

FEPC members

Richard Hart

May 2, 1979

The FEPC will meet this afternoon at 4:15 (please note) in Parlin 214 to consider these items:

(1) Adams request

(2) Personnel

(3) Lab

Minutes, Freshman English Policy Committee

April 25, 1979

Parlin 214

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

Agenda:

Adams request  
308PC texts  
Approval of minutes  
Cameron lab proposal  
Personnel

1. Michael Adams was present with Merry Eginore, his TA, to discuss his proposed 306 variant. Dr. Trimble asked him to describe his course briefly, but he replied that before taking the committee's time discussing the course itself he wanted to resolve the prior question of whether TA's could legally be used as much as he planned. Although he had found two old statements on the use of TA's, he had not been able to find the current set of guidelines. This matter was discussed briefly, and Dr. Ruszkiewicz recalled that TA's are now allowed to teach two units of the course, that is, approximately four to five weeks. Dr. Adams figured that his course could operate within this limit.

Dr. Adams then said that he had developed the course in response to two problems. First, with loads of three or four sections, he has found it impossible (as have other instructors to whom he had talked) to meet with all his students who need individual attention. Second, the apprentice program has not functioned as well as it might, partly because instructors with two or more 306 sections have realized that in order to keep all their sections on the same schedule while turning one over to a TA for a few weeks, they must spend time teaching the TA exactly what they're going to do in their other sections. Thus, instructors have typically either asked not to be assigned TA's or reduced their TA's to mere graders. His course would solve both these problems, Dr. Adams said, by allowing him to use TA's in all three of his sections (he would hope to get a course off for helping train three TA's) and to have more time for individual conferences with students.

Next, Dr. Adams sketched out his course. On Monday, 75 students would meet in a large group; on Wednesday and Friday they would break into groups of 25; six other hours of the week, the instructor would run a lab for individualized instruction. The semester would be divided into three phases: invention, development, and style. During all three phases, each of which contains material best conveyed via lecture, Dr. Adams explained, the instructor would lecture every Monday to the large group, thus freeing himself from



the redundancy of having to deliver the same information three times. Moreover, in the invention phase, during which the most difficult material occurs and by which time the TA's might not have developed much skill and confidence, the instructor would probably also meet the smaller Wednesday and Friday groups, as well as grade all the papers. Gradually, however, as the course material grew easier and the TA's more proficient, the TA's would assume more duties, so that by the style phase they would be teaching all the Wednesday and Friday classes and, subject to the instructor's review, grading most of the essays. The TA's would attend the workshop sessions, Dr. Adams added, so that they could learn how to teach on an individual basis and eventually do so on their own by semester's end.

Mr. Cameron remarked that such a plan would face several logistical problems. He asked what sort of lab rooms Dr. Adams would need and how he intended to schedule three classes for a combined meeting once a week. Dr. Adams responded that he would run the lab out of his office, and Ms. Byars said that he could take three sections already scheduled at the same time. Apparently, she added, it isn't impossible to schedule large sections which break into smaller groups since the philosophy department does so. But, Dr. Witte said, they plan a year in advance. Ms. Byars replied that we might be able to get the course listed in the fall course supplement. Dr. Witte agreed and added that he had not meant to address the course proposal itself, but merely the logistical problem. He liked the proposal very much, he said. Dr. Newcomb then asked whether attendance would be required in the lab, and Dr. Adams said that it would not be. Dr. Trimble asked what materials the lab would use, and Dr. Adams said that he could rely primarily on the handouts he had amassed.

Next, Dr. Trimble returned discussion to the initial problem of the TA workload. Dr. Adams explained that the TA's would not teach alone for more than four to six weeks although they would, in addition, team teach with him occasionally. Mr. Creel asked how the grading would be parceled, and Dr. Adams replied that the experience of the TA's would figure in the distribution of grading chores but that he would expect them to grade essays for those units in which they had assumed primary teaching duties. He added that he would look over all the papers. Dr. Trimble then inquired when and how often Dr. Adams planned to hold staff conferences with his TA's. Dr. Adams replied that he would hold them as often as necessary, probably at least briefly before each class. This discussion prompted Dr. Witte to point out that the course would be beneficial in a way that Dr. Adams had not mentioned: it would help the TA's overcome the reluctance that many new teachers have to be watched



in the classroom by other teachers.

