



Ruszkiewicz

Lower Division English Policy Committee Meeting

Minutes
April 10, 1990

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

A brief discussion was held concerning the course proposal requirements on the issues of course description (with students being the audience) and course justification (with the members of the LDEPC being the audience.) It was agreed to hold further discussions on this matter at a later date.

E 309 TOPICS IN WRITING PROPOSALS

Gudni Elisson—The Taste of Blood—The Cultural Construction of the Vampire

It was mentioned that Elisson had gone to great lengths to define and substantiate how writing is to be taught. One member remarked several of his students had trouble dealing with the death poetry presented in his class shortly after the murder of UT student, Mark Kilroy, in Matamoros and asked if the title of the course could be changed. The LDEPC approved Elisson's proposal and agreed that the title be changed to "Writing about the Cultural Construction of the Vampire in Literature."

Ed Madden—Identity, Image, Ideology: Reading Culture

Madden was praised on the fine job he has done as an Assistant Instructor. The LDEPC approved his proposal and requested he retitile the course to give a closer approximation of the subjects covered by his text selection---such as "Writing about 'The Signs of the Times'."

Christine Caver—Writing about Silencing and Violence in American Literature

Caver is revising a course that she currently teaches entitled "Writing about Intimacy and Violence in American Literature." It was asked if she could not be asked for syntactic agreement in the title perhaps "Silence and Violence," but it was pointed out that, in fact, "silencing" and "violence" are grammatically parallel. The LDEPC approved Caver's proposal.



Margot FitzGerald-Fictional Narratives of Grief and Loss: The Elegy in the West

FitzGerald is currently teaching a section of E 309 entitled "Writing about Literature" which was converted from a E 306-Humanities. The committee wondered if the number of texts assigned were not enough to warrant a 314L. FitzGerald will be asked if the focus of her proposed course will be on elegy as a literary genre or on writing about elegy. If the course is to remain an E 309, the LDEPC requests that FitzGerald cut the reading list by one-third.

L. Brodkey asked the committee whether J. Duban's April 4 letter and J. Ruszkiewicz's April 6 memorandum should be made part of the LDEPC minutes of April 3. After considering requests by J. Duban and J. Ruszkiewicz, the LDEPC approved appending Duban's letter to the minutes of April 3 and Ruszkiewicz's memorandum to the minutes of April 10.

The committee then discussed new business.

The question of whether the selection of the Assistant Director is the responsibility of the committee was raised. It was explained that the decision is jointly made by the LDE Director and the Graduate Advisor and that this has been the case for some years.

The question of whether the minutes of the April 3 meeting were accurate was raised. One of the LDEPC members said they were fine the way they were. The other members agreed.

The floor was then turned over to J. Ruszkiewicz (memorandum attached), who prefaced the points in his memo with a series of questions about basic course descriptions and course titles. He began the discussion with a question about whether the revised curriculum satisfies the catalog description for E 306 or E 309. He argued that the proposed course falls under the description of E 309 and then read aloud the descriptions of E 306 and E309 under the College of Liberal Arts Catalog for the University of Texas at Austin 1989-1991 to illustrate his point.

Other members of the committee mentioned that "subjects" or topics of some sort are used in all E 306 courses to provide instruction in writing. One member mentioned examples of topics used in classes recently taught and another suggested that while the point concerning the gap between the course description and courses was well taken, it would also apply to current classes.

J. Ruszkiewicz went on to say that the major subject of "Rhetoric and Composition" must be rhetoric and composition. One member pointed out that theory of rhetoric, such as Aristotelian rhetoric, is not currently addressed in E 306. Another member ascertained J. Ruszkiewicz's point to be that the course described in the catalog does not match the course proposed and sets up illicit expectations.

J. Ruszkiewicz was of the opinion that if an Assistant Instructor had proposed this course, the committee would have asked him or her to teach it as a 309. A member then mentioned that there had been no suggestion in the previous meeting that the curriculum proposed by L. Brodkey would not teach and focus on rhetoric and composition.

J. Ruszkiewicz then moved on to his second point concerning the direction in which the proposed curriculum would take E 306. He emphasized the significance of the change over how the course is visualized locally and nationally and that the decision to change had been made in only one meeting. He went on to say that the last systematic revision, made in 1982, took place over four or five meetings of the FEPC, which approved both a syllabus and design for the course. He pointed out that this was possibly the largest course on campus and should, therefore, be on paper before being approved by the committee. He added that since there was not much evidence of its workability, it should be tested, perhaps in one section of 398T. He then reiterated that the committee was moving too fast and added that the syllabus is sketchy. He wondered if the St. Martin's Guide would be offered for this course and concluded by asking for a reader which would provide two points of view.

A member replied that dissenting points of view would be provided by the court cases and that the text was a starting point from which students would search for arguments.

J. Ruszkiewicz responded that the proposed textbook is a limited form of argumentation without opposing arguments and that most AIs do not have a background in law.

Members then discussed what a text with opposing viewpoints would look like. J. Ruszkiewicz pointed out that he would be against any text with a single perspective, including a conservative one. Other members reiterated that multiple perspectives would be provided by students and court opinions.

One member then argued against the proposed textbook and curriculum on the grounds of its potential to undermine pluralism, expressing reservations about it setting a dangerous precedent.

Another member wondered if the issue of textbook selection might be a procedural point and asked for the mandate of the committee.

It was pointed out that J. Ruszkiewicz's understanding of the committee's mandate was more true of the previous FEPC than the current LDEPC, which is authorized to approve textbooks.

One member disagreed that the revision in 1982, recalled by J. Ruszkiewicz earlier, was in fact the last, systematic revision of E 306, since in the Spring of 1987 the LDEPC after a couple of meetings had determined to revise the syllabus, which was actually written over the summer.

Brodkey reminded the committee that she had proposed a curriculum, not a syllabus, and adjourned the meeting.