

MINUTES OF THE SENATE
Department of English

28 January 1983

3:05-4:45 p.m.

Present: Moldenhauer (Chair); Bertelsen, Bowden, Cable, Duban, Duncan, Faigley, Farrell, Friedman, Ghose, Hinojosa, Jolliffe, Kruppa, Lesser, Renwick, Ruszkiewicz, Sipiora, Skaggs, Stott, Wevill, Whitbread. Absent: Carver, Hairston, Lidoff Megaw.

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

The Minutes of the 19 November 1982 meeting were approved.

Report of the Senate Subcommittee on Lecturers. The Senate created a Subcommittee on Lecturers at its 19 November 1982 meeting to investigate and report to the Senate on legitimacy status, evaluations and hiring; the subcommittee members are Thomas Whitbread, Wayne Lesser, James Skaggs, Sharon Wevill and David Jolliffe. Dr. Lesser reported that the subcommittee is drafting a comprehensive proposal for dealing with these issues; this document would attempt to balance the interests of a number of different groups within the department (Lecturers, tenured and tenure-track faculty, and new or recent UT PhDs). In light of the magnitude of such a proposal, the subcommittee believed that it was necessary to get initial response to the committee's draft as a prelude to refining it in further committee work. On behalf of the subcommittee Lesser moved:

that after the subcommittee circulates to the department a general document on Lecturers (now being drafted), the Chair be asked to schedule a meeting of the full department for the airing of reactions to that draft document.

Dr. Wevill seconded the motion. Debate on the motion centered on whether the Senate should consider the draft document before presenting it to the department. Dr. Lesser explained that the subcommittee believed that this document needed input in its early stages of development from a wide range of individuals; it is important, and particularly helpful, to have heard everybody and to have heard them early enough to say that their comments helped shape the document. The motion was approved.

Dr. Moldenhauer had two brief announcements. The Undergraduate Advising Center has asked faculty members to help identify conference course students by instructor or by course number. A UT System-wide evaluation of all faculty will be conducted in the near future. The annual evaluation will be required of everyone, and, unfortunately, will duplicate much of the information contained in the annual report. The Chairman will release evaluation forms to the faculty as soon as they are received in the department; they will be due back to the Dean on March 1, 1983.

Recruitment. By motions at the Senate meeting of 19 November 1982, the department's graduate-program interest groups were asked to meet and decide whether they would be interested in strengthening their numbers at the associate professor rank. Dr. Moldenhauer reported on the results:

Medieval: Yes
Bibliography: Yes
Rhetoric: Yes, with emphasis on historian or technical writer
Creative Writing: Yes
Criticism: Qualified Yes, perhaps a secondary strength in history
Lang-Ling: Yes
Popular Culture: Yes
18th Century Literature: Qualified yes; would welcome as secondary strength
19th Century Literature: Qualified yes; would welcome someone on the major Romantic poets
American Literature: No
Modern British Literature: No
Renaissance: No

Alan Friedman moved, and Dr. Whitbread seconded, that the Senate accept the negative reports and eliminate those fields from consideration. The motion was approved.

The Senate then began discussion of strategies for proceeding further. Dr. Moldenhauer suggested that the target date for a senior-level appointment would be September 1984. In response to a question from Edwin Bowden, Dr. Moldenhauer explained that the departmental Recruitment Committee has been responsible only for junior recruitment; senior recruitment has been handled by ad hoc committees. Ads would probably be placed in The Chronicle of Higher Education, but personal contacts with suggested individuals would be very important.

Various combinations of fields the "ideal" person might have and of the priorities the department should set were discussed. Dr. Friedman suggested that the Senate divide the remaining interest groups into two areas: (1) those groups who have pressing needs for individuals and (2) those groups who would simply welcome new members. Although he thought this might be the most logical way to proceed, Dr. Lesser preferred not to do this; he worried that creative and capable graduate teachers would be dropped from consideration merely because their field was deemed to have "no pressing need." In response to a question Joe Kruppa said that those areas with the most need have traditionally been the undergraduate classes in lang-ling and creative writing, but the department has always managed to staff the classes. Lang-Ling, which has had trouble recruiting at the junior level, might have more effective recruitment at the senior level, suggested Dr. Kruppa. Thomas Cable said that even if Lang-Ling recruited successfully at the junior level, it still needed someone at the senior level.

