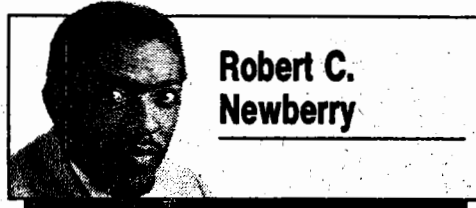


UT official sees introduction of diversity course

Final installment of a three-part series on a cultural diversity and differences course scheduled to be taught at the University of Texas in 1991. Today: What material will be used in the English 306 class?



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AUSTIN — “MY GOD, what we are asking students to do is read court opinions that take place in the courtrooms of America, and to involve themselves with issues that are written about in the New York Times, Time and Newsweek magazines; and what is seen every day on the television news. This isn’t some strange, radical or un-American material on which we have to totally tune out our thinking apparatus. They (foes) make it sound like we are making them (students) read Marx or Lenin or something.”

That’s what University of Texas English department Chairman Joe Kruppa said about the opposition that stopped the introduction this fall of a cultural diversity and differences course which would have examined court cases and biases involving ageism, sexism, racism and ethnicity.

Kruppa said the opposition was spearheaded “mainly by two faculty members” who belong to the National Association of Scholars — an organization whose goals include “rid[ding]” universities of Women’s Studies, African-American Studies and sim-

ilar programs; and in reversing affirmative action policies in recruitment and retention of women and minorities.

In fact, when College of Liberal Arts Dean Standish Meacham postponed the English 306 course until fall 1991, UT officials say calls to NAS national offices were answered with claims of victory in Texas.

So what the great cultural diversity battle at UT came down to was a fight between ultra right-wingers and people who are more open to the understanding of the different races of people in America.

Here’s what students must write about.

The new syllabus includes 18 separate writing assignments: six formal essays, including at least one documented paper (2,800-3,400 total words); 10 informal writing assignments (about 600 words); and two in-class essays.

Students would be required to read cases from the U.S. Supreme Court and other federal courts; academic (scholarly) essays

about issues raised in the cases; and a handbook reviewing grammar, mechanics, and other “basics.”

The approach to argumentative writing is based on Stephen Toulmin’s *The Uses of Argument*. Students will learn to identify — in the course and in their own writing — what Toulmin describes as the three components of argument: claims (assertions that something is true); grounds (evidence); and warrants (ideas or presuppositions that link the grounds to the claims).

The tentative syllabus, called Rhetoric and Composition: Writing About Difference, requires the textbook, *Handbook for Writers*, and a packet of reading material.

Martha Minow’s *Making all the Difference*, about sexist language, is the first reading assignment in the first week of class. It concludes with a 35- to 40-minute in-class writing assignment.

That’s basically the way it goes throughout the course — read it; write about it.

Other reading material include: *White Privilege and Male Privilege*; *The Spurs of Texas are Upon You* (Heman Sweatt suit to enter UT); and *How to Write a Review*.

Students will perform tasks such as summarizing, in 50 words, one claim and its grounds from Richard Kruger’s *Spurs of Texas* and will explain, in 50 words, why they think it is worth thinking about.

They will also be called upon to make a

list of five privileges (similar to those in Peggy McIntosh’s *Privileges*) that people either see or hear but do not have to think about or explain.

Kruppa: “What we thought in doing this — in giving it this kind of focus — was to take material that any thinking citizen; someone growing up in this society, is going to have to deal with. We want to ask students to evaluate the arguments on both sides. There may be very good reasoning on both sides (of a case) and the question is, ‘Why is one form of reasoning chosen over another?’ This just seems to be the kind of informed thinking a citizen has to do every day in his or her life.”

But will the foes be overcome and will the course be introduced next fall?

“I think that depends on how good a job of educating the university community we do this fall. We are going to try to show this is indeed a very legitimate course.”

Kruppa adds: “I didn’t think we were going to have that much of a problem to begin with. I think we are still going to have some difficulties, but I’m hoping that we are going to be able to prevail upon people’s good will, and show first of all that we should be trusted to generate a syllabus for a course for which we are responsible, and second, to show that the last thing in the world we are interested in doing is promoting political indoctrination.”