

The Daily Texan

Editorial Board

Matthew Connally  
Editor  
Brandon Powell  
Associate Editor  
Asim Bhansali  
Associate Editor

Viewpoint opinions expressed in *The Daily Texan* are those of the editorial board. They are not necessarily those of the University administration, the Board of Regents or the Texas Student Publications Board of Operating Trustees. Opinions expressed in staff or guest columns are those of the writer.

Letters submitted to *Firing Line* should be fewer than 250 words, and guest columns should be no more than 800 words. Bring submissions to the *Texan* basement offices at 25th Street and Whitis Avenue, or mail them to *The Daily Texan*, P.O. Box D, Austin, TX 78713. Letters may be edited for length, libel and *Texan* grammar/punctuation style.

# Interference with curriculum inappropriate

Several members of the Texas Legislature consider themselves better qualified to determine a university's curriculum than the institution's own faculty. State Rep. Ron Wilson, D-Houston, threatened financial harm if the University does not implement a multicultural requirement.

In a letter to UT President William Cunningham, Wilson suggested the administrator owed minority legislators a debt for last year's budget appropriations.

In nakedly political and vainglorious posturing, Wilson stated, "Those who oppose this course oppose the march of progress and will be forced to suffer the consequences."

Wilson's attempts to impose his will on the University are not the antics of a lone crusader operating in the dark. State Rep. Wilhelmina Delco, D-Austin, former chair of the House Higher Education Committee, also voiced anger over the

multicultural proposal's failure. However, she stopped short of threatening financial consequences.

Wilson and Delco engage in coercion of the basest sort. They misuse legislative seats in a draconian attempt to force upon the University a political agenda.

A university's faculty should determine curricula without interference of financial threats from politicians. The Federal Reserve operates independently from the U.S. government to prevent self-interested political motivations from affecting monetary policy. To protect the academic integrity of a student's education, so should the Texas Legislature remain out of the UT curriculum determination process.

Short-sighted, politically charged economic policy can be disastrous; forced adoption of a curriculum requirement can diminish educational quality. While the multicultural proposal sounds

good in political rhetoric — globalism, diversity, etc. — it will actually narrow the range of student choice. New requirements could also force the elimination of existing ones or raise the already staggering number of four-year-plus students.

Despite these dangers, some UT students abet legislators' attempts at curriculum tampering. After the failure of one multicultural proposal, Students' Association members, including President Garth Davis, presented a proposal for a three-hour multicultural requirement instead of the failed proposal's six hours. This Students' Association action gives unwarranted credence to the idea that most students support a new multicultural course requirement.

Texas Legislators should recognize this effort for what it is: a push by a relatively small interest group. The Legislature certainly must not punish the University because its faculty sent an ill-conceived plan back to the drawing board.

# English classes just plain bad

Many lower division English writing courses are academically substandard. Rather than emphasizing great works of literature, they promote the obscure, bizarre and trendy.

Furthermore, the nature of some courses makes them more suitable for political hacks than students of a world-class university. The writing component requirements make it a challenge for the average student to avoid such classes.

Of the 34 lower division English writing classes listed in the spring 1992 UT course schedule, at least six are "ethnic" in nature, and 10 others are politicized or otherwise wacky.

The course descriptions posted in Parlin Hall give some idea of the situation. Gudhi Elisson's course, "The Cultural Construction of the Vampire," includes study of "the aspects of homoerotic love, the conjunction of sex and death" and "feelings of xenophobia." John Ruskiewicz's "The Automobile in American Culture" is "for people who love automobiles and want to write about them."

Other real winners include "Writing about Gay and Lesbian Literature," and "Writing About Childhood Classics," which concentrates on "problems of ideology and reform."

"Writing about Victim Characters

Wayne Joubert  
TEXAN COLUMNIST

## "The Department of English must reform its curriculum."

in Drama" studies "the reality of discrimination and prejudice," while others can undertake "Writing about New World Literature and Anti-Colonial Responses" in the course of that name.

These courses combine bad pedagogy with the unwarranted injection of ideology into the curriculum.

Writing courses should not merely teach the skill of writing but also offer content useful to students. It is hard to imagine how "The Cultural Construction of the Vampire" will help any of us when applying for a job.

On the other hand, courses emphasizing elements of the mainstream of human history, instead of the fringe and bizarre elements, have useful practical application in everyday life.

This uselessness is complemented by an inappropriate emphasis on political ideology in these UT English courses. If faculty want to advance political view-

points, they should offer an informal class on the subject. Or better yet, run for public office.

Even if ideological or humanitarian criteria are employed to judge the curriculum, the writing courses are still poor.

For example, courses like "New World Literature and Anti-Colonial Responses" emphasize themes associated with the Marxist tradition, a tradition responsible for over 100 million deaths this century — not exactly a source of human well-being.

Nor is it clear such courses promote diversity or decrease racism and sexism. Author Dinesh D'Souza points out that the most politicized Northern campuses still suffer from violent outbreaks of racism.

Some may counter changing the curriculum would violate free speech. However, with a new curriculum, fringe groups would still be free to speak their mind, but without the support of student tuition money.

The English writing component courses are all too often academically poor, too political or just plain silly.

The Department of English must reform its curriculum to be more responsive to the needs of the students.

Joubert is a special student in journalism.