A CRITICAL REVIEW OF RECENT REPRESENTATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS' "COMPOSITION PROBLEM"

Prepared by
Stephen P. Witte
Associate Professor of English
University of Texas at Austin

Summary of the Review

The following document examines critically three classes of representations of the "composition problem" in general and the English 346K "problem" in particular at the University of Texas. Specifically, the document examines the general and particular "problem" in terms of logistics, competing interests in the Department of English, and an underlying philosophical or theoretical dispute about the nature of writing and writing courses. Based on the detailed examinations and critiques of representations of the E346K "problem" as a logistical problem, the document concludes that if an "emergency" situation demanded that E346K be suspended, that emergency was created by administrative failures that could have been averted. On the basis of its examination of representations suggesting competing and conflicting interests within the English Department or suggesting a theoretical dispute about the nature of E346K and other writing courses in the English Department, the document also concludes that it is unlikely that the current English Department can live up to its responsibilities for teaching writing at the University of Texas.

Table of Contents

page
Summary i
Table of Contents i
Section I: English 346K as a Logistical Problem 2
I.A. Statements of the Problem 2
I.B. Critique of Representations of the "Problem" as a Logistical Problem 3
1. The Number of Students 3
2. The Number of Lecturers 4
3. The Qualifications of E346K Teachers 5
4. Registration Practices 7
5. E346K Standards 7
I.C. Summary of Critique 7
Section II: E346K as a Problem of Competing Interests in the Department 8
II.A. Statements of the Problem 9
II.B. Critique of Representations of the "Problem" as a Problem of Competing Interests 11
1. Integrity of Individual Faculty Members 11
2. Regular vs. Temporary Faculty 12
3. Interests of Literary Specialists vs. Interests of Writing Specialists 13
II.C. Summary of Critique 23
Section III: E346K as a Philosophical/Theoretical Problem . 24
III.A. Statements of the Problem 24
III.B. Critique of Representations of the "Problem" as a Philosophical/Theoretical Problem 25
1. The Content of Writing Courses 25
2. University vs. Non-University Writing Courses . 29
III.C Summary of Critique 30
Section IV: Some Concluding Remarks 31
IV.A. The E346K Suspension in an Institutional Context 31
IV.B. Notes Toward a Comprehensive Solution 34
A Note About Writing the Present Document 34

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF RECENT REPRESENTATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS' "COMPOSITION PROBLEM"

Prepared by
Stephen P. Witte
Associate Professor of English
University of Texas at Austin

On or about February 10, 1985, University officials decided to suspend, beginning in the Fall of 1985, English 346K, a course titled "Writing in the Disciplines." E346K is a required junior-level composition course and is part of the new composition sequence that emerged from several years' work of an English Department Committee on Composition and a Faculty Senate Committee (the Vick Committee). E346K was legislated as a replacement for four composition courses (E307, E308, E310, and E317) taught under the old composition sequence. As a result of the suspension of E346K, University officials apparently anticipate having to dismiss some 50 lecturers who presently teach on a "temporary" basis in the Department of English.

Since the University's announcement of its "twin" decisions, a large number of news stories and opinion pieces have appeared in The Daily Texan and other newspapers and a fair number of opinions have been expressed on the floor of the Faculty Senate. If these statements suggest anything at all, it is that the "composition problem," to use former English Department Chairman Joseph Moldenhauer's term, at the University of Texas is indeed more real than imagined. From this writer's perspective, the University's recent solution to the "problem" threatens the very core of the University's educational mission and undermines its integrity as a state-supported institution dedicated to developing the knowledge and skills of its students.

The present review has two major purposes. First, given Section 2.1.1 of the Regent's Rules, which authorizes the suspension of courses under emergency conditions, one purpose of the present document is to determine whether, in fact, an emergency existed and, if it did exist, how it came to exist. A second purpose is to examine in some depth the "composition problem" as it has been recently represented.

Three critical assumptions inform the present review: (1) that institutional communities and individual members of them cannot solve problems that they are unable to represent adequately to themselves, (2) that misrepresented or poorly represented problems lead to unworkable or ill-conceived solutions, and (3) that conscientious and well intentioned professional educators and administrators will in good faith take action to solve serious problems that are adequately represented.

The multitude of public statements made recently about the "composition problem" provide an adequate starting point for the

present review. These statements fall fairly well into three categories of representations of the "composition problem." The first group includes those representations that depict the problem as one of, primarily, logistics. The second category includes representations that see the problem as one of, primarily, competing interests within the Department of English. The third class of representations contains those that depict the problem as involving philosophical and theoretical disagreements over the nature of writing curricula. In the sections that follow, each of these classes of representations is outlined and, in turn, critiqued.

Section I

English 346K as a Logistical Problem

This representation of the problem is best seen in English Department Chairman W. O. S. Sutherland's statements to the press and in his February 15 letter to the English faculty. Some of Sutherland's major points are reiterated in Rebhorn's February 25 column in The Texan, a statement that was apparently signed by 13 other members of the English faculty, and in Wadlington's March 7 letter to The Texan. It should, of course, be noted that the following statements and concerns have implications for not only the class of logistical representations, but for the other two categories of representations as well.

I. A. Statements of the Problem (Quotations in this and subsequent sections are arranged alphabetically by source.)

Rebhorn (a): "The English department simply does not have personnel qualified to teach writing courses in all the different disciplines studied here at the University, and it is highly unlikely that it could ever assemble such a staff" (The Texan, Feb. 25).

Rebhorn (b): E346K is "a logistical nightmare. Students sign up for sections of the course to suit their schedules rather than their fields of study, so that a humanities variant of the course, for example, may well be filled with majors in business, the natural sciences and the social sciences" (The Texan, Feb 25.)

Sutherland (a): Aproximately "7,500" students would enroll in E346K during the 1985-1986 academic year (Feb. 15 letter to the English faculty). "There is no way we can be assured of enough qualified staff to teach this course in our expanding university" (Feb. 15 letter). "If the course were fully implemented, UT would have to hire about 90 lecturers, or 40 more than currently employed,

to handle the student load" (Austin American-Statesman, Feb. 20; content attributed to Sutherland).

Sutherland (b): "The concept of the course .... has been undermined by the logistics of registration" (Feb. 15 letter). "'Instead of registering for the variant that was appropriate for their major, many students registered for the variant appropriate to their schedule'" (Sutherland quoted in Austin American-Statesman, Feb. 20).

Sutherland (c): E346K is "a course whose standards we do not understand or are not willing to enforce" (Feb. 15 letter).

Sutherland (d): "We were given to understand when the Department approved the course in 1978 that the new requirement would call for less staff than the old" (Feb. 15 letter).

Wadlington: "Despite the fact that we are the largest English department in the country, we do not have anything like the staff to teach all conceiveable courses involving instruction in literacy in the University. And even if we had the staff, it would be a bad idea if we did so. The teaching of writing is the responsibility of the entire professoriat" (The Texan, March 7).

I. B. Critique of Representations of the "Problem" as a Logistical Problem

The logistical representation of the problem centers on, primarily, five concerns--the number of students the course would have to serve, the number of teachers required to teach the course, the qualifications of the teachers, registration practices, and grading standards.

1. The number of students. The estimated 7,500 students that would enroll in E346K during 1985-1986 is just that, an estimate. The actual number may be smaller or larger; one cannot tell because no bases for the estimate have ever been made public and because enrollment patterns have not been established. In any event, the estimated 7,500 students translates into 300 sections of E346K, at 25 students per section, for 1985-1986.

If 7,500 is a fairly accurate estimate, the number is quite large to be sure. And it is a frightening number for the English Department, as it would be for any department on campus. However, on at least three occasions, Sutherland was advised that exemption procedures should be implemented in order to make the course workable. Two of the documents coming out of the ad hoc committees set up by Associate Dean Weinstock over two years ago made those recommendations. Sutherland must have read those documents, for he has discussed them with several faculty mem-

bers; and he has stated his unwillingness to implement their recommendations. As late as October of 1984, Ruszkiewicz, Director of Freshman English, met with Sutherland and offered assistance in developing and implementing exemption procedures. That assistance was refused. The E346K Committee, headed by Malof, did take up the issue of exemptions, but not until November of 1984, three years later than the Department should have taken up the matter. Even though under existing rules credit for E346K cannot be transferred in if the credit is not earned in upper-division courses, the existing rules do not preclude developing exemption procedures.

The development and implementation of adequate exemption procedures could very well have eliminated the E346K requirement for at least 20%--and the percentage could actually be larger--of the projected 7,500 students. That is to say, 1,500 students (the equivalent 60 sections of E346K) could have been exempted for 1985-1986.

2. The Number of Lecturers. According to Sutherland, 40 additional lecturers would have to be hired for 1985-1986 to staff the 300 E346K sections for the estimated 7,500 students. The projected 300 sections could have been distributed over the acdemic year in the following way: 135 sections in each of the two regular semesters and 15 sections in each of the two summer sessions. With an adequate exemption policy and an adequate exemption procedure, the projected number of sections could have been reduced to at least 240. With an adequate exemption program, the distribution could have been as follows: 105 in each of the regular semesters and 15 in each of the summer sessions.