Dr. Witte's remark in turn prompted Dr. Trimble to ask Ms. Eginoire what she found attractive about the course. She said that she expected it to be very beneficial for TA's, especially those in their second and third semesters of apprenticeship, who are qualified to teach more than they normally get to. During a long apprenticeship, she said, TA's get itchy to start teaching, and Dr. Adams's course would enable them to do so. Moreover, it would prevent them from becoming mere graders, as some do, or from having trouble keeping their sections in step with their supervisors' sections, as other do. In short, she said, the course should be more interesting and more educational than ordinary TA assignments.

Dr. Ruskiewicz then remarked that an instructor with three sections of the same course certainly doesn't save <sup>much</sup> any work by having a TA. Mr. Creel said that the apprentice program had been instituted to train teachers, not to save instructors time. That's right, replied Dr. Ruskiewicz, but the time problem is still a real one. Dr. Newcomb agreed, saying that when he had read over the course proposal, he had been afraid that Dr. Adams might be creating even more work for himself. Dr. Trimble asked Dr. Adams to identify some ways in which the course would save time. He reiterated that he would gain two conference hours each week by collapsing three lectures into one every Monday, and he went on to explain that though he might actually lose some time early in the course, when he'd be doing all the teaching and grading, he would eventually get it back as the TA's gradually picked up more of the work. This would be especially true, he added, since more students come for conferences in April than in January. Mr. Cameron pointed out that the arrangement might work a hardship on TA's, whose own papers come due at the end of the semester. Dr. Adams agreed but said that TA's have always had this problem and that at least he'd be giving them more free time than usual early in the semester if they wanted to do some of their work in advance.

Dr. Newcomb then said that of all the issues the committee had discussed so far, the logistics problem was the hardest. Ms. Byars again suggested listing the course in the fall supplement, but Mr. Cameron said that its publication deadline had already passed and that not many students read it anyhow. Dr. Ruskiewicz suggested that the course might be worked in during registration, when many new sections are created anyway. Ms. Byars said that students would be more willing to sign up if the course were not run during prime morning times and that in the last-minute scramble of registration, they might even be willing to sacrifice



their mornings just to get into freshman English. Dr. Adams agreed that the logistics would be difficult and asked whether the committee could approve his proposal on the condition that he solve these problems. Probably, replied Dr. Trimble.

Mr. Cameron then drew nods of agreement by observing that it was good to see an instructor asking for TA's, as Dr. Adams was, and that his proposed course had the virtue of providing an incentive for instructors to get involved in TA training. Dr. Newcomb agreed but reminded the committee that it could not approve Dr. Adams's request for a course off. Dr. Adams replied that Dr. Kinneavy had foreseen no problems in winning EC approval.

Next, Mr. Hart reported that Dr. Kinneavy had asked him to convey his enthusiasm for the proposed course but to point out that with only three sections involved, it could not furnish anything approximating hard experimental data unless Dr. Adams would be willing to teach a routine assignment in the spring for control purposes. Dr. Adams agreed to do so if necessary but ventured (or admitted) that he could already predict the results. Dr. Newcomb said that he would prefer to see the course run as non-experimental, and Dr. Trimble said that in either case the course-instructor surveys could provide us some information. Mr. Cameron added that the committee would probably like to have some formal way of staying in contact with Dr. Adams, and he replied that he had counted on some such arrangement.

After Dr. Adams and Ms. Eginoire left, Dr. Trimble said that Dr. Witte, who had left earlier during the discussion, had suggested to him that the vote on the Adams proposal be deferred until after Dr. Kinneavy had gotten a chance to read the minutes. Mr. Hart reported further that Dr. Kinneavy had indicated he would not vote on an issue for the discussion of which he had not been present. Then Mr. Hart added that the committee might still want to postpone the vote in deference to Dr. Witte. Ms. Byars pointed out that a delay would not worsen the logistical problems with the proposed course.

