on faculty assignments for both the fall and the following spring.

In that case we can consider offering text options, Dr. Trimble concluded. But, said Dr. Witte, who has run a bookstore, the Co-op is still a problem, especially if choices are granted to new instructors. Ms. Byars then asked when the book-order deadline occurs. April, replied Dr. Kinneavy, although books aren't actually ordered until summer. Dr. Trimble then recalled that when the committee's initial staff poll on Fiction 100 and The Norton Anthology of Short

Fiction had produced a 50-50 split, the committee had simply divided the book order in half and had, as a result, caused no problems for the Co-op. Ms. Byars mentioned that we could get regular faculty to choose texts by April.

Mr. Creel then conjectured that instructors teach less effectively when using a book they dislike, but that when they have made an investment in a book by choosing it, they teach better. Dr. Trimble agreed, adding that our results with F100 and NASF bear this out and speculating that some regular faculty may feel oppressed unless they're given textbook choices. Some of them, Dr. Newcomb added, will simply ignore our books if they don't like them.

Dr. Trimble expressed concern that the new wave of faculty might also want several 306 variants to choose among, but Dr. Kinneavy said that we should merely let them know about our standard procedure for requesting alternate courses and texts. Last-minute text changes bring chaos to the Co-op, Dr. Kinneavy added. But, Dr. Trimble said, we could have Dr. Kruppa send new faculty reminders about textbooks along with their employment forms.

As the meeting drew to a close, several final remarks were made. Dr. Kinneavy said that the textbook group should present recommendations by at least mid-April. Dr. Trimble asked that Dr. Kinneavy seek Dr. Moldenhauer's approval for a combination of a skeletal and a regular syllabus. Dr. Kinneavy said that Dr. Hershey now estimates fall freshman enrollment at 6300-6400.