To understand the implications of these numbers for staffing, the numbers need to be placed in the context of previous composition course offerings in the Department, before the new composition sequence or requirement went into effect. That would be Fall, 1983; enrollment figures, and the corresponding figures for the number of lecturers for 1984-1985, are largely irrelevant because the current academic year is a transition year--and was all along conceived of as such--between the old requirement and the new requirement. That is to say, the current academic year is an anomaly.

That the current year is, in fact, anomalous with respect to the amount of composition taught in the English Department becomes obvious if one compares the number of sections taught in Fall, 1984, with the number of sections taught in Fall, 1983, the last Fall semester under the old requirement. In Fall, 1984, the Department taught, according to its own summaries, 176 sections of composition, 82 fewer than it taught in Fall, 1983. In terms of staff, this comparison means that the Department needed approximately 20 fewer FTE's to staff its writing courses in the Fall of 1984 than it needed in the Fall of 1983.

Thus for the purpose of determining major changes in the staffing needs of the Department, the projections for 1985-1986

need to be compared to the number of sections of composition the Department taught in 1983-1984. In the Fall of 1983, the Department taught, again according to summaries prepared by the English Department, 258 sections of courses for which students received composition credit under the old requirement. Included among these 258 sections are E306-equivalent courses (121 sections), English 603A (10 sections), E307 (35 sections), E 308 (35 sections), E310 (22 sections), E317 (30 sections), E325M (5 sections). If we assume that the total number of E306-equivalent sections and E603A sections does not increase over the Fall, 1983, level--and there is no reason to expect that it would--and that E325M remains at its current level of two sections per semester, then 125 sections of composition offered under the old requirement (i.e., all sections of E307, E308, E310, and E317) would have no longer been taught during the Fall of 1985. If we also assume that no exemption procedures for E346K could have been implemented, then the Department would have had to offer and staff only 10 more sections of composition during each of the two regular semesters of 1985-1986 (i.e., 135 sections minus the 125 sections no longer taught under the new program) than it offered during the regular semesters of 1983-1984. With adequate placement procedures, at least 20 fewer sections of composition would have had to be offered during each of the regular semesters of 1985-1986 than were taught during the two regular semesters of 1983-1984.

With only 10 additional sections of composition needed during each regular semester of 1985-1986, the equivalent of 2 1/2 additional lecturers would have had to be hired to staff them, not the 40 Sutherland claims. And it should be pointed out that even if Sutherland's claim were based on hirings above the anomalous 1984-1985 year, his number of projected hirings is inflated by a factor of 2. With adequate exemption procedures, the number of lecturers would have been reduced below the 1983-1984 level by a minimum of 6.

Thus if the anomalous 1984-1985 academic year is discounted, it is difficult to see how an emergency could have existed with respect to staffing needs for E346K in 1985-1986.

3. The Qualifications of E346K Teachers. Wadlington, Sutherland, and Rebhorn state that the Department neither has nor can acquire, to quote Rebhorn, "the personnel qualified to teach writing courses in all the different disciplines studied here at the University." This claim, of course, has logistical and staffing implications so it is treated here; but its roots lie in a philosophical argument over the nature of English departments and their curricula, arguments that are addressed in a subsequent section. For the present, it is sufficient to point to number of facts.

First, it was never assumed that E346K would attempt to teach writing "in all the different disciplines"; the limited number of variants indicates that. These variants were set up to address common denominators across comparable disciplines, although, it must be admitted, more than 6 variants of E346K may eventually have to be created.

Second, for over 40 years persons with traditional Ph.D.s in literature have been teaching technical, scientific, and business writing and doing so successfully. The 30 sections of E317 offered in the Fall of 1983 strongly suggests a measure of success in those areas in the English Department, as does the growth--in English departments throughout the country--of programs in these fields of writing. It is, of course, true that one needs to make some effort to understand the written discourse of different disciplines and to develop an appreciation for the knowledge paradigms and analytic methods of other disicplines in order to teach writing in those areas successfully. The question is thus primarily one of whether English faculty want to prepare themselves to do so. Sutherland's and Rebhorn's statements suggest that at least some of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in the English Department do not. There is, however, no evidence that the challenge of teaching E346K is not welcomed by the Department's current lecturers, additional lecturers the Department *might* have to hire, most tenured and tenure-track faculty now in the Department (recall that Rebhorn's letter to *The Texan* bore only 13 signatures), or tenured and tenure-track faculty the Department could hire in the future. Finally, the regular faculty whose specialization is writing have not been allowed to assist in preparing faculty to teach E346K.

This second fact leads to a third, namely, that the study of writing has re-emerged during the last twenty years as a definable discipline, after a period of about 70 years during which it was made subordinate to literary study in English departments, an interesting history that is surveyed briefly in a subsequent section. And the English Department, until recently (see below), has reacted responsibly to this re-emergence. It assembled the strongest group of writing researchers of any department in the nation, and it created a Ph.D. specialization in rhetoric. This graduate program, by the end of Summer 1985, will have produced 8 Ph.D.s, all of whom have accepted tenure-track positions at other universities. (By comparison, only one traditional literature Ph.D. in English has been awarded a tenure-track position in the last six years.) Other universities have reacted similarly to the re-emergence of the study of writing as a discipline--California-Berkeley, Minnesota, Carnegie-Mellon, Purdue, Illinois at Chicago, and California-San Diego, to name but a few. Given the fact of 100% placement in tenure-track posiitons, University of Texas Ph.D.s in rhetoric certainly compete favorably with Ph.D.s from these other programs. The point, of course, is that Ph.D.s from rhetoric programs such as the one at Texas are not only qualified to teach courses such as E346K, but they are also able to carry out the kind of basic research that can make such courses ever more useful to the students who enroll in them.

Finally, there is simply no evidence that recruitment or hiring of regular faculty in the English department over the past two years has done more than pay lip-service to whatever the

specialized training that Sutherland and Rebhorn claim is necessary for teaching E346K. In addition, the Department has expended very little energy in finding out what new understandings of written discourse would be required for the Department faculty to teach E346K courses successfully. No training of faculty has occurred in the Department; the syllabi that were developed three years ago for the E346K variants have yet to be distributed to the teaching faculty, have not been used by them, and have not been revised.

4. Registration Practices. The "logistical nightmare" to which Rebhorn refers and Sutherland alludes was actually created by the English Department, not the students who enrolled in E346K. This point becomes obvious when the percentages (based on 1980 figures) of students enrolled in various colleges and programs at UT are compared to the percentages of E346K variants offered in the Spring of 1985, the current semester. In 1980, approximately 21% of the UT undergraduate population ~~was~~ were enrolled in either the College of Fine Arts or the College of Liberal Arts. However, 39% of the 89 currently available E346K sections are designated "Arts and Humanities" sections. Furthermore, 27% of the undergraduate population in 1980 were enrolled in the College of Business; but the English Department has never offered the legislated E346K "business" variant. In addition, of all undergraduates, 41% in 1980 were enrolled in science and engineering programs, but only 19% of the current E346K sections are designated for those students. Unless it can be shown that enrollment percentages differ markedly from those of 1980, there clearly exists a disjunction between the number and types of E346K sections offered this semester and the needs of the undergraduate population the course was set up to serve. Is it any wonder that Rebhorn and others find in their "Arts and Humanities" sections of E346K students "with majors in business, the natural sciences and the social sciences"? It would appear that those students did not enroll according to their majors for the simple reason that the English department did not offer the E346K sections that would allow those students to do so.

5. E346K Standards. Sutherland's statement about E346K standards is quite ambiguous: "...standards we do not understand or are not willing to enforce." If the standards are "not understood," it is because they have never been explored by the Department and hence never articulated to the faculty. If the department is "not willing to enforce" standards that do exist, the fault lies with the administration--or lack thereof--of the English E346K sections. To administer any successful composition program is to, if not articulate standards a priori, to develop them. The administration of E346K allowed for neither.

I. C. Summary of Critique

On the basis of the quotations that represent the "composition problem" as one of logistics, it is possible to argue that an emergency situation existed such that Sutherland's recommendation to suspend E346K and Fonken's decision to suspend were justified.

The above critiques, however, point to the need to qualify greatly that conclusion. The critiques of the five components of the logistical representation strongly indicate that the "emergency" did not exist because of the large number of students who would enroll in E346K, did not exist because of the number of teachers/lecturers that would need to be hired to teach E346K sections, did not exist because available teachers/lecturers lacked the qualifications necessary to teach E346K, and did not exist because registration was a "nightmare." None of these components or variables, the critiques indicate, lay beyond departmental, college, or university administrators' control of or ability to manipulate them in order to sustain a faculty-established course. Indeed, the facts strongly suggest that insofar as an emergency did exist, it existed by virtue of administrative inaction and administrative inattention to details that must be considered any time an educational program is offered.

Although E346K "standards" are and should be of great concern to the English Department, the only emergency suggested by them is the urgent necessity that the English Department deal with them. This process of developing and articulating standards could have been undertaken quite sometime ago, had a mechanism been established in the Department for doing so. Indeed, the suspension of E346K means that an administrative failure of some sort occurred at one or more levels.