Because this senior-level appointment was coming from a line vacated by Horace Newcomb, and because the Popular Culture interest group had expressed a desire to recruit at this level, Roger Renwick wondered if Popular Culture shouldn't be given first consideration; other lines could be requested from the administration as the need arises. Dr. Lesser disagreed with Dr. Renwick's premise: with few senior appointments to make, it is important not to allow other areas to suffer. Dr. Moldenhauer noted that Newcomb's line appointment had been on a line not previously occupied by Popular Culture. The status of Popular Culture at UT was discussed; Dr. Newcomb was said to have been very discouraged by the program offered in English. Dr. Moldenhauer read from a letter written by Dr. Newcomb in August, 1982:

I do think such courses [detective narrative, combining the study of literature, film, and television] should continue to be offered in English. Clearly, at the undergraduate level, those courses will draw students. Specific genre studies--the detective, science fiction, etc.--will probably draw more heavily than courses called "The Study of Popular Culture." But courses in film and television will always do well because of the four-course English requirement in the School of Communication.

At the graduate level the problem is more severe. The popular culture courses never drew well. Again, the generic studies drew better than methods and theory courses, which is a shame, for it perpetuates a large problem in approaching those specific areas in the most sophisticated manner. This problem is directly related to support in the graduate advising processes. Popular culture study at the graduate level is extremely peripheral. A request to cross-list our courses with American Studies was denied by American Studies last year, in spite of the fact that some of our best students have come from that area. Still, it is clear that careful coordination with other departments, perhaps involving cross-listing, is necessary if the courses are to draw the required numbers of students. English graduate students simply aren't going to take the course unless they have some "luxury time." They do not see the material as central to their professional best interests.

Personally, I think they're wrong. But then, I wouldn't have come here had I not thought that popular culture studies could be carried out in the context of a full, well developed English department. I still think that is the case, but to accomplish that goal those teachers who wish to offer graduate courses in the field should be more soundly supported, somehow, at the graduate level. As I have always tried to indicate in my course descriptions, the questions raised by the study of popular culture are central to the study of any literature,

but are not always addressed in more formally or historically oriented courses. Had it been possible for me to work up a new study area, I would have enjoyed offering a graduate course in "The Sociology of Literature," a course I think all graduate students should have. Because it was not possible to do that work-up, I tried to raise questions central to that topic in the popular culture courses. Even so, in the two graduate courses I offered during the four years, I taught only one graduate student from the Department of English. All of these matters are related to problems of philosophy and definition at the graduate level, a matter I commented on in a brief memo to Don Graham [Chair, GSC] regarding the qualifying process.

Dr. Friedman commented that he would be very wary of recruiting someone for the Popular Culture program without first taking a hard look at the program to see if there were structural problems at the graduate level.

Jack Farrell suggested that it would be a good idea to return the question of needs and desires to the interest groups before the Senate completes its discussion of recruitment policy; he proposed a rough sense of priorities generated from the first set of responses:

Creative Writing
Bibliography
Popular Culture
Rhetoric with strong interest in rhetorical theory and history
Lang-Ling with strong secondary interest in medieval or 18th century literature
Criticism/Intellectual History with strong secondary interest in 18th century or 19th century literature

Dr. Farrell moved, and Dr. Kruppa seconded:

that the interest groups concerned with the following areas be asked to refine their requests with respect to research and teaching interests and accomplishments of prospective candidates and with respect to the foreseeable role of such a candidate in course offering: Creative Writing, Bibliography, Popular Culture, History and Theory of Rhetoric, Language and Literature (with emphasis on the medieval period and the eighteenth century), and Criticism and Intellectual History (with emphasis on the eighteenth and the nineteenth century).

The motion was approved. By general consensus the Senate directed the Chairman to ask the interest groups to give special consideration to needs created by upcoming retirements, etc., and to report to the Senate before the Senate refines recruitment policy.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Pamela S. Wheeler
Secretary