



Ruszkiewicz

Lower Division English Policy Committee
Minutes
April 17, 1990

Present: L. Brodkey, J. Duban, E. Fernea, S. Heinzelman, S. Kimball,
J. Ruszkiewicz, J. Slatin, S. Fowler, M. Villalobos.

J. Ruszkiewicz presented, and the committee discussed, the following four motions:

1.) That the director of the LDEPC with the assistance of members of the LDEPC compose a syllabus for a version of E 306 Rhetoric and Composition that uses readings focusing on issues of difference and that this syllabus be tested in selected sections during the 1990-91 term by new AIs and other instructors interested in the new version. Further, J Ruszkiewicz moved that the LDEPC evaluate the new course focus during the 1990-91 term for the purpose of implementing it more generally in 1991-92.

J. Ruszkiewicz opened the discussion by stating that the proposed E 306 should be tested out in a small number of sections, that the course as it stands is not clearly articulated, and that we should go with the "safe and proven route." When asked what should be used for evaluation, Ruszkiewicz pointed out that in the 24 classes he had visited over the last few years, the AIs (some of whom were in his section of 398T this year) were unprepared to teach rhetoric and composition, and added that they also didn't know how to teach controversial topics. He noted that scholars attempting to write post-structuralist and issue-oriented composition have been having great difficulty. J. Ruszkiewicz concluded his statement by reiterating that the proposed curriculum was a risky type of pedagogy.

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One member of the LDEPC reminded the committee that the annual AI orientation would address J. Ruszkiewicz's concerns about pedagogy. Another member pointed out that the proposal put forth by J Ruszkiewicz presumed that AIs would be entirely responsible for designing the Racism & Sexism syllabus, and assured him that the plan was to write a syllabus over the summer.

L Brodkey pointed out that the AIs are not confident about teaching writing courses, which is reflected both in their conferences with her and their teaching evaluations. The range of teachers' evaluations seemed not to be positively correlated with teaching experience as it is in other lower division courses. She noted that AIs were not instructed during orientation last Fall to implement difference into their syllabi. She then went on to say that the

to implement difference into their syllabi. She then went on to say that the proposed E 306 curriculum would address pedagogical concerns, since all new AIs would teach the same syllabus and experienced AIs the same curriculum. Moreover, all AIs assigned to E 306 would be required to attend orientation and therefore be instructed on how to teach writing as well as topics of difference.

J. Ruskiewicz maintained that the design of E 306 ought to resemble more conventional composition programs across the country.

Members then discussed whether there was precedent for institutionalizing a major curriculum change with a pilot program of the sort suggested by J Ruskiewicz's memo (April 6). L. Brodkey referred members to her memo of April 15 (attached), which refutes the validity of pilot testing on the grounds that the current courses do not form a "control" against which to measure the success of the proposed courses. Members then discussed some examples of successful program innovations using or not using "pilot" testing.

Another member reiterated the opinion that he was concerned about and opposed to setting a precedent by requiring all AIs to teach the course from required texts.

It was pointed out by another member that the current multiplicity of texts in E 306 makes increasingly less sense to those teaching it.

A member then offered a friendly amendment to Ruskiewicz's motion, that it be divided into two motions:

- 1.) Whether or not to have a test course.
- 2.) If the course is successful, then implement the proposed E 306 on a regular basis.

The vote on motion # 1) was 2 for, 4 against, 0 abstentions. It was agreed that the negative vote on the first motion mooted the second.

J. Ruskiewicz then read his second motion: That any new E 306 course syllabus should be written so as to permit and encourage a diversity of approaches to teaching writing, including process methods that emphasize genres or modes.

He went on to argue that the proposed course was of a monolithic nature, and that he wanted to protect the AIs who wished to continue using the St. Martin's Guide to Writing. He added that he was also concerned because it

would preclude him from teaching the 398T course in the manner in which he has taught it in the past, but had been prevented from doing last Fall.

Various members expressed the view that the motion was not relevant to the discussion of whether to adopt the textbook, since it raised issues of pedagogy. One member claimed that it was relevant.

The vote on motion #2) was 2 for, 4 against, 0 abstentions.

J. Ruskiewicz then read his third motion: That any instructor of E 306 who wishes to use the current E 306 syllabus and/or rhetorics or readers currently approved for the course may continue to do so for the 1990-91 term.

J. Ruskiewicz asserted that this motion went to the heart of academic freedom for the AIs. One member noted that there were limitations on academic freedom, since as a faculty member she had to teach what the department deemed necessary. L. Brodkey reminded the committee that as their supervisor she was personally responsible for their teaching, and that the poor course evaluations in E 306 in the last few years necessitated some form of standardization in the course. J. Ruskiewicz reiterated that the proposed course was monolithic in nature. Others answered perhaps it needed to be under the circumstances.

The vote on motion #3) was 2 for, 4 against, 0 abstentions.

J. Ruskiewicz then read his fourth motion: That the LDEPC rescind its choice of Racism and Sexism as the approved anthology for E 306 and approve--in its place--a list of anthologies that offer a wider spectrum of issues and a more balanced perspective on contemporary social issues.

The motion was modified to read "That the LDEPC adopt Racism and Sexism among the choice of other texts." Another member again voiced his concern for plurality and questioned the potential for future abuse when required texts are mandated.

One member responded that the pluralism and diversity will come out in the classroom.

In response to the charge that only "leftist issues" were represented by Racism and Sexism, one member noted that the Supreme Court of the United States, whose decisions are covered by the text, could hardly be accused of being on the "left".

The vote for motion * 4) was 2 for, 4 against, 0 abstentions.

An additional motion was made: That AIs must have taught the new course one semester before proposing an alternate version of E 306 on the topic of difference.

The vote was 4 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions.

L Brodkey thanked the committee and adjourned the meeting.