In sum, if an emergency did exist with respect to any of the five components of the logistical representation of the "composition problem," it appears to have been caused either by administrative incompetence at one or more levels or by deliberate administrative inaction at one or more levels, not by anything inherently wrong from a logistical standpoint with E346K. Finally, it needs to be pointed out that the lack of funds to hire lecturers was never proffered as a reason for suspending E346K; rather, Sutherland pointed to the resultant savings to the University as a happy consequence of the suspension.

Section II

E346K as a Problem of Competing Interests in the Department

This representation of the problem takes various forms, depending on the particular interest being served, charged, or defended. Statements from Carver, Gribben, Kinneavy, Megaw, Skaggs, Sutherland, undergraduate students, and Wevill illustrate this representation of the problem.

II. A. Statements of the Problem

Carver (a): "... if the course [E346K] uses one of his [Kinneavy's] textbooks, so much the better" (The Texan, Feb. 25).

Carver (b): "But rhetoricians, it seems, from the days of Socrates on down have never been much concerned with truth" (The Texan, Feb. 25). (In context, the statement invites the inference that Kinneavy is a liar.)

Carver (c): "We always treat our legitimate children better than we treat our bastards" (memorial reconstruction of a statement before the Faculty Senate, March 4).

Gribben (a): "'...most of our regular faculty is enormously relieved that we have the opportunity to reassess the premises of 346K'" (Austin American-Stateman story).

Gribben (b): "Our rhetoric and composition faculty members have a financial interest in 346K because their potentially lucrative textbooks might be adopted on a mass scale" (The Texan, Feb. 22).

Gribben (c): "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 ... and regain its momentum toward overtaking the 10 top-ranked departments in the nation" (The Texan, Feb. 22).

Gribben (d): The Faculty Senate should not concern itself with a "family quarrel" within the English Department (statement to the Faculty Senate, March 4).

Kinneavy (a): "... there is a serious effort on the part of a small but influential group to do away with the essential nature of the course [i.e., E346K] and either to get rid of the course entirely or substitute for it a course about literature" (The Texan, Feb. 20).

Kinneavy (b): "The alleged objections to the course actually mask some real objections to it. The suspension of the course [i.e., E346K] really achieves the following objectives:

*It gets rid of the lecturers and the 'lecturer problem' immediately;

*It takes away from some English teachers what they view as the distasteful job of working in

business and technical writing;

*It bolsters enrollment in the literature courses;

*It severely de-emphasizes composition in the Department of English" (The Texan, Feb. 20).

Kinneavy (c): Teaching E346K would make composition "take the place of the main event [i.e., literary study]" (statement to the Faculty Senate, March 4).

Megaw: "Prodessor Carver's argument that writing can be taught in combination with literature ... fails to address the more important question of whether it will be" (The Texan, March 7).

Skaggs (a): "There is little doubt that the primary aim underlying the decision to axe E 346K is twofold: first, to dismiss a large group of faculty, the lecturers, who, because of their willingness to teach despite adverse circumstances, pose some vague sort of threat to the overpaid, underworked senior faculty; second, to 'discipline' a rapidly growing composition-rhetoric program that, because of its popularity and effectiveness, again poses a threat, possibly real this time, to the unpopular established literature domination of the department" (The Texan, Feb. 20).

Skaggs (b): "From the comfort of his [i.e., Gribben's] tenure in the Ivory Tower, he [i.e., Gribben] has the gall to attack colleagues who are trying to continue their careers in higher education, despite the continuous undermining of their efforts by their own colleagues, and then he pretends that such an attack is really a service to the University" (The Texan, Feb. 26).

Students: As of this writing, every one of the student-authored letters appearing in The Texan argue for the reinstatement of E346K, as do the editorials written by The Texan editor, David Woodruff, primarily because stu-dents seem to believe that they need the kind of instruction offered by E346K.

Sutherland: "Most of us had looked for a new departmental structure next year; indeed, the Dean had recommended a Division of Composition which would have separated E.346K and the temporary staff from the more traditional courses and the regular staff. That new structure would have solved the internal strains within the department" (Feb. 15 letter).

Wevill (a): "To excoriate the English lecturers as 'contemptuous' and 'self-interested,' and to hint that certain faculty members have a vested interest in the

writing courses and/or 'grudges against the department' is to indulge in the very bickering Gribben professes to dislike. And, more seriously, to misrepresent the nature of the past few years' quarrel which the _Texan_ has carried in some detail" (_The Texan_, March 7).

Wevill (b): "...we in the English faculty might ask ourselves just what our recent actions mean, and whether something better and more sensible can't be done than to sacrifice a generation of of dedicated teachers, their livelihood, and the course they teach, to a narrow sense of expedience and personal ambition. The department is not an abstraction we should worship and serve. It is ourselves and who we are and what we do" (_The Texan_, March 7).

II. B. Critique of Representations of the "Problem" as a Problem of Competing Interests in the Department

Representations of the "problem" as one of competing interests can be grouped into basically three classes. The first class includes those that reflect adversely on the professional integrity of individual faculty members. The second class includes those representations that depict the "problem" as one in which regular faculty are pitted against temporary faculty. The third and most important class contains those representations that see the problem as rooted in a conflict between the interests of literature specialists and the interests of writing specialists.

1. The Integrity of Individual Faculty Members. Some of the above quotations raise questions about the integrity of English Department faculty members. Although these attacks probably better serve as an outlet for the frustrations of the writer than they serve as a means to advance a cause, they must be addressed here, if only to dismiss them.

Skaggs' (see Skaggs-b) and Wevill's (see Wevill-a above) outright dismissals of Gribben's statements about "contemptuous" and "self-interested" lecturers stand on their own merits and need not be elaborated on here.

Skaggs' assault on "the overpaid, underworked senior faculty" (see Skaggs-a above) can perhaps be excused, for surely he is entitled to vent his anger, in _The Texan_, over having been notified by _The Texan_ that he had lost his job.

Gribben's assault on "our rhetoric and composition faculty members" (see Gribben-b above) in general and Carver's attack on Kinneavy (see Carver-a above) in particular cannot be so easily discounted--unless, of course, the situation poses a threat to the careers of Carver and Gribben. Charges such as Carver's and Gribben's, ungrounded as they are in fact, serve two purposes and two purposes only. First, they turn those who make the charges

into a source of public embarrassment to their Departmental colleagues and to the University community at large. Second, they divert attention away from substantive and important issues. As Megaw (_The Texan_, March 7) reminds us, they are, afterall, mere "Piddle, dust in the eyes."

2. Regular vs. Temporary Faculty. Several of the above quotations suggest that competing interests of the regular and temporary faculty lie at the heart of the "composition problem" in general and the E346K problem in particular. To be sure, a situation requiring the use of lecturers to teach large numbers of students in an English department that aspires to be among the "10 top-ranked" (see Gribben-c above) is less than ideal, for a number of reasons. Beyond such worthy aspirations, the need to hire large numbers of temporary faculty has created an enormous, and as yet unresolved, problem in faculty governance.

During recent years, the need to hire large numbers of lecturers has created, in the case of the English Department, a faculty nearly equally divided between first-class citizens having all the benefits and responsibilities of a tenured or tenure-track position and second-class citizens having neither benefits nor responsibilities, except for teaching basic, multi-sectioned courses for considerably less pay. From the standpoint of the temporary faculty, teaching basic courses is a full-time job, leaving little or no time to do the scholarly and creative work by which professional advancement is achieved. From the standpoint of most regular faculty, hiring tenure-track faculty to teach courses in writing primarily will not lead to tenure or promotion in the English Department. In addition, enfranchising large numbers of temporary faculty, who are not required to publish (though many lecturers do publish anyway), can be said to dilute or detract from the quality of the English faculty at large and to threaten the image that many, including Gribben, in the Department would justifiably like to be able to project. On the other hand, not enfranchising temporary faculty cuts them off even more than their temporary status from the academic life at a "university of the first class," a significant part of which is a role in the decision-making processes of one's department.

The crucial point is simply this: Neither temporary faculty nor their use in the Department created the "composition problem." The "pool" of temporary faculty is, instead, a major consequence of it. The claim that the "pool of temporary lecturers" creates a power base for furthering the special interests of the rhetoric and composition specialists among the regular faculty is to confuse historical coincidence with design. No one in the English Department caused the massive increases in undergraduate enrollments at UT during the 1970's, increases that happen to parallel decreases in the demand nationally for Ph.D.s in literature. In the late 1960s, the Department of English had about 175 teaching assistants, primarily literature graduate students who taught two writing courses each semester. At the present time, the Department has about 75 assistant instructors. With graduate enrollments in the English Department increasingly

lagging behind the increase in undergraduate demands for writing courses, the Department began hiring temporary faculty to teach courses that had been taught historically by teaching assistants working on graduate degrees in literature. No one among the regular faculty believed or argued that hiring temporary faculty, that creating a group of second-class citizens in the Department, was an ideal solution to the problem of burgeoning enrollments. No interests at a "university of the first class" are best served by a faculty made up of 40% to 50% temporary teachers. Neither should a refusal to ignore the lecturers as teachers or the courses and students they teach be construed as tacitly signifying approval of hiring temporary people to teach a large percentage of the classes taught in the largest department of a major "university of the first class."

