

New E306 disregards Western culture

He is an American who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds ... here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of man."

This was the reply Hector St. John de Crevecoeur gave to his own question. Presently, we are witnessing an assault against the very principles that have provided the foundation for the unique success of the American nation. In this very school, self-serving extremist elements are attempting to undermine the integrity of the curriculum by injecting their own political ideology into E306, a remedial writing course for incoming freshmen.

E306 is described in the College of Liberal Arts catalog as "a composition course that provides basic instruction in the writing and analysis of expository prose; includes an introduction to logic and the principles of rhetoric." This is a course for students who are particularly deficient in their writing abilities.

The initial attempt by supporters of "multiculturalism" to use Paula Rothenberg's racist and sexist book, which has been misleadingly titled *Racism and Sexism*, has been abandoned. Instead, in a clear act of legerdemain, they have incorporated many of the elements of this book in a packet. Instead of using materials that teach good grammar, sentence structure and effective writing in general, the new materials attempt to promulgate a virulent ideology.

Proponents of this packet have claimed that there is no indoctrination involved. They have asserted that students will be free to take a variety of viewpoints and be allowed to defend them. It should be pointed out that "multicultural" elements have already been incorporated into the course. This summer, we were repeatedly told by many E306 students that honest writing would result in a lower grade. They all believed they were having an ideology pushed upon them, and they could all discuss their instructors' political beliefs at length, mainly because their teachers were quite vocal about ideology. One student described how her instructor lectured for 30 minutes on how Ronald Reagan was at fault for the savings and loan crisis. She was afraid to voice a dissenting opinion in the class discussion that followed.

Most of the instructors also seemed to be exceedingly radical. Two students, who considered themselves dedicated liberals, recounted how stunned they were to discover themselves regarded as conservative. We never found a female student who did not consider her instructor's feminism to be too extreme. There was a pervasive fear among all students that if they defended their true views, they would be penalized. We even know of students who spoke out and who believe their work was misgraded as a result.

The bias of the instructors is well documented. In a particular case, a student wrote that multicultural courses were not relevant to her life because within five to 10 years she would

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probably be married, have children and get a job. The only comment elicited from the instructor was "But is this fulfilling?" What could possibly be more fulfilling than being a productive member of society and raising a family?

Besides, the question of fulfillment is a subjective one and has nothing to do with the expository writing methods and skills, or with the reasoned arguments this course is purported to teach. This particular instructor was blatantly promoting a specific ideology. When grading, the vast majority of instructors paid more attention to the students' views than in the mechanics of writing. Spelling and grammatical errors, wordiness, and other such mistakes were often ignored. A value statement rarely passed unscathed unless it was in agreement with the teacher's views.

The bias of the E306 summer course becomes obvious when one is unable to find Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" and "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in the most commonly used textbook, *Multicultural Literacy*. These are truly instructive works in the use of the English language. Apparently, King is too conservative for the E306 instructors.

The students of this course have not been the only subjects of intimidation. Graduate students in the Department of English, in other words prospective E306 teachers, have been warned that working with professors — such as Alan Gribben — who oppose "multicultural" education would be detrimental to the progress of their degrees. Steven Mays reported in the September issue of the *University Review* that "moderate and traditionalist [professors] are frightened of having their careers hurt." Gribben, who has been the most vocal opponent of the proposed course changes, "has had the lowest pay raises in the department [during the past two years]— including a zero percent raise this year ... non-traditional graduate students have sent foul letters to his home."

Is this the sort of attitude we need to foster in incoming freshmen? It is clear that the people behind the politicization of E306 have no respect for free speech and the unrestricted flow of ideas. They claim the traditional curriculum represents the hegemony of Western culture and, consequently, it contributes to the oppression of women and minorities. They believe the way to remedy this perceived problem is to revise the "canon" to include more works by blacks, other ethnic minorities, and women, regardless of the intrinsic value these works may or may not have.

Why are these people so vehemently opposed to Western culture? The reasons they present are patently false. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "most great literature and good history are deeply subversive in their impact on orthodoxies. Con-

sider the American 'canon': Emerson, Whitman, Melville, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Henry Adams, William and Henry James, Holmes, Dreiser, Faulkner. Lackeys of the ruling class? Agents of American imperialism?" Certainly not!

Schlesinger continues by pointing out that "America inherits a European experience. To deny the essentially European origins of American culture is to falsify history. We should take pride in our distinctive inheritance ... there is no need for Western civilization, the source of the ideas of individual freedom and political democracy to which most of the world now aspires, to apologize to cultures based on despotism, superstition, tribalism and fanaticism ... [The Western tradition does not represent] fixed, final and complacent orthodoxy, intolerant of deviation and dissent, but ... [is] an ever-evolving creed fulfilling its ideals through debate [and] self-criticism ... it is a tradition that has empowered people of all nations and races. Little can have a more terribly damaging effect on the psyche than for educators to tell young blacks and Hispanics and Asians that it is not for them."

This brings us to the point made by Crevecoeur. America is a country of varied peoples who have been assimilated into Western thought and civilization while making their own contributions to it. America is a nation with a new and distinctive identity, not a mere patchwork of different cultures. The wishes of advocates of politicized courses, if implemented, will lead to the fragmentation of society and the destruction of national cohesion.

These people do not adhere to the great ideals of Western civilization. After causing the resignations of the two dissenting members on the Lower Division English Policy Committee and replacing them with their own allies, they voted 6-0 to institutionalize the adoption of multicultural elements in E306. In its Sept. 10 issue, *The Texan* quoted Adam Tate, Students' Association vice president, as saying, "The fact that this vote was unanimous should make it clear that there is widespread campus support for the E306 changes."

The mendacity of his argument becomes obvious when one considers the statement opposing the proposed changes, which was published in the July 18 issue of *The Texan*. That statement was signed by 56 UT faculty members, including six from the English Department. Additionally, there is widespread opposition within the student body, which Tate is supposed to represent, against these changes, although the intimidating tactics of leftist extremists have muffled much of the dissent.

Unfortunately for the "multicultural" supporters, the mainstream majority on this campus has awakened and will not allow a few self-serving ideologues to dominate the debate and cheapen education just so they can increase their power and influence at the University.

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