

Minutes, Freshman English Policy Committee

March 21, 1979

Parlin 214

Members present: Kinneavy, Trimble, Ruszkiewicz, Witte, Newcomb,
Cameron, Creel, Byars, Hart

Agenda:

- Approval of minutes
- Textbook Subcommittee report
- 306 syllabus
- Staffing problems
- Cameron report
- Gross request

1. The minutes of March 7 were approved as written.
2. Since Dr. Kinneavy was running late, the committee took up the last item on the agenda in order to avoid talking about textbooks in his absence. After some discussion, it was agreed that Ms. Gross should be invited to answer questions. In particular, the committee wanted more information about library work in her proposed course and a clarification of whether the seven paper assignments would cover two semesters or only one.
3. After Dr. Kinneavy arrived, Dr. Ruszkiewicz reported on the most recent Textbook Subcommittee meeting. Eventually, discussion of the problems inherent in textbook selection led the committee to contemplate its own structure and function.
Dr. Ruszkiewicz said that the textbook group had talked primarily about the 306 rhetoric and had considered five courses of action:

- (1) keep Adelstein and Pival (rejected because of the book's unpopularity)
- (2) have no rhetoric (rejected because de facto instructors already have the choice of not using our texts)
- (3) replacing A & P with a different text which approximately fits the syllabus
- (4) replacing A & P with a neutral text, one which has no strong rhetorical framework (problem: a long syllabus might overwhelm such a text)
- (5) replacing A & P with a text which offers a strong alternative to the rhetorical framework of the syllabus (problem: such a text might overwhelm the syllabus, especially a skeletal syllabus).

The Textbook Subcommittee had also discussed several other matters: it could not decide why Adelstein and Pival had failed, it was uncertain about its charge, and it had wondered whether the FEPC might

function more efficiently with a program subcommittee. Dr. Ruszkiewicz concluded his report by asking the committee whether it wanted a neutral text and what it planned to do about the 306 syllabus.

Dr. Kinneavy then explained that the fate of the syllabus is more a matter of fact than of policy. He had hoped to keep A & P and the Rodi syllabus for another year or to drop the text and publish the syllabus for students, but both these options had fallen through. Now, he said, he has time only to produce about a 12-page syllabus, a skeletal one such as many composition programs are run on.

Mr. Cameron then suggested that a committee be appointed to revise the Kinneavy syllabus which preceded the Rodi one, substituting references to whatever new texts we adopt. Dr. Kinneavy, however, said Dr. Ruszkiewicz had been right in pointing out that the Rodi syllabus is helpful to TA's and new AI's. Mr. Cameron said that he, too, would like to have the Rodi available for TA's, and Dr. Ruszkiewicz voiced support for doing so. Ms. Byars said that new teachers ought at least to be made aware that the Rodi syllabus exists.

Dr. Kinneavy responded to these comments by suggesting that we prepare a 12-page skeletal syllabus and reprint some copies of the Rodi. Dr. Witte said that references in Rodi to textbooks could easily be deleted for coverage in the short syllabus, thereby relieving the Rodi syllabus of the needless burden of having to integrate itself with the text and also allowing it to do what it does best--to present Dr. Kinneavy's theory in digest form. Ms. Byars asked whether copyright problems might interfere with even limited use of the Rodi syllabus, and Dr. Kinneavy replied that he'd be seeing his publisher in two weeks. In any case, Dr. Ruszkiewicz inferred, our basic 306 syllabus for next fall will be short. Yes, Dr. Kinneavy replied, and it will follow the structure of the present syllabus, offering a one-page outline of objectives, readings, and theme assignments for each unit, as well as information about grading, policy statements, and so forth.

Dr. Ruszkiewicz then asked whether the committee would prefer a short or a long text. A long text might be more difficult to integrate with a short syllabus, he speculated. At this point, Dr. Kinneavy raised the possibility of offering teachers three different kinds of approaches. He explained that we might, for instance, approve Tibbetts and Tibbetts for those who want a text which fits the syllabus fairly well, a sentence-combining text for those who prefer that approach, and perhaps D'Angelo for those seeking a strong alternative to the syllabus. One problem with D'Angelo's book, he added parenthetically, is that although the next edition will include a unit on persuasion, the current

one does not; but Mr. Cameron suggested that the publisher might let us use the new unit with the old book, especially if we showed an interest in later adopting the new edition. At any rate, Dr. Kinneavy concluded, he sees no objections to adopting three different texts: since there is only a limited number of approaches, why shouldn't we try them?

The committee then discussed some consequences of such a plan. Dr. Witte pointed out that it might help us meet Dr. Moldenhauer's objections. Dr. Trimble asked whether we would need a separate syllabus for each text. No, Dr. Kinneavy replied, not even for sentence combining. Dr. DeCamp, he said, uses Daiker along with the syllabus and eight of its theme assignments. Dr. Witte expressed reluctance to see the Daiker book used as the only text in a composition course, especially since Daiker himself has his students do more than just combine sentences. Dr. Witte went on to say that he would like to see the FEPC go on record as calling Daiker a good supplement, and Dr. Trimble agreed.

Now Mr. Cameron spoke. He moved

that the FEPC amend its constitution to replace the New and Variant Course Subcommittee with a Curriculum Subcommittee.

He explained that the committee had just spent most of a meeting discussing matters which such a subcommittee could already have considered, adding that he would hate to see three texts adopted without the careful supervision such a subcommittee might provide. Last year, he said, the FEPC had approved a report recommending the same change he proposed, but no further action had been taken on the report.