It appears to this writer that the present situation in the Department of English admits two possible conclusions:

> **Conclusion 1:** If the courses taught by large numbers of temporary faculty cannot be staffed by regular faculty, perhaps those courses, as Lesser (The Texan, March 7) implies, do not belong in a university.

> **Conclusion 2:** If regular faculty do not want to teach courses that are firmly within the liberal arts tradition in higher education, if they do not want to teach courses mandated by the University faculty at large, and if they do not wish to develop new knowledge applicable to those courses, then either those faculty do not belong in a "university of the first class" or they do not belong in the department charged with the responsibility of offering and teaching those courses.

3. Interests of Literary Specialists vs. Interests of Writing Specialists. As the preceding discussion suggests, representing the "problem" as one involving the different interests of temporary and regular faculty is in some ways a misrepresentation of the "problem." To be sure, as Gribben (see Gribben-c above) has pointed out, "self-interest is everywhere with 346K." Nowhere is this "self-interest" more evident than in statements that suggest a conflict between the interests of literature specialists and the interests of writing specialists--many of whom, given the Department's current makeup, happen to be temporary faculty.

Sutherland's brief description and endorsement (Feb. 15 letter) of Dean King's recommended "Division of Composition" is in this regard revealing: this Division "would have separated E.346K and the temporary staff from the more traditional courses and the regular staff." The critical issue rests squarely on Sutherland's juxtapositing of "E.346K and the temporary staff" on the one hand and "traditional courses and the regular staff" on the other. This juxtapositioning admits several possible inter-

pretations. It could imply that regular and temporary faculty should not be housed in the same department. It could also mean that E346K and courses like it have no place in the Department of English, which defines its "tradition" in terms of literature courses. It could also mean that the teaching and study of functional literacy warrants only the attention of temporary faculty. And it could mean that the goals of E346K and courses like it are incompatible with the goals of the English Department.

Now, if we extend the basic assumption that seems to underlie this "recommended" separation, it would follow that all interests not specifically tied to the study of literature should also be separated from the English Department. These interests would include at the very least linguistics, teacher education, history of the language, rhetoric, composition, creative writing, folklore, American studies, and women's studies--all of which are represented in the English Department by some of its most productive and best known scholars. It therefore follows that if the "recommended" separation and the suspension of E346K were not designed for the sole purpose of eliminating the need for "temporary" faculty in the English Department, then both the "recommended" separation and the E346K suspension represent attempts to change the fundamental nature and mission of the Department of English. Because such a change would have profound implications for the rest of the University community and its demonstrated commitment to improving the writing of its students, it is in this context that the representation of the "composition problem" as one involving the competing interests of literary specialists and writing specialists must be seen.

Minimizing this conflict in the English Department by characterizing it to the Faculty Senate as a "family quarrel" (see Gribben-d above) is both to misrepresent the importance of the "quarrel" and to understate its implication for the the University community at large. A more accurate indication of the importance of the "quarrel" and its implications is Carver's (see Carver-d above) stormy declaration that "We always treat our legitimate children better than our bastards." Carver's declaration that the Department has accorded the status of "bastard" to composition strongly supports Kinneavy's claims (see Kinneavy-a, b, and c above) that teaching E346K would make composition "take the place of the main event [i.e., literary study]" at all levels in the curriculum. The supplanting of composition by literary study that Kinneavy fears will occur in the Department stands, of course, at odds with the faculty-legislated composition requirement.

The notion of a "family quarrel" and the reference to composition as a "bastard" child in the English Department, together with Sutherland's appeal to "tradition," introduce an important historical dimension to the "composition problem," as reflected in the controversy ensuing from the recent suspension of E346K.

Quarrels in academic departments are, of course, not uncom-

mon. Neither are they necessarily bad. Quarrels are one of the principal ways by which disciplines define and redefine themselves; and if they are resolved, they lead to an adjustment of the discipline to the demands that a changing world makes on it. Such "quarrels" in most departments are usually resolved productively.

The "family quarrel" to which Gribben refers is not endemic to UT's English Department. It is a "quarrel" that has persisted in English studies for over 100 years, a period considerably longer than that during which English has been considered a discipline and English departments have been administrative units in universities. Moreover, it is a "quarrel" whose history suggests that if the modern English department contains a "bastard" child, that "bastard" is the study of English and American literature.

A brief survey of that history will illustrate. This survey is based largely on an article titled "Where Do English Departments Come From?" (College English, Feb. 1967) by William Riley Parker. (Parker's work on the poet John Milton is widely acknowledged as unsurpassed. Parker served as Secretary of the Modern Language Association (MLA), the professional organization to which most literary scholars belong, and he served as editor of Publications of the Modern Language Association (PMLA), long regarded as one of the most prestigious journals of literary scholarship). In all essential points, Parker's historical account of the rise of English departments agrees with Arthur N. Applebee's more extended and comprehensive history, Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974) and with Don Cameron Allen's account--The Ph.D. in English and American Literature (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978)--of the development of English studies in American colleges and universities.

Parker begins his essay by noting that if he intended for his study to be a sermon rather than a history lesson, he would take as his text Cicero's claim that "'Not to know what happened before one was born is always to be a child'" (p. 339). Parker points out that neither the Oxford English Dictionary (1933) nor the 1925 edition of Webster's unabridged dictionary contains any reference to or definition of English as a field or course of study; the same may be said of the 1934 edition of Webster's dictionary. Such omissions from these major dictionaries of the language are, Parker contends, significant, for they indicate that English departments and, correspondingly, English as a recognized academic discipline are fairly recent phenomena, that whatever "tradition" they can claim is either of relatively recent vintage (i.e., based on practices instantiated after English departments became recognized entities in university structures) or rests on the academic ancestors of English departments. As Parker notes, the professional organization, the Modern Language Association (MLA), that helped give shape to English as literary study was not founded until 1883. Twenty institutions were represented at the organizational meeting of MLA, and "at all twenty of these

institutions there were only thirty-nine faculty members in English" (p. 341); and these faculty were not housed in English departments.

English as a "recognized academic subject," as Parker points out, "was not self-begotten" (p. 340). Rather it was born of two parents who had been well respected as academic disciplines or fields for many years. Parker's metaphorical account of the marriage and the offspring is to the point:

> Its [i.e., English's] mother, the eldest daughter of Rhetoric, was Oratory--or what we now prefer to call public speaking or, simply, speech. Its father was Philology or what we now call linguistics. Their marriage...was shortlived, and English is therefore the child of a broken home. This unhappy fact accounts, perhaps, for its early feeling of independence and its later bitterness toward both parents. I date the break with the mother, however, not from the disgraceful affair she had with Elocution, but rather from the founding of the Speech Association of America in 1914, which brought, as was hoped, the creation of many departments of speech. I date the break with the father, not from his happy marriage to Anthroplogy, but from the founding of the Linguistic Society of America in 1924, and the developing hostility of literary scholars to non-prescriptive grammar, new terminology, and the rigors of language study. Splinter groups form when their founders feel their interests neglected, and English teachers, absorbed in what they considered more important business [i.e., teaching literature] were indeed neglecting speech by 1914 and losing all vital concern with linguistics by 1924. (p. 340)

This metaphorical account, however, focuses primarily on English's rejection of its parents, not on the historical circumstances that gave rise to English as a recognizable discipline and the formation of departments of English. Although English literary studies date from Tudor times, recognition of English as a discipline in university circles is of much more recent origin: "Cambridge did not have a professor English literature until 1911" (p. 341); "Harvard was not to have a professor of English until 1876, when, ironically, it granted its first Ph.D. in English to a man who never entered the teaching profession" (p. 341); and "Oxford did not have a university chair of English literature until 1904" (p. 341).

At the University of Texas, "English" was first taught in what was from 1883 to 1891 called the "Academic Department," which also taught courses in rhetoric, Greek, Latin, modern languages, and philosophy. From 1891 to 1906, "English" was taught in the "Department of Literature, Sciences, and Arts." It is likely that a department of English was not formed until some time after 1906, after the College of Arts was created and

such a department may not have been formed until after 1921 when the College of Arts and Sciences was formed. But regardless of when after 1906 the department of English was formed at the University of Texas, it is fairly clear that before that time, courses in English literature existed alongside courses in rhetoric, language, and history.

The first faculty that was assembled for the University of Texas in 1883 suggests this configuration as well. That faculty counted among its members Leslie Waggener, whose title was "Professor of English Language, History, and Literature." Waggener appears to have been responsible for teaching courses in rhetoric, linguistics, and history, as well as literature. In 1884, Waggener was joined by two younger faculty members, George P. Garrison and L. V. Lane, who had similar teaching responsibilities and who both had the title "Assistant Instructor in English and History." But in any event, as Parker observes, the teaching of English is "a Johnny-come-lately" to the world of university studies.

