FROM THE EDITOR

The primary aim of Freshman English News will be to provide a continuing report on the status of Freshman English throughout the country. Such a report seems desirable because of a tendency in the academic world to make decisions on the basis of "what is going on at all the other schools." If this tendency is widespread, if we do look to others and are influenced by others when making our decisions, then it behooves us to know as precisely as possible what others are actually doing. I am afraid that we often make decisions on the basis of rumors rather than on the basis of hard facts. Providing these "hard facts" will be one of the goals of this newsletter.

Although the dispelling of rumors is, I suspect, a worthwhile endeavor, there are nobler goals toward which a newsletter such as this might strive. A broadening of our sense of what is possible, an extension of our vision, might well occur when we know how others have tried and succeeded, how still others have tried and failed. What has been tried and how it has been tried will be the central concerns of the newsletter.

The following topics strike me as significant (and I invite news items and accounts which deal with all of these and the many others which 'remain unnamed'): changing requirements, the nature of the "course," the training of TAs, the success of experimental programs, the role of the director of Freshman English, the use of writing labs, the establishing of standards in composition, the use of media, the success and failure of honors programs, etc., etc.

I should emphasize that this first issue of the newsletter is not typical of what we hope to publish in the future. There are more articles than items of news and information. Because I wished to publish the first issue this spring, I asked acquaintances to contribute material. Mr. Prichard, the two-year college editor, did the same. The results are pleasing, but this issue should probably be viewed not as an actual newsletter but as an announcement of a newsletter. It is in this spirit that we are distributing it.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank publicly the Texas Christian University Research Foundation and its director, E. Leigh Secrest, for providing the funds that made possible the publication and free distribution of this issue.

G. L.

FRESHMAN ENGLISH IN THE 1970's

Richard L. Larrson
University of Hawaii

If there ever was a program one could call "freshman English," it is fast disappearing, if it has not already vanished. If, that is, one could ever talk of a program in "English" that was more or less the same for most freshmen from campus to campus around the country, and be reasonably confident that one's words referred to something real rather than hypothetical, one can't do any more. Even the common elements one thought one could count on—the collection of essays, the rhetoric-handbook, the weekly theme, the insistence on thesis sentences and on unity in the standard expository paragraph—are disappearing. And few teachers or students are lamenting their departure.

If one doubts the change, talk to textbook publishers, editors, and field representatives, who try in vain to learn where their once lucrative market is going, so that they can sign books to publish when the demand for them develops, two or three years hence. Watch the profusion of books, many of them short, most of them paperbound, almost all of them highly diverse in content, plan, and cover design, that are replacing (for many publishers at least) thick rhetoric texts and rhetoric-readers among the review copies that cross one's desk. There are exceptions, of course—an important one is William Irwin's Halt Guide to English—but texts today are typically shorter, their materials more current (a more precise adjective might be "modish"), than when I went to the University of Hawaii in 1963. And teachers are replacing the classic essays with pieces from today's newspaper or this month's magazine, not to mention the much more important substitute—the writing of students themselves, mimeographed, dittoed, or xeroxed, which is made increasingly the focus of attention—often the exclusive focus—in classroom after classroom.

But such evidence is unnecessarily indirect. Catalogues and syllabi testify to the increased diversity of the "English" that is offered to students (and "offered to," rather than "required of," is increasingly the correct phrase) in their freshman year—if indeed the course is offered exclusively in the freshman year, rather than being deferred to the senior year, spread over two or three of the undergraduate years, or made available to the student for his election in any one of his four years. Courses focusing on film as rhetoric (as at the University of Illinois); courses studying mass media; courses offered in short modules, of which all students take one and then choose two others (as at Fort Hays Kansas State College); programs offering the student a choice of a semester of written or a semester of oral composition; and then a choice among several courses in writing or speaking, including courses in imaginative writing (as at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst); programs offering the student a choice of as many as eight courses—including Narration and Description; Autobiography; The Study of the Past; Language and the Visual Media (as in our program at the University of Hawaii)—these instances can only hint at the multiplying abundance of guises in which what we once knew as "Freshman English" is appearing. And the multiplication of forms promises to continue.

I think that this multiplication of forms is all to the good, and not just because it gives the student one more chance to decide what he wants in his education, while giving teachers the chance to teach from their interests and their strengths—as the teachers I interview are doing increasingly anyway, ignoring standard syllabi or voting such syllabi out of existence. For diversity breeds experimentation, and experimentation, at least in "freshman English," is humanizing. Not only the study of literature, but the study of all modes of communication, print, non-print verbal, and non-verbal are the proper concerns of the Humanities (indeed of rhetoric itself, as the participants in the National Developmental Project on Rhetoric argued); freshman English, like possibly no other part of the curriculum in English, has the opportunity to involve students in these humanistic studies. "Invention," rather a latecomer to the freshman syllabus, has led teachers to study processes of thought and ways to increase the power of thinking—a concern expressed in courses on problem-solving and in books like Young, Becker, and Pike's Rhetoric: Discovery and Change. Some experimental courses focus on the personal life of the student and help him understand, by his writing, what sort of person he is and how he came to be that way; I think of Taylor Stoehr's course at the State University of New York at Buffalo (recently described in College English), and of the work of John Butler at Wichita State University and now at Drexel. In the hands of some teachers, the writing course becomes an intensive exploration of how language helps one to know and to organize one's knowledge, as in the teaching of William B. Coles (formerly at Case Western, now also at Drexel).
I think—I hope—that this kind of humanizing experimentation shows where we are headed as teachers of composition. I think we are going to enrich our efforts at helping students to achieve genuine rhetorical effectiveness in their writing (as distinguished from enforcing the observance of conventions and formulas) by leading them to see how language, and indeed all communication potentially, can help them learn about their world, their neighbors on this planet, their fellow citizens, their problems, their choices, and themselves. Since we are working to help human beings make the most of themselves, this kind of dual emphasis, on rhetorical effectiveness and on knowing oneself and one's kind, seems to me a healthy and encouraging prospect to look forward to.

