

Officials cancel E306 textbook

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Daily Texan Staff

Amid debate over curriculum changes for the freshman composition class English 306, English Department officials on Monday canceled orders for the course's new textbook, *Racism and Sexism*.

Joseph Kruppa, English Department chairman said the textbook's cancellation was due to controversy within the English Department.

"A lot of people had trouble with the book because it had weak material and we were only going to use a small part of it," he said.

Although *Racism and Sexism* — written by Paula S. Rothenberg — will no longer be the English 306 textbook, the course will still be standardized under the title of "Writing About Difference."

The Lower Division English Policy Committee — which made the decision to revamp E306 for the upcoming fall semester — will produce a reading packet to replace the textbook.

"We're going to do the same thing with the class, but we'll be working with a packet including essays, poems, government documents and the like," Kruppa said.

Kruppa added that parts of the controversial text will still be included in the packet. "There are plans to use four or five pieces from *Racism and Sexism* if the rights can be obtained," he said.

Linda Brodkey, director of lower-division English, mentioned plans to revamp E306 in a March 20 memo to members of the policy committee.

At the April 3 policy committee meeting, Brodkey — who was unavailable for comment Tuesday — presented her plans to standardize the E306 curriculum and require assistant instructors to attend orientation sessions before teaching the new course.

According to the minutes, "While the committee agreed to support both the standardized curriculum, 'Writing About Difference' and the orientation of all AIs, one member expressed personal reservations about standardizing curriculum."

At that same meeting, *Racism and Sexism* was adopted as the primary text for the revamped E306 course by a 4-0 vote with one abstention.

Alan Gribben, professor of English, represented the abstention vote and was the one member that "expressed personal reservations" about the changes. Gribben said Tuesday that he has three major objections to the textbook.

"First it's a sociology textbook, and a rather extreme example of that," he said. "Secondly, assuming the situation on campus and in America is so dire that students have got to be indoctrinated and we have to subordinate the basic teaching of writing, that book still doesn't

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meet the standards of the University because it is so out of balance."

Gribben's third complaint about the textbook is its "Marxist line of questioning."

"It's whole point of view is that America has failed its mission and I just happen to believe that freshmen shouldn't have to subscribe themselves to this very jaundiced point of view," he said.

Gribben and James Duban, an associate professor English, both said the issue is not whether or not they are for against racism and sexism.

"My whole life has been a fight against racism and sexism, but this is a matter of principle involving the integrity of the subject matter for an established course," Gribben said.

The two professors said the reason they oppose the E306 changes is because they are concerned about academic freedom and the politicization of the classroom.

"I have worried about the implications for academic freedom of a one-reader (i.e., textbook) adoption policy for so many instructors. I also have reservations about the potential for politicizing Freshman English: I see no advantage to restricting the issues — however vital — which students are allowed to address persuasively in an introductory writing course," Duban said in a written statement. He refused to comment further.

Kruppa said he and Brodkey decided the complaints about the one-

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sidedness of the text were correct. "A lot of people who supported the course had difficulty with the book and we finally decided they were right," he said.

Gibben, however, is still disappointed by the E306 changes. "Essentially the course has been turned upside down," he said.

"Previously the students may have touched on issues, but they were learning something about how to write an effective sentence. Now the subject matter is of paramount importance and incidentally, maybe, the students will learn something about writing essays," Gibben said.

Standish Meacham, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, said he endorses the decisions made by the English Department concerning E306. "I'm not the one to decide whether to use the book," he said. "I support the decision the department made concerning the course."