But what accounts for the rise of the teaching of English and the subsequent rise of English departments? Parker argues that the rise of both can be traced to two occurrences, one in England and one in America. In England, the occurrence was the decline during the last half of 18th century of "Latin" grammar schools. Beginning in the late 1700's, "a slowly increasing number of such schools in English were professing what was called an 'English education,' in contrast to the usual classical education preparatory to a university, as their aim" (p. 342). This "English education," Parker points out, "normally included composition or 'rhetoric' in the mother tongue" (p. 342). In America, the occurrence was the publication of Benjamin Franklin's _Idea of an English School_ which proposed "a very radical idea--a utilitarian education for citizenship conducted entirely in the English language" (p. 342). This idea was instantiated in a modified form in 1751 in Philadelphia's "'English School'" which, in 1755, became a college, later to be called the University of Pennsylvania. According to Parker, the second head of the English School at Philadelphia, Ebenezer Kinnersley, "was given the title Professor of the English Tongue and Oratory" (p. 342) and became, again according to Parker, America's "first college professor of English in any sense" (p. 342). That is to say, English studies, English professors, and English departments in America derive historically from the antecedent emphasis on linguistic and rhetorical study, not literary study.

The developments in America were of a piece with events in Scottish universities of the period, events which greatly influenced American education. From 1742 to 1783 in Scotland a number of important thinkers of the period--including George Campbell, Lord Kames, David Hume, Hugh Blair, and Adam Smith--"agreed on the importance of the arts of public speaking and reading, not only for the clergyman, but also for educated citizens in general" (Parker, p. 342), an agreement that "was given both significance and permanence in April 1762 with the founding

of a regius professorship of rhetoric and belles-lettres, to which Blair was appointed" (pp. 342-343). Another outcome of these developments was the establishment at Harvard in 1806 of the Boylston professorship of rhetoric and oratory. The first holder of this professorship was none other than a man who was to become President of the United States, John Quincy Adams, thereby, as Parker notes, "setting a provocative precedent for all future teachers of English" (p. 343).

Not to be dismissed as inconsequential was the American political scene during the last half of the 18th century, a period which saw political oratory and political tracts and treatises move America toward revolution against Great Britain. In the early years of "English studies" in America there clearly operated a sense of the pragmatic, which took as its basis the art of rhetoric. This growing pragmatism was paralleled by a decline in the "power and prestige" of the classical curriculum and the rise of "the star of the modern languages" (Parker, p. 347). This sense of the pragmatic has never been completely absent from English studies or English departments; indeed, it still persists, but not in the literature component of the curriculum. Parker is worth quoting at length on this matter:

> It was the teaching of freshman composition that quickly entrenched English departments in the college and university structure--so much so that no one seemed to mind when professors of English, once freed from this slave labor, became as remote from everyday affairs as the classicists had ever been. To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever shown why it is more "useful" to know Anglo-Saxon than it is to know Latin, or educationally more valuable to know English literature than to know Greek literature; and, in my judgment, either would be a very difficult case to make. But no one needs to persuade the American public that freshman composition is essential, despite the fact that it rarely accomplishes any of its announced objectives.
>
> Surprising as the idea may first appear to you, there was, of course, no compelling reason at the outset why the teaching of _composition_ should have been entrusted to teachers of English language and literature. Teaching the language meant teaching it historically and comparatively, according to the latest methods of scientific philology. It was a far cry from freshmen themes. As everyone knew in 1883 [i.e., the year the Modern Language Association was founded], composition was a branch of rhetoric, a subject which had been a basic of the college curriculum since medieval times. As everyone knew in 1883, composition involved oratory in addition to writing intended for silent reading. Another relevant fact was a matter of recent history: composition was now permitted in the mother tongue. But

> these facts do not add up to the conclusion that the professor of rhetoric and oratory should disappear, to be supplanted by the teacher of English language and literature. In 1867, when Francis Child became Harvard's first professor of English, his post as professor of rhetoric and oratory was immediately filled by someone else. And naturally so. (p. 347; the emphasis is Parker's)

Thus it would seem that early English departments were pragmatic in at least two senses. First, they readily offered pragmatic courses such as composition. Second, they realized that since literary study itself could not be defended on pragmatic grounds, composition courses had to be a major component of the English department, guaranteeing its survival in the face of the pragmatism that has always informed higher education in America. As we shall see in a following subsection, this second kind of pragmatism, but not necessarily the first, provides a touchstone for some of the representations of the "composition problem" as involving different philosophical/theoretical views of the teaching of writing.

An additional note about the rise of departments in academic institutions is in order here. The last decade of the 19th century is pivotal, for it was during that decade that a number of forces that had been acting on higher education in America came together to alter its administrative structure drastically. Among the forces Parker mentions were "new learning, the elective system, increased specialization, acceptance of the idea that practical or useful courses had a place in higher education, and...the actual doubling of college enrollments" (p. 348; the emphasis is Parker's). It was in the 1890's and later that "departments became important administrative units, pigeon-holes into which one dropped all of the elements of a rapidly expanding curriculum" (p. 348). In this situational context, to quote Parker again at length, "English"

> became an accepted subject, grew to maturity, and planted deeply the seeds of most of its subsequent troubles as an academic discipline. Early chairman and early professors of English literature were willing if not eager to increase the prestige of their subject and the numbers of their students and course offerings by embracing, not only linguistics (including English grammar and the history of the language and even, when possible, comparative philology), but also rhetoric, which normally included, of course, oratory, elocution, and all forms of written composition. How this latter coup was possible I shall explain in a moment, but first let us remind ourselves of the full scope of the aggressiveness (some would say the acquisitiveness) exhibited by departments of "English." They were later to embrace, just as greedily, journalism, business writing, creative writing, writing for engineers, play-writing, drama and theater, and American literature, and were eventually offering courses in contemporary literature, comparative literature, the Bible and world classics in translation, American civilization, the humanities, and "English for foreigners." [Parker's article appeared in 1967; since then, the acquisitions have continued.] In sum, English departments became the catchall for the work of teachers of extremely diverse interests and training.... Disintegration was therefore inevitable. Since there was no diminishing of the various forces that caused the original creation of departmental structure in colleges of arts and sciences, splintering of departments eventually ensued, often with great bitterness and an unhealthy increase in competive spirit. (p. 348; the emphasis is Parker's)

As a consequence of its origins and the subsequent "competition and agressiveness engendered by departmentalization, 'English' has never really defined itself as a discipline" (Parker, p. 348; the emphasis is Parker's). According to Parker, before the formation of the Modern Language Association in 1883, English "was associated chaotically with rhetoric, history, and many another definable subjects" (p. 348); and in many senses, its chaotic association with definable disciplines persists. Accordingly, the "English" teacher has always suffered from a kind of professional identity crisis. Parker elaborates: "The typical English teacher in the 1890's and later no longer had a multititle, but he belonged to a department that had multi-purposes, and normally his graduate training had almost nothing to do with what he found himself doing in the classroom [i.e., teaching composition]. Having recently mastered Anglo-Saxon and the techniques of textual analysis, he began by teaching composition or speech, with perhaps an occasional survey [of literature] course to lessen the pain. Much later, if he survived, he might be allowed to teach his specialty to graduate students who, in turn, would begin by teaching freshman composition" (p. 349).

How English departments were able, in the years following the formation of the Modern Language Association in 1883, to appropriate the teaching of writing and speaking and to assert administrative control, initially, over all teaching of writing in the university can only be explained as a consequence of three historical coincidences, which had they occurred in relatively distinct periods probably would not have led to the formation of the modern catchall department of English.

The first occurrence was, of course, the decline of rhetorical study during the 19th century. As Parker shows, "historically the academic study of English literature was a protege of the study of one of the oldest subjects in the curriculum, rhetoric" (p. 349); but in the 19th century in America, the influence of the 18th Scottish rhetoricians was quite pronounced. Although they stressed the pragmatic value of rhetoric to the educated citizen, Scottish rhetoricians and their universities had come

increasingly to associate rhetoric with belles-lettres, an association that marked a significant departure from the classical separation best exemplified by Aristole's careful distinction between rhetoric and poetic. No less significant is the fact that the importance that the Scottish rhetoricians accorded secular oratory led in the 19th century to a shift in "attention from the written word to the voice and body control involved in the increasingly popular study of 'elocution'" (Parker, p. 349).

A second occurrence that worked in concert with rhetoric's consequent loss "of both integrity and independent vitality by dispersing itself to academic thinness" (p. 349) through its emphasis on elocution was the increasingly troublesome demographic fact that enrollments in American colleges and universities doubled during the last 25 years of the 19th century. As a result, at least two new concerns emerged on the national level--the variability in preparation of high school students for college or university study and the problem of determining which students should be granted entrance to college or university study. (Solutions to this latter problem gave rise, of course, to what eventually became a conflict between elitism and egalitarianism in American higher education, a conflict that a number of subsequent federal statutes and court decisions address specifically. The conflict between elitism and egalitarianism is not altogether absent from the current debate over the "composition problem," as Gribben's remarks (see Gribben-c above) and Lesser's remarks (see Lesser-b below) attest.)