FRESHMAN ENGLISH IN TEXAS

Richard Fulterson
East Texas State University

In August of 1971, the East Texas State University Freshman English Committee conducted a survey of a broad group of freshman English programs in Texas. Questionnaires were sent to directors of freshman English at thirty-five colleges and universities. Twenty-seven schools (counting ETSU itself) replied, ranging from small private institutions such as Abilene Christian College and Southwestern University to large public ones like the University of Texas at Austin and Texas Tech. The survey showed that although freshman English in Texas shows considerable variety, it does so mainly within quite traditional limits.

Twenty-three of the respondents require six semester hours of freshman English, and contrary to national trends, only two (Austin College and McMurry) indicated that they were considering reducing their freshman requirement. Ten schools restrict their freshman course in English exclusively to composition; the others use literature extensively; five devote the freshman course almost wholly to literature. Writing requirements range from the University of Texas at Arlington's recommendation that each student write twenty 200-word paragraphs each semester to Sul Ross's demand of ten themes of 1200-1500 words. In six schools almost all writing is done out of class; in seven it is almost all in class; in the others both types are done about equally.

Three new programs are somewhat unusual. At Prairie View A and M, where students meet in classes of 200, all writing is done in class and graded immediately, as either acceptable or unacceptable, by graduate assistants to pass, the student must produce a minimum number of acceptable impromptu papers. McMurry College emphasizes "creative writing techniques for purposes of inspiration and originality." And Tarleton State allot equal time in the second semester to three media: print, television, and motion pictures. Even these programs apparently differ from the traditional ones described above more in implementation than in either goals or theory.

Greater variety than the responses imply may actually exist since most of the schools allow the teacher considerable freedom to design his own course. Only six of the respondents attempt to insure uniformity among sections by using detailed prescriptive syllabi.

But an important restriction on course design is the careful control twenty-one schools exercise over textbook selection. The great majority of the prescribed textbooks are standard handbooks, rhetorics, or anthologies, such as McCrimmon's Writing with a Purpose, Baker's The Complete Stylist, Percy's Structure, Sound, and Sense, and Brooks, Purser, and Warren's An Approach to Literature. A few schools provide the teacher with several options, but only six give him nearly complete freedom to select his own books.

Thus the Texas college freshman stands a very good chance of being required to study a combination of literature and composition, of using standard textbooks, of writing six to ten 200-1000 word papers each semester and of having a teacher who is free to conduct the class pretty much as he wishes within these limitations.

EVOLUTION IN FRESHMAN PROGRAMS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN — MADISON

William T. Lanehan
Director of Introductory Courses

The editor of Freshman English News asked that I contribute a brief statement on recent changes in the Freshman English programs at UW-Madison in order to verify or refute some of the rumors in current circulation. My knowledge of human nature convinces me that interesting rumor will triumph over tedious fact regardless of equal availability; however, I will state my version of the facts.

It is a fact that at the end of the 1968-69 academic year, the English Department ceased to offer a required composition course to most of the entering freshmen. I view this act as a logical step in an evolutionary process—not a radical reaction to a particular set of problems. The process began in the late 50's with the dropping of remedial composition programs; it continued at Wisconsin in the fall of 1968 with the replacement of the two-semester composition requirement for most students with a pattern of one semester of composition and one semester of introductory literature, both courses taught primarily by teaching assistants. The next step was that instituted in 1970: we returned to a small remedial composition program for those students who proved on their placement exams clearly deficient in language skills and instituted a writing laboratory to help students at any level who found themselves deficient in compositional skills. We continue to use teaching assistants in the introductory literature course, the writing laboratory, remedial composition, and discussion sections of large lecture courses, but the TA staff has been reduced in size, a necessity considering the job market.

What made this evolution possible and desirable was the changing nature of the entering students. Admission requirements and student self-selectivity gradually reduced the number of entering freshmen having very limited writing skills; most of our freshmen could create clear expository prose. It is a truism that writing is a skill that can always be improved, but to move from clear prose to effective prose requires motivation on the part of the student. After following the well trodden path in search of motivating subject matter—relevant readers, short stories, novels, etc.—we concluded that our required composition course was not sufficiently successful in attaining its end—to improve the writing of the students—to justify its existence. We therefore quit offering the course.

Other circumstances, of course, entered into the debate before the Departmental action. It is a fact that some of our teaching assistants agreed with and even encouraged their students in the belief that composition courses were useless; it is also true that the period was one of student activism. Other pressures emerged on questions of college requirements, faculty attitudes outside the department, curricular patterns, and administrative procedures. But these were circumstances, not causes, and interesting though they may be, they do not belong in this report.

