

## Lecturers selfish

English lecturer James Skaggs' gratuitous insult to the permanent faculty ("literati" who are "overpaid, underworked," *Texan*, Feb. 20) should alert the University community to the contemptuous attitudes of those the English department often must employ to staff three required University courses. I am one of the "literati" he reviles, and he is dead wrong on nearly all counts. According to figures presented in the *Austin American-Statesman*, my salary after 11 years of teaching, research and service in administrative positions at UT is slightly more than \$4,000 above what a high school teacher in Austin earns at the same stage. I'm not complaining — this is a career I truly love — but my work weeks are generally 60-hour marathons, if I include the publishing commitments

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that have produced a book and 40 articles and reviews. Both Skaggs and *Texan* editor David Woodruff also err in presuming that I and my colleagues abandon lower-division and composition courses because we write about literature in scholarly books and journals; I have taught a course in composition or editing virtually every semester since I joined the UT faculty, usually coupled with another lower-division course as well. My course-instructor survey ratings have been high in composition, and I have received a teaching award for these efforts.

But Skaggs is right about the examples of self-interest revealed by the high-flown rhetoric swirling around the postponement of the 346K requirement. More lecturers seem to be interested in their one-year teaching contracts than in the actual quality of that course. Our rhetoric and composition faculty

members have a financial interest in 346K because their potentially lucrative textbooks might be adopted on a mass scale. Faculty union representatives feel honor-bound to protect each and every academic job ever created. A few other responding members of our English faculty nurse long-time grudges against the department, for complicated reasons. There is self-interest everywhere with 346K, even in my case — as English graduate studies chair, I want to see my department cease the public bickering of these past three years and regain its momentum toward overtaking the 10 top-ranked English departments in the nation. This achievement would do more to help the university and the students than any cheap points scored by deriding our faculty and their teaching accomplishments.

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