To address the problems attendant on the tremendous increase in enrollments, the National Council of Education and the National Education Association appointed in 1892 the now famous "Committee of Ten" to conduct, in effect, the first national study of high school curricula. Of the ten members of the Committee, half represented the interests of colleges and universities and half represented the interests of the secondary schools; the Chair of this prestigious Committee was Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard and a long-time advocate of modern studies. Out of this Committee and the Conference on English that it sponsored at Vassar College came a recommendation that was to have a profound effect on the rise of English departments at the college level. That recommendation was that literature and composition be combined in the high school curriculum. This recommendation, which was implemented nationally on the strength of the prestige of the Committee--which included, in addition to Eliot, William Harris, U.S. Commissioner of Education, and James Angell, President of the University of Michigan. The effect was twofold: it permitted literature and composition to be combined on college entrance examinations, and it created the need to instantiate that same combination at the college level. Although the Committee's twin goals of developing student's abilities to appreciate literature and to communicate effectively cannot be faulted, there is no compelling theoretical justification--and none has ever been offered--for their conflation in either programs of study or in testing. In testing, the conflation no longer exists in any important way. The only compelling reason for the conflation of

literature and composition on either front was, and continues to be, administrative expediency.

The third occurrence, which we have already touched on, was the widespread desire to restructure colleges and universities according to "departments," in part to accommodate the great influx of students and in part to recognize differences among bodies of knowledge. In some cases, however, departments were constructed exclusively by an administrative desire to compartmentalize the university. "English" was one such department. One effect of compartmentalization or departmentalization was competition for students and for available monies. As Parker points out, the first English departments played this numbers game well and agressively so that their power in numbers could enhance their stature in the university administrative structure. One victim of this numbers game was rhetoric which, in its weakened condition at the end of the 19th century could not withstand what might be compared to a modern corporate takeover. English departments, as we have seen, quickly realized the value of not divorcing themselves completely from their progenitor, rhetoric. No one has, afterall, ever had to convince the public that college students need writing instruction. In fact, rhetoric has become the "great secret strength of 'English'" (Parker, p. 350); it "has made possible the frugal subsidizing of countless graduate students who cannot wait to escape it" (p. 350), and has thereby allowed English departments to continue to populate their graduate courses in literature even though no or few jobs in literature await those graduates. Parker's 1967 wait-and-see attitude notwithstanding, it would seem that the "union of literature and composition" was never a "true marriage" but was always rather "merely a marriage of convenience" (Parker, p. 350).

It is in the context of this history that the remarks of Carver (see Carver-c above), Gribben (see Gribben-a, -c, & -d above), and Sutherland (see Sutherland above) must be placed. Given the history of the development of English studies and English departments, the statements of Carver, Gribben, and Sutherland embody, at best, a view of history that violates the chronological development of their own discipline by denying its ancestry and, at worst, a reconstruction of that history to advance their own interests in the study and teaching of literature. Perhaps Carver, Gribben, and Sutherland should take seriously Parker's quotation from Cicero, a rhetorician: "'Not to know what happened before one was born is always to be a child'" (Parker, p. 339). It is also this historical context that lends a great deal of credence to the fears expressed by Kinneavy (see Kinneavy-a, -b, & -c above) and Megaw (see Megaw above) that the teaching of composition may be seriously threatened in the present Department of English. And it is this history that makes tenable Skaggs' (see Skaggs-a above) assertion that the "primary aim" of the suspension of E346K was "to dismiss" a large group of composition teachers and "to 'discipline' a rapidly growing composition-rhetoric program that...poses a threat...to the...established literature domination of the department."

II. C. Summary of Critique.

The foregoing critique of attempts to represent the "composition problem" as one of competing interests in the Department addressed three representations that fall into that category.

First, in addressing those representations that call into question the integrity of faculty members, the critique argued that the attacks on the personal integrity of faculty members have no basis in fact, that they are neither relevant nor valid forms of argument, that they serve only to divert attention away from important, substantive issues.

Second, the critique addressed the "composition problem" in terms of the interests of temporary and regular faculty, of lecturers and tenured or tenure-track faculty. It adopted the position that neither the discipline of English, however defined, nor the Department's professional educators are especially well served by the current division of the Department into two classes of citizens. It pointed out that the two-class structure of the Department raises serious questions about whether a system of governance that would be considered "fair" by both classes of faculty could even be implemented in the Department. The question of governance in a two-class Department has been, in effect, decided on a supposedly interim basis when Dean King suspended the Department's existing governance document and placed governance almost completely in the hands of the Chairman, two consequences of which were Sutherland's recommendations, made without soliciting faculty advice, to suspend E346K and to dismiss a large number of lecturers. Overall, the critique suggests that at least part of the "composition problem" for some members of the Department appears to be the number of lecturers required to teach the course.

Third, the critique examined representations that saw the "composition problem" as one involving the different interests of literature specialists and writing specialists. This "quarrel" was shown to be deeply embedded in the history of English studies and English departments, a history that some members of the Department have distorted in order to minimize the importance of rhetoric and composition in the English Department, a distortion of history that includes falsely positing a more ancient and viable "tradition" of literary study. This third part of the critique strongly suggests that, like the differing interests of the temporary and regular faculty, the differing interests of literary specialists and writing specialists do lie near the center of the "composition problem" as it exists in the Department.

With respect to the second and third representations in this class of representations, it needs to be pointed out finally that Sutherland could have solved the staffing problem that he perceived by recommending the suspension of a different course in the new composition requirement of which E346K is a part. He

could have recommended suspending E316K, which is a course in literature. He did not. Instead, he recommended suspending E346K, a course in writing that would have had to be taught largely by lecturers in the Fall of 1985.

Section III

E346K as a Philosophical/Theoretical Problem

The preceding examinations of various ways of representing the "composition problem" strongly suggest that underlying the most immediate manifestation of the "problem" are some fundamental philosophical or theoretical differences at or near the heart of the English Department. Some of these differences were hinted at in previous sections of this report, particularly in the historical overview of the development of English studies and English departments. More importantly, these differences have, in fact, surfaced in the debate which has followed the suspension of E346K. Statements by Carver, Kinneavy, Lesser, Megaw, and Rebhorn will serve to illustrate some of the dimensions of these differences.

III. A. Statements of the Problem

Carver: "... I direct the Humanities Program under whose auspices it [HMN303/E306] is taught." "I believe this course [HMN303/E306] ... should become a model for freshman English. Kinneavy claims that 'a small segment of entering freshmen take E 303 instead of E 306.' This semester the 'small segment' is 26 percent" (The Texan, Feb. 25).

Kinneavy: "...there is a serious effort on the part of a small but influential group to do away with the essential nature of the course [i.e., E346K] and either to get rid of the course entirely or substitute for it a course about literature" (The Texan, Feb. 20).

Lesser (a): "Putting simplistic generalizations about the 'forms' of writing before the problem of having something substantial to write about ..., courses with composition as their major focus do nothing to help the student appreciate the level of discourse and the spirit of inquiry making university education different from trade school education. Such courses eschew the cultivation and expression of an attitude toward knowledge. Instead, they value the arbitrary application of writing formulas" (The Texan, March 7).

Lesser (b): The focus of E306 and E346K is on

"remediation" (The Texan, March 7).

Lesser (c): In regard to "the very way teachers and students relate to one another ..., courses designed to avoid a disicplinary subject matter prove most unacceptable for a university education" (The Texan, March 7).

Lesser (d): "E 306 and E 346K are presently constructed on the false idea that university students, like children, are in need of basic socialization" (The Texan, March 7).

Lesser (e): "The debate is about how to integrate the teaching of writing into the general curriculum, such that the University is not guilty of substituting a junior college function for its general requirements" (The Texan, March 7).

Megaw: "... whatever theoretical case can be made for distributing the responsibility for teaching composition across the entire university faculty regardless of discipline, faculty members in other departments have repeatedly told us that they simply do not have the training in this highly demanding work to do the job well" (The Texan, March 7).

Rebhorn (a): E346K is "a course too narrowly conceived and technocratic and which should not properly be considered the exclusive property of the English department" (The Texan, Feb. 25).

Rebhorn (b): "None [of the E346K variants] is truly discipline-specific. Nor could they be, since a course aimed at students in chemistry, physics, biology and so on, for instance, could not possibly allow the students in one of those disciplines to write in its specific language. Instead, such a course, lacking in real content, could at best offer students training in general, belle-lettristic [sic] writing about (not in) science, a laudable goal perhaps, but certainly not what the course was intended to be" (The Texan, Feb. 25).

III. B. Critique of Representations of the "Problem" as a Philosophical/Theoretical Problem

Collectively, these statements raise two fundamental questions about the nature of composition courses: (1) What is appropriate content for a course in writing? and (2) What criteria determine whether a writing course is a university-level course? These two questions will serve to organize the following critique of the preceding representations of the "problem."

1. The Content of Writing Courses. The statements

quoted above represent two views of the content of writing courses.