Although reactions are mixed, the general results after three semesters without a large composition program are encouraging. The Letters and Science College faculty has ruled that each department must certify its majors as competent writers before graduation. Required writing is appearing in all kinds of unlikely courses; faculty members in all departments are learning to comment on form as well as content on papers and reports. The ideal world has not arrived, but a major step has been taken; the responsibility for the writing ability of all our students has been distributed to a university faculty, not relegated to a sub-sub-group of an English Department; students, perceiving the fact that improved writing proficiency is an on-going process rather than a one or two course repetition in the freshman year of principles they were exposed to in high school, will, I firmly believe, be the major beneficiaries of this evolutionary process.

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ON PAGE 11
COMPARING STIPENDS OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Richard Bradock
University of Iowa

Needing some data on the stipends of teaching assistants in order to do the best I could for my crew with the dean, last spring I wrote for that information to the directors of freshman English at a number of comparable universities in the Midwest. (I discovered that the information in the CCCC Directory of Assistantships is sometimes erroneous.) As I tried to reduce the data to comparable form, it became apparent that several other factors deserved consideration as well as the stipend—tuition expense, number of class hours taught per week, and size of class. Consequently, I computed a "student-hour stipend," reported here in case it may be useful to others.

The "student-hour stipend" is computed by subtracting from the nine-month stipend the amount the teaching assistant usually pays in tuition and fees for the academic year. That remainder is then divided by the product of (1) the total number of classes (sections) the assistant teaches during the academic year (adjusted, if necessary, to a semester system), (2) the number of "hours" which one class meets during one week, and (3) the average number of students in such classes. Several examples of such computations are offered in the accompanying table.

The advantages of computing a "student-hour stipend" are obvious. The results are comparable from one institution to another, and they give weight to a consideration like class size which otherwise may be overlooked. The disadvantages are that the "student-hour stipend" itself does not seem quite as meaningful in the real world as the stipend itself, even though the stipend itself is less meaningful than some realize when they ignore tuition and teaching load. Furthermore, the "student-hour stipend" ignores such qualitative matters as the nature of the graduate program and the nature of any in-service preparation for teaching offered at the institution. In addition, the "student-hour stipend" does not take into account the number of papers expected from students or the possibility that a teaching assistant may have more than one preparation in the number of classes taught. Some institutions offer higher stipends for assistants with more teaching experience than others, but this can be accounted for by computing the "student-hour stipend" for such people at the higher stipend figure.

Despite its shortcomings as an index of a teaching assistant’s entire financial and educational prospects, the "student-hour stipend" strikes me as an index useful in comparing from one institution to another the stipend offered for work expected.

### SOME STUDENT-HOUR STIPENDS

for 1970-71

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*Note that these figures may, with just as much meaning, apply to what others would call a two-thirds, half, or one-third appointment. Note also that when an institution’s stipend is followed by a plus sign (+), higher stipends are given for TA’s who fulfill certain criteria.

**This figure is the sum that a teaching assistant usually pays in an academic year. Where no sum is given, tuition is waived.

***This figure represents the total number of classes (i.e., sections) taught during an academic year, adjusted to a semester system. For example, Institution G has offered figures for an assistant teaching one class during each of three quarters, adjusted here to the equivalent of one class during each of two semesters.

Freshman English News is published three times a year at Texas Christian University. Subscription price for one year is $2.00. All subscriptions, books for review, and news items about four-year college programs should be sent to the editor. News items about two-year colleges should be sent to the two-year college editor. The editors are interested in facts and news about Freshman English only. Theoretical and speculative articles should not be submitted.

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Jim W. Corser
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Booth, Wayne C. Now Don’t Try to Reason With Me. 1971.


Harrington, David, "Teaching Students the Art of Discovery," College Composition and Communication, XIX (February, 1966), 7-14.


Weaver, Richard. The Ethics of Rhetoric. 1955.

THE TREND TOWARDS FRESHMAN SEMINARS

Thomas W. Wilcox
University of Connecticut

The term "Freshman Seminar" seems to have been coined at Dartmouth in 1958, when the English Department there revised its freshman program to include as its second-term offering a battery of innovative courses, each of which would be devoted to a specific theme, body of literature, or critical concern. The seminars bore such titles as "The Education of the Young Man in Literature," "James and Conard: Two Worlds within Worlds" (a study of fantasies), and their common purpose was to allow each student to explore a limited topic in considerable depth. A stipulated amount of writing (c. 6,000 words) was required in each ten-week seminar. The Department thought it could best help its students to improve their writing by giving them something substantial to write about; it also hoped to demonstrate that study in depth inevitably leads to consideration of fundamental problems and principles, that specialization is the best route to general education. Dartmouth's freshman seminars proved enormously popular — so popular that other departments asked to participate and by 1962 a college-wide program had evolved. Similar multi-discipline programs have since been instituted at Cornell, Boston University, Brown, and elsewhere. Courses of the seminar type are now being offered to freshmen at Mills, the University of Washington, Buffalo, Ohio University, and many other two and four-year colleges. It seems likely that the number will grow as the multiple advantages of the seminar plan become apparent to more and more departments.