Mr. Creel then expressed some misgivings about the course. Although he had confidence in Dr. Adams and agreed that much 306 material could be taught effectively in large lecture sections, he observed that many freshmen receive their only small-class instruction in the English department and they value this feature of our courses, a feature whose loss would not be wholly compensated for by the smaller Wednesday and Friday sessions of Dr. Adams's variant. He said, furthermore, that he would not like to see TA's having to teach as much as the course would require at the end of the semester. Dr. Ruszkiewicz speculated that Dr. Adams might



be willing to resume full responsibility for all his students during the last two weeks of the semester.

Dr. Newcomb then articulated some of his views about the proposed variant. He saw its merits not as programmatic, he said, but rather as almost exclusively personal. Although he granted that some students and instructors would have problems in the course, others would not, he said, and the more variation--the more freedom--we can have in a program as large as ours, the better. Mr. Creel said that he shared this philosophy and, in fact, did not so much oppose the course as simply feel troubled by it. Dr. Trimble responded by saying that he thought Dr. Adams was very sensitive to the needs of TA's and if made sufficiently aware of end-of-semester problems, would not unreasonably burden his TA's during the last two weeks.

Several miscellaneous points were made before discussion ended. Dr. Ruszkiewicz pointed out that the proposal would enable us to address the problems of our instructors, the hardest worked people in the department, and Dr. Newcomb agreed, noting that it might generate similar proposals. Next, Dr. Ruszkiewicz mentioned that Dr. Moldenhauer had once asked us to consider converting to large lecture sections, and Mr. Creel recalled that Dean Werbow had always favored such a change. Mr. Hart added that even Dean King had initially expressed an interest in seeing large sections of freshman English. Ms. Byars observed, however, that in approving the Adams request we would not be capitulating to these powers since small-group sections are integral to its plan. Then Dr. Trimble said that the merits of the proposal depend in large part on the instructor's ability and that if anybody in the department could hold the attention of 75 students while talking about writing for an hour and a half, Dr. Adams would be the one. Finally, the committee agreed to postpone action until the next meeting.

2. Ms. Byars reported that a recent meeting of 308PC instructors had not included much discussion of texts, primarily because nobody had any real alternatives to Popular Writing in America. Dr. Newcomb said that Mass Media: Forces in Our Society might make a fair alternative were it not out of print. He recommended that the committee readopt PWA even though it might be available for fall only in a shorter version.

Ms. Byars said that one problem with the PC course is that there is no continuity of interest in it. At the instructors' meeting she had proposed getting a block of offices for PC instructors so that objects, handouts, books, files, and so forth could be accumulated in one location and thus instructors might borrow from

Keast



one another more easily. She had also volunteered to coordinate the interest group, she said, but she would soon be leaving. Dr. Newcomb offered to assume the role more permanently and said that the FEPC should deliberate on PC problems in the fall. Ms. Byars expressed hope that the discussions would result in making the course a more logical extension of 306 and in solving the conflict in it between writing and content. Dr. Newcomb added that something needs to be done to reduce the excessive variation among PC sections. Ms. Byars agreed but said that she liked the freedom the course offers instructors. Perhaps, she suggested, the course could be made modular so that instructors could select options that were firmly tied to the same base. Mr. Cameron then recalled that the committee had once discussed using The Norton Reader as the basic PC text, to be augmented by advertisements and other material. He added that the entire 308 offering, not just PC, needs to be reworked, and Ms. Byars said that Dr. Kinneavy was considering rewriting the syllabus to make PC the standard 308 course.

Finally, Dr. Newcomb moved that the committee readopt Popular Writing in America, preferably in the longer version if it can be found, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. The minutes of April 11 were corrected and approved, and those of April 18 were approved as written. Mr. Hart thanked Dr. Trimble for keeping minutes for most of the previous meeting.

4. Discussion of the Cameron lab proposal was deferred until May 2.

5. Dr. Trimble reported that only two people had applied for the assistant directorship and that, consequently, he had circulated a memo extending the deadline for application until April 30.

Mr. Creel moved that the meeting be adjourned and the committee, voting on the run, passed the motion unanimously.