The first view accords primacy to the subject matter of the reading or writing that students may be required to do as part of their writing courses. It is this view that underlies Carver's contention that HMN303 "should become a model for freshman English." This is also the view that informs Lesser's insistence on insuring that students have "something substantial to write about" and his disdain for courses that "avoid a disciplinary subject matter." And it is this view of content that enables Rebhorn to describe E346K as a course "lacking in real content." It should be noted that for Carver, Lesser, and Rebhorn, content in this first sense is a positive value. Courses lacking content in this first sense, according to Lesser, "eschew the cultivation and expression of an attitude toward knowledge."

The second view of the content of a writing course appears explicitly in the first of the Lesser statements. Content in this second sense refers not to subject matter about which students read or write, but to "generalizations about the 'forms' of writing" and to "writing formulas." Although it is not clear what Lesser has in mind when he uses the term "writing formulas," his earlier reference to "generalizations about the 'forms' of writing" suggests that he might have in mind mechanistic organizational formulae such as "introduction, body, conclusion" that have been applied to theme writing in schools. His reference to "'forms'" also suggests that he might have in mind formulas such as "preliminary statement of thesis, far-to-near review of relevant literature, clear delineation of thesis, demonstration of thesis, conclusion" that describe, in this case, the major parts of most articles appearing in Publications of the Modern Language Association. And his reference to "'forms'" could refer to taxonomies of aims or modes. For Lesser at least, content in this second sense characterizes "courses with composition as their major focus." To these courses, Lesser strongly objects because they "do nothing to help the student appreciate the level of discourse and the spirit of inquiry making university education different from trade school education."

It is not easy to disagree with Lesser's negative view of content in the second sense, but it is unfortunate that Lesser has so slight an understanding of composition courses, particularly since the extant research on writing demonstrates that knowledge of "'forms'" has a powerful heuristic function in both in writing generally and in writing for particular discourse communities. Any composition course whose major focus is content in this second sense is, indeed, an inadequate course, for it presupposes a narrow and simplistic view of writing. No less inadequate, however, are composition courses whose major focus is content in the first sense, for they also presuppose a narrow and simplistic view of writing. The content of a writing course cannot be reduced either to subject matter written about or to organizational formulas, although knowledge of both kinds of content figure in writing itself, as demonstrated repeatedly in

studies of the acquisition and use of written language.

All of this might suggest to some that a good composition course would, therefore, consist of content in both the first and the second sense, that it would develop both knowledge of the subject written about and the forms used to express or communicate that knowledge. But such a course would still be inadequate as a composition course, even though it would bear a striking resemblance to the prototype for the kind of composition course that emerged after rhetoric became ill during the 19th century and English departments took in their elder and ailing kinsman, making certain that he stayed alive but never allowing him to regain his health.

Such a composition course would be inadequate because it could do little more than develop what some writing researchers now refer to as declarative knowledge, something akin to what Gilbert Ryle described in 1949 as "knowing that." In this, the composition course would be altogether consonant with the traditional training in literature that writing teachers receive in English departments. And in many ways, the course would embody vitalist assumptions which maintain that writing cannot be taught because it is a creative act. In a composition course whose major focus is on developing declarative knowledge, "knowing that," developing procedural knowledge, what Ryle called "knowing how," is left entirely to chance.

Knowledge of what to say and knowledge of written forms are not alone or in combination sufficient to produce good writing. Indeed, we all have colleagues who have abundant declarative knowledge of both kinds, but who somehow never manage to write the book, the promise of which got them promoted. For the writer, declarative knowledge is useless, unless it is coupled with and supplemented by procedural knowledge. A composition course whose primary focus is content in either the first or the second sense or both does not teach writing; that course merely expects writing. That is to say, such a writing course ignores the processes of production, but it expects the products. Such courses are doomed to fail, as Evan Carton's "On Going Home: Selfhood in Composition" (College English, April, 1983) quite unintentionally demonstrates.

Historically, from before the time of Aristotle but especially since the time of Aristotle, one of the major concerns of rhetorical theorists has been the processes by which texts are produced. Aristotle, for example, defined the art of rhetoric as "the faculty...of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion" (Rhetoric, trans. L. Cooper, p. 7). It was in the context of this definition that Aristotle delineated the five departments of rhetoric, which identified the major processes of constructing and giving a speech. Three of these departments are still widedly used to designate three important processes of composing--inventing or discovering content, arranging or organizing material for audiences, and styling sentences for effective communication, all of which represent

sophisticated and complex thinking processes.

Thus the word "faculty" is in Aristotle's definition of rhetoric critical. It anticipates what recent theorists and researchers in the rhetorical tradition have described as the "cognitive processes of writing." These theorists and researchers have devloped and validated a theory that sees writing as perhaps the most complex of all human activities. Taken as a whole, Aristotle's definition of the art of rhetoric anticipates contemporary theories of writing as a "problem-solving" activity. An extensive body of research into the processes writers employ as part of this problem-solving activity indicates that writers in the act of writing must repeatedly solve three kinds of complex problems. These three kinds of problems constantly interact during writing and thereby create tremendous demands on even the expert writer's working memory and thought processes.

One class of problems includes, of course, a host of knowledge problems, only some of which can be solved by having access to content in the first sense of knowledge of subject matter or by having access to content in the second sense of knowledge of "forms." Other kinds of knowledge relevant to solving writing problems include, but are not limited to, knowledge of communication situations, audience, language itself, and thought proceses that may be invoked during writing. A second class of problems that writers in the act of writing must solve are communication problems, which include, but are not limited to, translating into words, phrases, sentences, and larger verbal units of meaning what may be stored in memory in nonverbal form; formulating and instantiating intentions or plans for conveying "content" in written forms to an audience; framing content and overcoming differences between speaking and writing. These two classes of problems give rise to a third, namely, a variety of procedural problems which see the writer constantly juggling the constraints imposed on writing by limited working memory, knowledge, the situation, and the extant text (however complete or incomplete) as he/she switches back and forth among a hierarchical set of processes that include at least goal-setting, organizing, translating, reviewing, evaluating, and revising. In short, writers must constantly deal with the complex problem of regulating production processes.

These problem-solving procedures, these cognitive processes, represent the content of a composition course in a third sense. Content in this third sense is critical in many fields of study and inquiry, and it is the most difficult kind of content to master--the process of doing mathematics, the process of doing chemistry, the process of analyzing a short story, or the process of writing itself. To teach content only in the sense of subject matter or in the sense of form is to leave to chance the learning of processes that make content in the first two senses usable to the writer. That is to say, an adequate writing course must focus on content in this third sense. Neither Carver, Lesser, nor Rebhorn even so much as mention content in this third sense, perhaps because their training in literature and literary studies

predisposes them to consider only the products of writing.

Only in the context of content in this third sense can content in the first two senses be meaningful in a composition course. If the central focus of a composition course is content in the first sense of subject matter read and written about, then process reduces either to recalling information read or to displaying the "attitude toward knowledge" or subject matter that a particular teacher deems appropriate. If the central focus of a composition course is content in the second sense of knowledge of "forms," then process reduces to matching, in effect, information or knowledge already available in memory to a particular organizational pattern. If content in both the first and second sense is the central focus of a composition course, process reduces to a mechanical combination of recalling what was read, identifying the proper "attitude" toward subject matter, and fitting both to a pre-existent form.

Such major emphases, singly or in combination, in composition courses lead to a number of unhappy results. Such composition courses never teach explicitly the processes they demand that their students use, because the central concern is always on the written product, whether in terms of its conveying adequately the teacher-determined subject matter and attitude or in terms of its reflection of accepted forms. In such courses, writing becomes either a "knowing that" problem or an "arrangement" problem or both, but the processes needed for solving either of these secondary problems are never taught explicitly. The net result is "school writing," a kind of writing, in terms of both subject matter and form, that has no real counterpart in writing outside the context of schooling.

Finally, it should be noted that none of the English faculty proffering criticisms of the content of writing courses are themselves publishing experts in either discourse theory, the acquisition of written language, composing processes, the functions of writing, or the teaching of writing. Yet each would presume to restructure the composition program of a "university of the first class," which in all other curricular decisions defers to the expertise of publishing scholars. Professors of computer science do not presume to tell professors of literature how to design their courses, nor do professors who publish regularly in the field of writing. Yet these professors of literature would presume to decide the content of courses in which they have no demonstrable expert knowledge. While all have no doubt taught composition courses, this University has traditionally and rightfully viewed published scholarship as the only basis for claiming expert knowledge in a field.

2. University vs Non-University Writing Courses. The preceding discussion of the content of writing courses answers indirectly the question of what constitutes remedial instruction in writing. Although he does not define his key term, Lesser has charged that the major focus of E306 and E346K is on "remediation." To the extent that those courses provide remedies for the student's deficiencies, they are in fact remedial. In this sense, so is every course in the University. But Lesser no doubt has in mind a somewhat different meaning. As the preceding section made clear, composition courses whose major focus is on content in the sense of subject matter, do not in effect teach writing; they teach only what to write about. Such a course appears to be what Lesser, Carver, and Rebhorn see as a composition course. All else, according to Lesser, "is unacceptable for a university education"; all else signifies "a junior college function." Accordingly, for Lesser all teaching of writing, as distinct from teaching subject matter to write about, is remedial. It would appear, therefore, that Lesser and Carver want to create courses which, in effect, will not teach writing at all but will, nonetheless, expect the products of writing. Such courses must necessarily assume that teaching writing represents remedial instruction.