Those advantages may be illustrated by our experience at the University of Connecticut. For many years we required most of our freshmen to take one semester of composition and one semester of literature. In 1968, inspired by the seminar programs at Dartmouth and Cornell, we inaugurated a pilot program which consisted of a term of literature followed by a term of seminars. We liked our new plan so well that we installed it across the board last year. This year we also reduced the freshman English requirement to one course — the introduction to literature (in which students write about nine papers). Our seminars have thus become optional, but they are so popular that we are offering some 27 this spring and have enrolled about 70% of the students eligible to elect them. The seminars are popular with the staff as well, because they afford opportunities to experiment with new courses in topics of special interest to the instructors. Each member of the staff — and 90% of them are Teaching Assistants — submits a detailed prospectus of the seminar he proposes. These are reviewed by a faculty committee, and a slate of topics is submitted to the students (all 1,600 of them) for their opinions and suggestions. Some seminars are dropped, others added in response to our analysis of the students' preferences; we try to place each student who elects the course in a seminar he prefers. The results of this laborious procedure are gratifying: most instructors are teaching subjects which engross them, most students are taking courses which engage them. This term we have seminars in "Humor in Literature," "Legend and Fantasy," "Modern Afro-American Literature," "The Woman as Hero," and in a host of other intriguing topics. Morale is high, freshman English at the University of Connecticut was never easier to defend, never more fun to teach.

[Professor Wilcox offers to answer queries about the planning and administration of freshman seminar programs. His address is U-25, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Conn. 06268.]
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PRE-PUBLICATION REVIEW OF
THE HOLT GUIDE TO ENGLISH

"...Bill Irmscher's endition is so solid, his coverage so extensive, his treatment so sound and sensible, his style so lucid and graceful...I don't think I'm indulging in superlatives when I say that there isn't a handbook/rhetoric now on the market that can match (The Holt Guide to English) for extensiveness and variety of coverage, for soundness of treatment, for practicality, for depth of knowledge about how language works.

"...Some unusual or particularly well-done sections:
- the structural definitions of grammatical terms
- good transformational test for the dangling verbal
- lucid exposition of the main principles of transformational grammar
- use of Burke's Pentad for generating ideas, illustrated by showing how the pentad might be used on a topic like the student-activist movement
- the arguments and counter-arguments on the subject of grades set up in parallel columns (a form of self-dialogue useful in the invention process)
- apt selection of paragraphs to illustrate ways of developing paragraphs, with analyses in the margins of what is happening in the paragraphs
- description of the six major styles, classified according to function or occasion (novel and exceedingly well done)
- good section on revision-passages in parallel columns, with analyses and advice about revising
- good section on patterns in misspellings (only treatment I've seen that was really useful)
- good section revealing the distinguishing features of the major literary genres, using a skeletal form of the genre
- twenty assignments that a number of instructors made on Dennis Jusdowicz's play Blood Money (teachers, who are desperate for ideas about kinds of assignments to make, especially on literary texts are going to love this section)
- the whole section presenting student themes on literature, accompanied by comments on the student's performance
- glossary (of additional linguistic, literary and rhetorical terms). Here is certainly 'God's plenty.' The best I have seen in any handbook. You can't match it unless you go to something like Fowler or Thrall and Hildard. Some of the longer entries, like those on courtly love, free verse, epic, romance, tragedy, are valuable little essays on their own. I would suspect that some students, especially those who were going to be English majors, would retain the book simply for the reference value of this section.

"I could find something commendable to say about almost every section of the book, but I singled these sections out for special mention. But let me single out one section for special, special comment. The chapter 'Writing on Literary Topics' is superb. The best I've seen anywhere..."

Edward P. J. Corbett, Director of Freshman English, The Ohio State University

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IT'S NICE TO HAVE

SOMETHING ON THE BALL

EVEN IF IT'S JUST A SPIN

Robert D. Horst

Blue Mountain Community College (Oregon)

There are, perhaps, a dozen of us in the room. Male and females are we, some still hatchlings, some so old we could draw the face of Coolidge from memory. Problems range from how to cover pimples to the insufficiency of the Social Security check. But we don't talk about those things; they are beyond the range of our twenty-gauge text. What we are here for is simple; we will bleach all grammar errors from these students by dipping them for an hour three times a week into the Purex of Basic English.

This we do repeatedly until the "Ain't got none's" and the "Him and me's" become fainter, fainter still, and eventually fade completely away. (Well, not completely, to be perfectly honest. There are some who are fade-resistant.) But for most, the errors become fewer, the writing becomes better.

How? The students do exercises in a workbook, but we do more than that. We discuss the reasons why a change of word will alter the meaning of a sentence. For example we try to learn about precision by looking at the Christmas song, It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, and seeing what happens when we substitute prepositions in the line:

Angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold. By substituting "with" we can change the meaning to imply that the angels are using a guitar pick (gold, of course) to produce their music. Or (not gold, alas) we substitute for "for" and find that now the angels have become a celestial combo working their way through heaven. Or (not even pyrite, I'm afraid) we slip in "into" and show that now the angels have an advanced case of King Midas Disease. We all chuckle about this, but the point has been made; any change of word changes meaning. Once students know this on the conscious level they are ready to utilize it in their writing.

To make sure, we do the same type of thing with verbs.

She walked into the room.

