

**Freshman English Policy Committee Meeting**

**February 15, 1978**

**Parlin 8B, 11:00-12:00**

**Members present: Kinneavy, Trimble, Creel, Wainwright, Saldivar,  
Cameron, Ruskiewicz, Henry, Haney**

**Agenda: (starred items deferred)**

- Approval of minutes
- Reports of standing committees
  - Program Evaluation
  - Variant Courses
- \* Reports of special committees
- Other business
  - \* Apprentice Program
  - \* TAC statement on TA probation
  - \* Participation in FERA project
  - \* FEPC procedures

1. The committee approved the minutes of the meetings listed below (as distributed):

November 4, 1977  
November 18, 1977  
December 9, 1977  
February 3, 1978.

2. The Program Evaluation gave a preliminary report in response to the charge given it by the FEPC in a motion passed November 4, 1977 asking for a statement of the goals of the Freshman program in general which identified the contents of each course and which established a rationale for the course sequences. Janice Haney addressed the first half of the charge, noting that the statement on sequencing would come later. She reviewed the history of the report, saying that the need for it arose out of the difficulty of choosing texts for courses for which there was no syllabus. Since there is now a syllabus for each Freshman course, the committees needing overviews of those courses can consult the proper syllabus.

Jana Wainwright reviewed the major courses, noting that for the most part, each syllabus defines course objectives on the first page. The present E308PC syllabus is an exception to that rule and needs revision. Kinneavy mentioned that he hopes to have Buddy Timberg revise the PC syllabus this summer--if funds can be secured to hire Buddy to do it.

Kinneavy then reviewed the need for rhetorics in each course: 306 needs both a rhetoric and a handbook, and the MODERN ENGLISH HANDBOOK does not work well as either; 307 could use a rhetoric like Irwin's HOLT GUIDE; 308 should have a rhetoric that is strong in argumentation; 308PC needs a rhetoric, though there may not be one that really fits the course. A brief discussion ensued about the difficulty of finding a rhetoric that is entirely compatible with our approach to AWR. Wainwright noted that THE WRITING COMMITMENT appears on the surface to be useful in the 306-308 sequence, but that its treatment of persuasion/argumentation makes it useful in neither. Kinneavy then suggested that the textbook committee send out a questionnaire asking the faculty what they want in a handbook.

Haney reviewed handbook needs in the sequence. She suggested that 306 is a handbook course, needing something like the HARBRACE. The other courses, though, may have more need for a workbook which teachers could use for remediation; no actual classroom time is allotted in those courses for handbook work, but some students still need to do exercises in specific problem areas.

Saldivar thanked the committee for its report, saying that this is the kind of statement the textbook committee can make good use of. He reiterated a previous text committee position that the textbook committee should not establish policy. Cameron agreed, and asked for further clarification on a few points. Noting that the MEH had been chosen last year primarily because of its testing package, he asked if the text committee should address the question of department-wide testing next year: should the committee look for a handbook which is accompanied by tests?

Haney then outlined the second half of the committee report which will come later. A general discussion followed in which various kinds of courses for the Freshman sequence were suggested.

Trimble suggested that the evaluation committee address the actual contents of the syllabi in its discussions. He said that, for instance, while the 307 syllabus suggests content for teacher lecture and teacher-led discussion, it makes few substantial suggestions to the inexperienced teacher about how to teach students composition.

Kinneavy asked whether the syllabus should be directed to the teachers (and new teachers specifically) or to the students, since we are talking about publishing our own student syllabi. Trimble suggested we need both, one for the student and another more elaborate statement with background discussion and handouts for the already overburdened teacher and the inexperienced TA.

2. The variant course committee reported that they had decided not to recommend a variant course proposed by Terry Brogan. Ruzskiewicz noted that they were not sure of Brogan's terms regarding the kind of writing he would have the students do and the system of contract grading he hoped to employ. He said they would ask for clarification of those terms and would make a recommendation to the committee at a later date. Kinneavy pointed out that Brogan's grading policy should be compatible with our soon-to-be-published statement on grade inflation.

3. Though there had been no actual protest votes on the grade inflation statement which had been circulated to each member before the meeting, the committee considered the Grading Criteria list once again. Trimble brought with him to the meeting an enlarged statement for consideration, and the committee once again functioned as a committee-of-the-whole to discuss the matter. Members were in general agreement that the elaborated statement further improved the document, and, after discussing and amending the new list, approved it as revised. A copy is attached to these minutes, and a copy of the complete document, distributed to all Freshman faculty, has been placed on file.

## GRADING CRITERIA

- F paper: Its treatment of the subject is superficial; its theme lacks discernible organization; its prose is garbled or stylistically primitive. Mechanical errors are frequent. In short, the ideas, organization, and style fall far below what is acceptable college writing.
- D paper: Its treatment and development of the subject are as yet only rudimentary. While organization is present, it is neither clear nor effective. Sentences are frequently awkward, ambiguous, and marred by serious mechanical errors. Evidence of careful proofreading is scanty, if nonexistent. The whole piece, in fact, often gives the impression of having been conceived and written in haste.
- C paper: It is generally competent--it meets the assignment, has few mechanical errors, and is reasonably well organized and developed. The actual information it delivers, however, seems thin and commonplace. One reason for that impression is that the ideas are typically cast in the form of vague generalities--generalities that prompt the confused reader to ask marginally: "In every case?" "Exactly how large?" "Why?" "But how many?" Stylistically, the C paper has other shortcomings as well: the opening paragraph does little to draw the reader in; the final paragraph offers only a perfunctory wrap-up; the transitions between paragraphs are often bumpy; the sentences, besides being a bit choppy, tend to follow a predictable (hence monotonous) subject-verb-object order; and the diction is occasionally marred by unconscious repetitions, redundancy, and imprecision. The C paper, then, while it gets the job done, lacks both imagination and intellectual rigor, and hence does not invite a rereading.
- B paper: It is significantly more than competent. Besides being almost free of mechanical errors, the B paper delivers substantial information--that is, substantial in both quantity and interest-value. Its specific points are logically ordered, well developed, and unified around a clear organizing principle that is apparent early in the paper. The opening paragraph draws the reader in; the closing paragraph is both conclusive and thematically related to the opening. The transitions between paragraphs are for the most part smooth, the sentence structures pleasingly varied. The diction of the B paper is typically much more concise and precise than that found in the C paper. Occasionally, it even shows distinctiveness--i.e., finesse and memorability. On the whole, then, a B paper makes the reading experience a pleasurable one, for it offers substantial information with few distractions.
- A paper: Perhaps the principle characteristic of the A paper is its rich content. Some people describe that content as "meaty," others as "dense," still others as "packed." Whatever, the information delivered is such that one feels significantly taught by the author, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. The A paper is also marked by stylistic finesse: the title and opening paragraph are engaging; the transitions are artful; the phrasing is tight, fresh, and highly specific; the sentence structure is varied; the tone enhances the purposes of the paper. Finally, the A paper, because of its careful organization and development, imparts a feeling of wholeness and unusual clarity. Not surprisingly, then, it leaves the reader feeling bright, thoroughly satisfied, and eager to reread the piece.