This view of "remediation" writing courses, of course, runs contrary to the legislation that created the new composition requirement. And it deals with the important question of what constitutes a remedial writing course only after changing the ground on which that question should be decided. Lesser can have nothing to contribute to the basis for determining levels of writing courses until he addresses himself to writing courses.

III. Summary of Critique

The preceding paragraphs dealt with two questions raised by representations of the "composition problem" as a theoretical or philosophical problem: (1) What is appropriate content for a writing course? and (2) What is a remedial course in writing?

In answering the first question, the present review demonstrated that the answers proffered by Carver, Lesser, and Rebhorn are inadequate, because they reduce writing to subject matter while ignoring the processes that act upon subject matter and its expression in written form. Such a reduction, it was urged, is altogether consistent with training in literature, with its emphasis on written products. The position adopted in this review is that the content of a composition course has to be conceptualized in three different ways--as subject matter, as form, and as procedure or process. And it showed that the former two kinds of content are of extremely limited value unless they are taught in the context of the third.

The present review's answer to the second question was inconclusive, in part because Lesser never specified what he means by "remediation." It did, however, point out that Lesser's view of "remediation" was consistent with his view of the ideal content of writing courses generally. In short, if one does not teach writing in composition courses, the teaching of writing is likely viewed as remedial instruction.

In its entirety, the preceding critique indicates that the "composition problem" may be usefully represented as a theoretical or philosophical problem. In fact, it could be argued that theoretical or philosophical disputes about the nature of writing courses sit at the heart of the problem. In this connection, it should be recalled that Sutherland described E346K as "a course whose standards we do not understand." To the extent that the statements of Carver, Lesser, and Rebhorn are consistent with the misgivings and doubts that Sutherland expresses about E346K and to the extent that the logistical and staffing reasons for the suspension of E346K can be questioned, one could argue that E346K was, in fact, suspended because the present chairman of the Department does not believe in composition courses whose major focus is not and cannot be on content as subject matter for writing.

Section IV

Some Concluding Remarks

The present review examined more or less systematically the University's "composition problem" as it has been recently represented publicly. While this document attempted to present the various issues honestly and fairly, there has been no attempt to conceal its author's point of view. However, unlike the authors of other written statements that have appeared, the author of the present document has resisted the temptation, at times almost overpowering, to write deliberately inflammatory prose and to engage in _ad hominem_ attacks, preferring instead to maintain as much as possible a disinterested and objective tone. The aim of the present review was never to incite or to infuriate, but always to analyze and to examine. In fact, several passages had to be repeatedly and extensively rewritten and some passages had to be dropped completely in order to maintain a relatively consistent tone throughout. This is not to say that the present document does not evaluate either events or statements.

By and large, the evaluations proffered in the preceding pages are directed toward the particular relationship to the current English department of the "composition problem" in general and the E346K problem in particular. In the following concluding paragraphs, the general and particular problem are placed in their larger institutional context. Specifically, the meaning and implications of the decision to suspend E346K are interpreted from a broader perspective, and a comprehensive solution to the "composition problem" is outlined briefly.

IV. A. The E346K Suspension in an Instituional Context

The suspension of E346K suggests that the principles by which professional bureaucracies, such as universities, have traditionally operated did not operate in the time leading up to the suspension. A major and far-reaching curricular decision (such decisions have long been the responsibility of the professoriate) was made exclusively by administrators, and apparently only three of them were involved in the discussions that led to the decision.

At the heart of the issues raised within the larger institutional context by not only the recent administrative solution to the "composition problem" but also the means by which that solution was decided on is the denial of two related principles fundamental to the concept of a university, particularly "a university of the first class."

The first of these principles is the **principle of faculty expertise**. This principle underlies President Flawn's attempts to establish endowed chairs to attract the best available faculty in the world. It is also the principle that informs, ideally, committee structures at the departmental, college, and university levels. And it is the principle by which tenure and promotion presumably are decided.

The second is the **principle of adjustment**, whereby the expertise of the faculty is called upon to accommodate curriculum and instruction to the demands of a larger and ever-changing social and cultural context. It is this second principle that has led to diversity in degree programs (e.g., B.S. degrees in nursing and computer science) and fields of study (e.g., nuclear fusion). It is also this second principle that has led to changes in the structure and goals of colleges (e.g., the splitting of a College of Arts and Sciences into a College of Natural Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts) and departments (e.g., the shift in focus from behavioral to cognitive psychology).

In the carefully deliberative and extended debate that led to the adoption of the Vick Committee recommendations and those of the English Department Committee, both of these principles operated, more or less. Recognizing the importance of the principle of expertise, the Vick Committee consistently solicited input from faculty in various departments and colleges on campus, and it conscientiously tried to accommodate that input in its recommendations. If "departmental views" represented to the Vick Committee were in some cases skewed or biased, that is probably the fault of particular departmental representatives or chairpersons, not the Vick Committee. But in any case, there is no reason to believe that either the Vick Committee or the English Department Committee deliberately eshewed faculty expertise in either their attempts to represent the needs of students in various disciplines to develop writing skills or in their recommendations for changing existing degree requirements to meet those needs. (It is, of course, possible to argue that none of the committees allowed for enough formal instruction in writing; and it is possible to argue on developmental grounds that E346K ought to be the last rather than the middle course taken to meet the new requirement.)

In contrast, neither of these two principles is in any way evidenced in the administrative decision to suspend English 346K. In fact, the suspension ignores--indeed makes light of--the enormous, deliberative efforts of countless faculty members over a period of several years. Extrapolated beyond the suspension of English 346K itself, the administrative decision also makes a mockery of the concepts of faculty expertise, of endowed chairs, of the relationships of the university to its public constituency, and--indeed--of the university itself. Any university, any administrator, any faculty member that denies, either tacitly or deliberately, the free and open operation of these two principles undermines the concept of a university.

Given the conclusions drawn in the first three sections of the present document, it becomes clear that not only was the operation of the principle of faculty expertise and the principle of adjustment denied in the administrative decision-making process that led to the suspension of E346K, their operation has been denied in the English Department as well, ever since the Department accepted the responsibilty for a major part of the new composition requirement.

The regular faculty in English includes a number of nationally recognized and publishing scholars in writing. Collectively, these scholars have been referred to as the strongest group of scholars in writing ever assembled at a single university. Yet their expertise in the current English Department is systematically ignored. None of these individuals has been allowed to influence either the implementation or the administration of E346K. None of faculty members' recommendations on testing and standards, placement, and administration has been implemented. Given these facts, to claim that Sutherland's recommendation to suspend E346K and the subsequent statements of Carver, Gribben, Lesser, and Rebhorn are mere historical coincidences is hardly a credible claim. The facts lead to the highly plausible inference that the current leadership of the Department deliberately ignored the principle of faculty expertise in an effort to undermine at least E346K and possibly the Department's entire composition program.

If the above inference is a valid one, then the current leadership in the Department has also systematically ignored the principle of adjustment, whereby faculty expertise is brought to bear on the process of accommodating curriculum and instruction to the perceived needs of the students they serve. In an era when no one outside the English Department questions the need for more writing instruction and for a more sophisticated understanding of the processes of text production and the functions of writing in academic and nonacademic settings, to recommend suspending a course like E346K and to argue for reducing all composition courses to courses in disciplinary subject matter is to misunderstand seriously the role of education in society and to misunderstand the nature and purpose of a writing course.

IV. B. Notes Toward a Comprehensive Solution

As the present review has shown, the "composition problem" at the University of Texas is a complex one. It is, moreover, not an easy one to solve. Quick solutions such as Fonken's decision to suspend E346K create more problems than they solve and ignore the needs of the very students the University presumably exists to serve. Ill-conceived solutions such as those proposed by Carver and Lesser reduce writing to subject matter and thereby also ignore some important needs of students. Administratively expedient solutions such as an administrative unit that houses undergraduate writing courses and a large number of temporary faculty merely renames the problem and it denies the study and teaching of writing the status it has had in university studies since classical antiquity. Letting the present furor over E346K run its course and then leaving the composition program in the hands of the current English Department is tantamount to denying that a problem ever existed and admitting to not wanting to solve it.

The only comprehensive solution is to accord writing, the study of writing, and the teaching of writing independent status as discipline, to create a separate department of literacy, complete with an undergraduate and a graduate program, in a college with a dean who will respect it as a discipline, nuture it as a legitimate field of study, and allow it to grow steadily until such time as it can take over the important business of teaching writing for all of this University's students.

[**A NOTE ABOUT THE WRITING PRESENT DOCUMENT:** A first draft of the document was produced on March 4, 1985. That draft was circulated among and critiqued by colleagues in both the English Department and other departments. A poorly edited version of the document in its present form was produced on March 15. That draft was also read by fellow faculty members and subsequently edited. This "final" draft was completed on March 18. The only substantive differences between it and the March 15 draft are two minor additions: the comment about "vitalist assumptions" and the reference to Evan Carton's 1983 essay in College English.]