That verb just lies there and whispers. And we say no. Then comes a trickle of suggestions. "Jumped!" "Nifty. She's so eager she pounces in there like a pesky lion." "Tiptoes!" "Peschy. The timid little thing is either practicing up on her ballet or is getting ready to pull a Lizzy Borden on some poor chap in the room. "Silthers!" "Bulls eye. With a nose in her teeth and seduction on her mind. Keep a goat!" "Limps. Sure. Listen to the sound she makes. THUMP-thump, THUMP-thump. "Explodes. Run for the fallout shelter! We have reached critical mass and Miss Atomic Bomb is HERE!

We do this sort of thing with all of the parts of speech: (limped HOW? painfully, deflectly, pathetically?) A dog! I can't see him (a hop-eared, short-tailed, belly-dragging, one-eyed, splay-footed, tongue-lobbing, curly-haired, black and brown, feisty little runt.)

Now I can see him. But I can't hear him or smell him or... And they laminate us with sensory information. "He smells like a skunk somebody neglected to refrigerate." "He barks like a mottar." "He sounds like he's trying to chew through a tank with a buzz saw." Etc.

And the "etcs" are delightful. Once the student knows what words do, how flexible, exact or vague they can be, he is on his way towards liking the process of writing. Once he accomplishes this he might even write when he doesn't have to. At that point learning begins to change into education.

The most rewarding class for observable progress is Basic English. We say hello to caterpillars and wave good-bye to butterflies.

AN AUTHENTIC MULTI-MEDIA FRESHMAN COMPOSITION PROGRAM

Otto Louis Pfiff

Arapahoe Community College (Colorado)

Self-evident truths bear repeating now and then lest we lose sight of them. For instance, one communication (Old or New) can do something better than another medium: a slide projector conveys a visual image better than the human voice can. Arapahoe Community College English instructors understand this principle well and, working as a team, have created a year-long, multi-media freshman composition program. (This program has been seen at conventions and by individual English departments throughout the midwestern and western states.)

The results have been encouraging. Our students, nourished from childhood by mechanical toys, radios, cameras, movies and television, respond enthusiastically to our multimedia presentation designed to compete with the familiar entertainment media. Importantly, our students are writing better, on the average, than any students in our memory. (The twelve, members of our department represent, collectively, over a hundred years' teaching experience.)

Over the five-and-a-half years of our college's existence, the department's one constant has been a quest for the most effective teaching methods possible within the limits of our resources. Working as a cooperative team and operating on the premise that each instructor has strengths that should be exploited, the staff has evolved its three-part method of instruction.

1. Multi-Media Lectures

Information distribution being one part of education, it makes sense to distribute to as many students at one time as possible. On a Wednesday, for example, a student in our second quarter composition program selects which of two (9:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m.) presentations he will attend. One instructor makes both presentations, thus freeing the other eleven members of the department to grade, plan, counsel students, or to do whatever else they need to do.

Let's look in on one presentation. On this day, the student enters the lecture hall, he hears the familiar sound of John Hartford singing (on tape over the P.A.), "Like unto a Mockingbird," and a song that satirizes the "follow the crowd" theme. (The presentations serve two functions — informational and motivational.) A real live professor with a personally-adapted script begins the presentation as the music ends. Today's lecture is called, "On Using and Being Used," and deals with ten common propaganda devices. Smoothly blended with the lecturer's words, slides on a large screen, center-front, show spicy advertisements from magazines and newspapers that illustrate each propaganda device. On the second screen high over the lecturer's shoulder, definitions and verbal examples of the propaganda devices are projected. The 30-minute presentation (our lectures range from 20 to 60 minutes) ends with taped examples from radio (used with permission of the sponsors) of the same propaganda devices.

Each of the three quarters of our program—personal narrative, argument, and literary criticism—is built around a series of multi-media presentations using combinations of live voice, slides, transparencies, super-8, audio-tapes, and video-tapes. The student has an accompanying student manual containing student and professional writing models, pictures, cartoons, quips, and pages especially designed for the student to record notes from the media presentations as he writes his own rhetoric.

One instructor is appointed annually to oversee the continued development of each quarter's program. This instructor has the primary responsibility for refining media presentations and upgrading the student manual. His normal 12-hour load is reduced for one quarter to 9 as he works on his program. Arapahoe's Instructional Resource Center provides the expert technical assistance needed to avoid overly-amateurish production work. Some twenty publishers provide varying degrees of advice on the development of our composition programs.

2. Discussion Groups

Ideally, the two one-hour discussion sections per week would be limited to 20 students. Political and economic realities have forced us to increase these sections to 25. In these, the instructor and students review the lecture content, study writing models, do related exercises, or whatever the instructor in each section decides to do to make the best use of the lecture content.

Each English instructor at Arapahoe handles three composition sections and one literature section with 30 students.

3. Individual and Small Group Conferences

The Arapahoe instructors feel that, while each part of the method is essential, the small
group (3 to 5 students sharing in critiquing each other’s writing) or individual conference is the heart of the method. After each of four theme writing assignments during the quarter, the student signs up for a specified time to meet with the instructor to evaluate his work. The small group conferences typically last about an hour, while individual conferences range from 15 to 30 minutes.

Student response to this intimate approach to learning about writing is consistently enthusiastic. While each part of our method is given enthusiastic student response, especially by transfer students to Arapahoe, the individual or small group conference is graded highest by students.

ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

Both formal (written) and informal (word of mouth) student and teacher feedback (as well as evaluation of our product, the students’ writings and understanding of the course content) help determine changes to make from year to year.

