

New focus for writing course draws support from students

Delayed E306 revisions prompt some to call for options

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Students generally support the intentions of changing the syllabus for English 306 to focus on issues of race and sex, but they expressed concern Wednesday about making such a class mandatory.

Plans to alter the theme and content of E306 for fall 1990 ended Monday when Standish Meacham, College of Liberal Arts dean, announced that no changes would occur until fall 1991 because of concerns that the changes were being made too hastily.

"I think discussing issues of race and sex is a good thing, because many people don't have an opportunity to discuss those things otherwise," said Alex Ho, computer science junior. "The aim of E306 is to learn writing skills, but I wonder what the effect would be if you can learn something about racism and sexism at the same time."

Peggie McClish-Werlinger, English senior, said that she was not sure about the specifics of the E306 proposal, but she agreed that incorporating these issues into the course syllabus would help fulfill the role of the University.

"I think that raising student consciousness is the goal of the University," she said. "The fact that students in that class are forced to write about those issues will be advantageous and good. You really have to think about the issues when you write about them."

Some students feel that the main issue is whether students have any choice in the courses they take. Adherents of this

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view say the University should offer classes that deal with issues of race and sex, but it should not force students to take them.

"It's not within the University's functions to influence the values or opinions of students," said Mike Neely, electrical engineering junior. "It should be up to the student whether or not he wants to take that course."

Tony Castillo, psychology freshman, said that although he feels the idea of a socially conscious E306 is good, it would be wrong to make it mandatory.

"There should be an option between the traditional course and the proposed one," Castillo said. "If a racist person is forced to take the class, he will be confrontational. You can't tell someone, 'You will be more diverse.' It's just not realistic."

Many students questioned whether a class intended to teach rhetoric and composition was the right place to discuss the

issues of difference.

"I don't think E306 is the right place for these issues," said Andy Peebles, a correspondence student. "I think the administration dumped a hot potato in the English department's lap. It smacks of tokenism to me."

Peebles suggested instead establishing "a yearlong mandatory course, where the first semester would deal with minority issues in the U.S., and the second semester would focus on the Third World."

R.V. Rice, a graduate student in Latin American studies, said that incorporating these issues in E306 is a good idea, but that they really should be discussed in other classes.

"I'm not sure about making it the subject of an English class which is intended to teach the proper use of the English language," Rice said. "The role of women and minorities has traditionally been left out of texts on a high school level. These issues should be discussed, but the proper place is in history and social science courses."

Elizabeth Miller, psychology senior, pointed out that people should not forget the purpose of E306, which she says is crucial to the survival of the students who do take it.

"The class is meant to help people learn how to write on a college level," Miller said. "You can do it with traditional literature or with these issues, as long as you teach them. I hate all the political arguments. People should have the choice to take what they want."