There was some discussion of procedural matters, but the committee quickly turned to the merits of Mr. Cameron's motion. Ms. Byars said that a curriculum subcommittee might address the problem of combining skills and content in 308 PC and also provide some coordination for the numerous de facto variants of the course. Dr. Kinneavy pointed out that now, whoever writes the syllabus determines the course, and Dr. Newcomb added that the same person also determines the extent to which instructors follow the syllabus. Almost in unison Ms. Byars and Dr. Newcomb indicated that they do not follow the 308 PC syllabus, after which Dr. Kinneavy said that he teaches 306 independently. He went on to say that the syllabuses probably ought to be constantly revised and that, for instance, the deduction unit should probably be dropped from 306. Ms. Byars agreed, saying that most instructors think the present 306 syllabus is too full.

Dr. Newcomb then shared some of his perceptions of our year's work. He wondered whether we need a curriculum subcommittee or whether what would become its business is not, instead, the proper business of the entire committee. Our best work, he said, has been in dealing with substantive matters, the sorts of things which would fall to the proposed subcommittee but which the whole committee would likely do over anyway. Perhaps we should appoint individual members to look into and report on matters of particular interest to them, he said.

Mr. Cameron replied, noting first that our subcommittees normally do little work, unlike those at Texas A&M, whose FEPC structure ours is modelled on. The system functions better there, he explained, because subcommittees have many outside members, whereas here we have little departmental support. Dr. Newcomb's idea is workable, he then said, but if we were to have members specialize, we would do well to discontinue the present subcommittees. Dr. Kinneavy extended Mr. Cameron's remarks by saying that we used to have a less formal system until we saw how effectively A&M's subcommittees work. He agreed that, say, Ms. Byars should be overseeing 308PC, he should be handling 306, etc. He cautioned, though, that such an arrangement puts a premium on members reporting back to committee.

Ms. Byars then observed that 398T courses provide some coordination for the program on substantive matters but that, as the current state of 308PC makes clear, individual instructors soon drift beyond their common origins in 398T. This remark prompted Dr. Newcomb to share more of his insights. His impression of the year, he said, is that we've verged on talking about substance but have stopped short. He had questioned Mr. Cameron's proposal, he explained, because he had initially expected the committee to discuss substance and thought that it might still.

Next, Dr. Witte recalled that Dr. Moldenhauer had wanted an ad hoc committee to study our 306 syllabus. If we were to establish a curriculum subcommittee and include some outside members, he said, it would assure us departmental representation on substantive issues. We may lose power, he warned, if we do not reach out into the department. In a historical note, Dr. Kinneavy added that the committee has used outside members before.

Ms. Byars and Dr. Newcomb then said that they would teach better with more coordination. Specifically, Dr. Newcomb continued, the issue in 307 and 308 is how to meld substance and skills. In 306, Dr. Kinneavy added, the issue is how to integrate the material on logic.

Discussion now turned back toward the immediate problem of adopting texts. Mr. Hart said that according to several sources, the Co-op sets its spring book-order deadline to determine which books will not be readopted but does not actually order books until midsummer. Dr. Kinneavy explained that the Co-op is concerned, first, about whether to buy back student's books and, second, about having time to buy books from jobbers. For our part, he went on, we must set texts under the aegis of the current three syllabuses since we would not have time to effect any course changes before fall. Dr. Newcomb advised that the textbook group aim for one neutral 306 rhetoric, one which fits the syllabus, and one which doesn't fit the syllabus.

Dr. Kinneavy next said that when he accepted his job as director, he was assured the right to establish variant courses. Dr. Trimble said that our present variant-course procedure is a good idea in principle but that in practice regular faculty, who give low priority to 306, usually end up falling into the courses we make available, not designing their own. If the committee were to generate three or four paradigm courses, he argued, faculty members would more nearly have in reality the options they now have mainly in theory.

For now, Dr. Kinneavy said, if the Textbook Subcommittee chooses a text which radically challenges the catalogue description of 306, it might consider limiting the book's use to, say, ten sections. If the subcommittee establishes many text options, Dr. Witte said, it might also cull journal reviews to help faculty make choices. Also, Dr. Kinneavy said, the group might circulate titles among faculty at the penultimate point and perhaps distribute copies of Dr. Ruskiewicz's survey, since it's so impressive.

4. Dr. Kinneavy reported that the staffing problems will probably be less severe than earlier expected. He and Dr. Kruppa had found that the department could handle 71 more sections of 307 by using all faculty, and they are now planning to have some 35 regular members teach 306 in the fall and 35 more teach 307 and 308 in the spring. With our 30 instructors and with little AI attrition, Dr. Kinneavy continued, the staffing problem will not be severe. He reported, too, that Dr. Hershey still expects 6500 freshmen in the fall and that Dr. Kruppa plans to make teaching assignments this semester.

Such being the case, Dr. Trimble said, we could have faculty choose among optional texts before we place orders with the Co-op. Yes, Dr. Kinneavy replied, so long as we inform the Co-op soon

about which books we plan to discontinue. Also, Dr. Trimble speculated, the Co-op would probably have an easier time finding used copies for three texts than for one. Such is not always the case, however, Dr. Witte said.

Now, as a look of adjournment came into Dr. Kinneavy's eyes, two members rushed to make final remarks. Mr. Cameron reported that although he had not talked to Dr. Reborn, Judy Wilcott had assured him that AI's are still routinely granted extensions for tenth semesters. Dr. Witte advised that if the committee plans to draw outside supporting members, it should name them at the beginning of the year so that they could have legitimate standing in the department. Then, as is to prove again Kenneth Burke's observation that an attitude is an incipient act, Dr. Kinneavy declared the meeting adjourned.