In addition to these measures, Arapahoe instructors, working in a merit pay system, are required to undergo peer group evaluation (the group comprised by the department chairman, a person selected by the Humanities Division, and a person chosen by the instructor being evaluated) every fourth year. Instructor evaluations are done annually by students and the department chairman, as well as by the instructor himself.

The department is currently working through the Research Division of Higher Education of Colorado University to explore the possibility of setting up a three-way teacher-program exchange with Community colleges of Denver and Metropolitan State College to make a comparative study of the three colleges’ effectiveness in teaching composition. Our motive in exploring this type exchange is to learn how we can do our job better.

For now, we have reason to feel good about what we’re up to. Our students enjoy writing, and more astonishing still, our instructors enjoy teaching it.

APPROACHING A COHERENT ENGLISH PROGRAM

Donald G. Bass
College of the Mainland (Texas)

Since its inception in 1967 the College of the Mainland English staff (eight members) has believed that [1] English is something one does; [2] English is not something one observes; [3] English is reading, listening, talking, seeing and writing. This may sound like a very dry beginning, but such purposes are like Ben Hur compared with the biddism, "I think I’ll start with adverbs next year."

AN APPROACH

English instruction as an activity fits this college’s purposes, especially the aim to help young people become independent. Last spring the English staff and four students sat down to identify capabilities which they desired students to possess after a four semester sequence of instruction. Before that time individual instructors had employed the instructional system; however, the more immediate problem involved making the program coherent. The staff wanted one program because it would allow optimum use of resources; thus they developed the capability requirements.

There were seventy-four capabilities selected for the following categories: Process, Thinking and Logic, Speaking and Listening, Writing, Literature, Film, Creative Writing, and Communication Theory. From these capabilities, instructors, in teams, designed environments they felt would produce the best learning opportunities for students. How many of these capabilities are achieved is at present a matter of close evaluation.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

If these capabilities are desirable, one must look at the characteristics of our entering students. Here are some interesting ones:
1. 30% of the students work 40 or more hours a week;
2. 18%, black, 4% brown;
3. many are blue collar youths;
4. 70% want grades very strongly; no pass-fall stuff;
5. about the same number want the traditional classroom, are socially rigid;
6. 20% take reading improvement;
7. the composite ACT score for the student body is 16.7;
8. they tend to be the first from their families to go beyond high school.

DOING ENGLISH

The question becomes, "How do we design an instructional situation for students with these characteristics?" It is not possible to describe all of the English instructional talent, but there are some facts on English 131, the first of the four semester sequence:

1. English 131 is designed in a format of large groups (stimuli for 280 students) — small groups (application for 23 students).
2. All students, including technical vocational (40% of the student body), take this course. 450 are in the course now.
3. Students who are assessed remedial (variants: developmental, directed, guided, "bluebird" students) take a writing course and a reading course in addition to this course.

Sixty percent of these students have received credit in English 131 in the past.
4. Large group stimuli in the fall ‘71 semester have been broad topics of: Communication Theory, Education, Conservation, and the Future. Some of the specific sessions have included these films: The Communication Explosion, Sixteen in Webster Groves, Population Eclogy, Say Goodbye, The Futurists, The Mystery of Life. Members of Zero Population Growth and Sierra Club and concerned public have visited with slide presentations. There has been mediation instruction on organization, development and non-verbal communications, and there were two sessions produced by students. 5. Students contract for grades; some of the activities for C, B, and A grades are:
a. evaluating the course,
b. panel discussion activities,
c. reporting on books and periodicals,
d. writing congressmen,
e. creating visual displays—tape-slide presentations, bulletin board,
f. reviewing films,
g. editing a community resource handbook,
h. creating a proposal,
i. reporting on a college event,
j. tutoring,
k. building a bibliography,
l. planning a future and presenting it in the large group,
m. and many others, including any negotiated activity that involves using the English language heavily.

These activities are indicative of the design of the other three courses in the sequence.

EVALUATION

This team applies the research design suggested by Arthur Cohen in Is Anyone Learning to Write (ERIC), and it has improved upon the criteria for grading composition that Cohen suggested. The research design has revealed a twenty-five percent improvement (pre-post-test) in those stated criteria. The design identifies areas the team should improve. Evaluation points out that the instructional sequence is headed in a direction which is desirable.

One important element of the design is the operation of the writing laboratory where students may "walk-in" for help at anytime during their college stay; the lab utilizes independent study units.

MONEY

The cost of the College of the Mainland program amounts to professional salaries and a program budget of $4,500.00 (visuals, films, instructional materials, etc.)

Annually, the program serves approximately 1500 students ($3 a student).

Inquiries about this instructional sequence are invited.

The editors are interested in publishing descriptions of successful Writing Lab programs in two-year colleges. Please submit specific, brief descriptions (emphasizing why the Lab is successful) to:

Arthur Pritchard
Dept. of English
Tarrant County Junior College
(South Campus)
Fort Worth, Texas 76119

Among a recent spate of noteworthy books on rhetoric, Jim W. Corder’s *Uses of Rhetoric* stands out for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is its readability; it is written by a humane rhetorician who obviously values clarity and who has “style.” Foregrounded against some of the muckraker tones that have appeared recently, *Uses of Rhetoric* glitters.

Corder’s book also performs a real service to the field of knowledge that the author writes about. This long essay does concern the relevance of rhetoric, rhetoric’s place in the here and now. And Corder does succeed in making the point that, it seems to me, so badly needs to be made: either modern society will learn accommodation, or it will confront, and the best tool of accommodation is rhetoric.

Some books attempt to advance new theory, and others attempt to interpret accepted doctrine in the light of the present. Corder’s task is predominantly the latter.

Chapter titles give some notion of the range of inquiry in the book: “Urgencies and Possibilities in Rhetorical Study, with Some Account of Its Range”; “Shapes and Direction in Rhetorical Study”; “On the Preservation and Extension of Rhetoric”; “Rhetoric in the Classroom”; “Rhetoric in the Curriculum”; “Rhetoric at Large”; and “Certain Maxims and Questions, with No Conclusion to be Found.” The heart of the book, however, is the third chapter, “On the Preservation and Extension of Rhetoric,” which relates rhetoric to what’s going on in the world today. Corder argues that “We have come at last to think ourselves good without question, our native wit sufficient without learning, our feelings right without deliberation.” We have come, in short, to the point where discussion is impossible and shouting is a show of rightness and righteousness. We have come, that is, to an age in which the notion of adjusting ideas to audiences and audiences to ideas does not, at many crucial junctures, prevail. Or to state this point another way: many have abandoned the art of invention. The New Left, for example, is often totally un inventive, as are the McLuhanites:

The claim shared by media-men is that when we lose the bonds of linearity in favor of simultaneity, then we have freed ourselves. This I take to be but another manifestation of the claim I have been talking about for some time, that we are free once we have escaped the trellis of imposed knowledge and the deliberations of invention for the greener slopes of the happening, the spontaneous finding.

To repeat: *Uses of Rhetoric* is an essay that intelligently does demonstrate the uses of rhetoric at the present time.

And yet, one speculates about the audience for this excellent book. It is clearly not a text (though it does contain a good introduction to the problems of rhetoric), and it is just as clearly not a major attempt to advance knowledge in the field significantly; rather it falls into that class of works that, characteristically have “defense” in their titles: defense of reason or of poetry or religion. *Uses of Rhetoric* is model of its kind.

All of which is not to say that the book contains no new concepts; indeed, it is filled with them, but newness is not the main thrust. Any rhetorician who doubts that Corder has a good deal to teach should look, for instance, at the concept of “multiple invention,” developed in the first chapter.

*Uses of Rhetoric* is a useful book, one that every student in the field will profit from and enjoy reading.

W. Ross Winterowd
University of Southern California


William Irmischer has put together what may well be the definitive English handbook for the 1970’s. In *The Holt Guide to English*, Professor Irmischer brings together—coherently and with reasonable economy—much of the current wisdom in the fields of rhetoric, language, and literature and has produced an “English department complete” within the covers of a single book. Attempting to deal with all aspects of the English discipline, Professor Irmischer has generally succeeded in mapping, usefully and expeditiously, the terrain of English studies.

Actually few books have ever attempted so much: “to provide a complete and flexible text” giving “full attention to rhetoric, language, literature, criticism, and composition.” Yet the attempt needed to be made, and in this excellent volume we begin to see a synthesis of all our concerns, begin to see how everything that we do in an English department can fit together, how a general concern with language brings all our disparate interests and skills together. The rhetorician, the linguistics specialist, the critic of literature—each will find his area of study acknowledged and included in the wholeness of English as Professor Irmischer analyzes and describes our discipline.

Professor Irmischer is well qualified to write this book, of course. Who else in the nation has read so many papers, articles, and essays—publishable and unpublishable—dealing with every aspect of English as has the editor of *College Composition and Communication*? Such editorial overview has obviously given Professor Irmischer the sense of balance and proportion that prevails in this book and has obviously provided much of the insight into “latest trends” that helps make this book timely in the best sense of the word.

Professor Irmischer begins his book by surveying “The Elements of Rhetoric”: he deals with the traditional matters of writer, audience, subject, structure, logic, paragraphing, the rhetoric of the sentence, style, and revision. In this section—as in others—he up-dates a good deal of our terminology, cuts through a lot of meaningless complexities, and makes rhetoric relevant for the student by identifying it “as a force against oppression, as a wedge against closed structures, as a force for freedom against tyranny.” He suggests—in such terms as “the drama of thinking,” “the continuing audience,” “the essay as a developing form”—a dynamic approach to the use of language.

The second section of the book deals with “Special Kinds of Writing”—writing on literary topics and writing a reference paper. In this section, Professor Irmischer offers one of the most comprehensive—and certainly one of the “neatest”—expositions of literary studies I have ever read. “The Nature of Literature,” pp. 191-283, is a monograph unto itself that will prove valuable to every English major in the country.

The third section deals with “The English Language: Origins, Growth, and Changes”; here we find a discussion of Indo-European, the sources of words, how words change in meaning and value—along with an analysis of grammar (acquiring the student with segmentals, suprasegmentals, and the like), and going on to “Usage,” getting into the matter of dialects and various sociolinguistic patterns. The section ends with a glossary of usage and an informative discussion of the dictionary.

The fourth section, “Reference Resources,” presents a microgrammer, along with a fairly detailed study of the parts of speech and a study of phrases, clauses and sentences (with transformational analysis explained and illustrated). This section also includes information about the preparation of manuscripts (punctuation, capitalization, italics, numbers, spelling, and the mechanics of letter forms) and a glossary of additional linguistic, literary, and rhetorical terms that gives definitions for terms ranging from ablaut and allomorph to trivium, tropes, and Venus’s law.
In making such a rich survey of the entire English field, Professor Irmscher has provided a reference book par excellence. It is a compendium of valuable observations, with abundant illustrations, many effectively taken from student writing. Without venturing into areas of experimentation and for the most part ignoring "creative writing," the book quite understandably turns out to be a volume of current orthodoxies and present-day established views of what language is socially and culturally all about and how language can be used for general written communication.

None of us will agree, of course, with every single observation presented in the book, and I did find myself "taking exception" here and there—most frequently it seemed in Chapter 10: "Toward Better Writing: Revision." In this chapter, Professor Irmscher wrestles with the old problem of giving "advice" without becoming "prescriptive," and though he is well aware of the problem—"Attempts to define good writing are," he says, "for the most part futile because once the definition has been completed it may cover good writing of one variety, but fail to take in account numerous other kinds"—he nevertheless does proceed to give advice that at times seems to me to be somewhat restrictive. For instance, he tells students that—in general—they should "keep a firm and confident tone without seeming dogmatic," ignoring the fact that a dogmatic tone is just as much a part of a writer's repertoire as anything else while a "firm and confident tone" may not be the most rhetorically effective one on certain occasions. At another point, Professor Irmscher lauds "honesty" as a rhetorical virtue, telling the student to "use personal experiences and firsthand observations whenever possible; don't invent hypothetical characters and situations. Above all, be natural in the expression of feeling." Such advice, I feel, drastically limits the student to one kind of writing.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING


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BOOK REVIEW POLICY

The editors will attempt to have reviewed only those books which will be of interest to freshman English instructors. Normally we shall not carry reviews of handbooks, standard readers, and the like. We are especially anxious to review books which might not otherwise come to the attention of many teachers.

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As the subtitle indicates, this volume of A Theory of Discourse deals with the aims of discourse—or, to use synonymous terms, the uses, the functions, the purposes, of discourse. A projected second volume will deal with the modes of discourse. "Classification of kinds of realtites referred to by full texts," Kinneavy says (p. 35), "constitute 'modes' of discourse." This classification is based on a consideration of what is being talked about, whereas the aims of discourse are classified on the basis of why a thing is being talked about. The modes of discourse that Kinneavy will deal with in Volume II are narration, classification, evaluation, and description—a slight reshuffling of Alexander Bain's "forms of discourse," narration, exposition, argumentation, and description.

To derive his classification of the aims of discourse, Kinneavy employs the four elements in the Communication Triangle:

Encoder △ Decorder

The aims of discourse are distinguished according to which element in this four-part interrelationship receives the predominant emphasis. If the emphasis is on the encoder (the speaker or writer), we get Expressive Discourse. If the emphasis is on the decoder (the audience), we get Persuasive Discourse. If the emphasis is on the signal (the work, the message, the artifact, the product), we get Literary Discourse. If the emphasis is on the reality (the universe, "the world out there"), we get Reference Discourse. (Those familiar with The Mirror and the Lamp will recall that M. H. Abrams, using the four elements in the communication triangle, arrived at his classification of the four main schools of literary criticism—the Expressive, the Pragmatic, the Objective, and the Mimetic. In Teaching the Universe of Discourse, James Moffett also used the communication triangle to distinguish kinds of discourse.) Reference Discourse in turn has three distinct species:

(A) Informative—"If the reality is conceived as known and the facts about it are simply relayed to the decoder, there is an informative use of language."

(B) Scientific—"If the information is systematized and accompanied by demonstrative proof of its validity, there is scientific use of language."

(C) Exploratory—"If the reality is not known but being sought, there is an exploratory use of language" (p. 39).

Each of these aims of discourse or uses of language, Kinneavy claims and convincingly demonstrates, has its own system of logic, its own organizational structure, and its own stylistic characteristics. After an Introductory chapter in which he argues the need for a theory of discourse, gives a brief historical sketch of discourse education, and proposes that the "field of English" be defined in relation to the communication triangle, Kinneavy devotes a chapter to each of the four aims of discourse. Each of these chapters follows the same pattern: definition of key terminology, discussion of the nature of the kind of discourse being dealt with in that chapter, consideration of the distinctive logic, organization, and style of that kind of discourse, a detailed analysis of a particular example of that kind of discourse, some study questions and assignments, and a bibliography. Here is a listing of the number of pages devoted to a discussion of each aim of discourse, the title of the specific example that is minutely analyzed, and the number of pages of bibliography:

Reference Discourse: 129 pages; "The Effective Use of Statistics"; Bibliography, 9 pages (177 items).

Persuasive Discourse: 91 pages; Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "First Inaugural Address"; Bibliography, 5 pages (101 items).

Literary Discourse: 79 pages; Gerard Manley Hopkins's "That Nature is a Hieracitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection"; Bibliography, 7 pages (130 items).

Expressive Discourse: 55 pages; "The Declaration of Independence"; Bibliography, 2 pages (35 items).

There is no other book in print quite like A Theory of Discourse—certainly none written by an English teacher for English teachers. The erudition exhibited so modestly and unpedantically in this book is staggering. Kinneavy "alludes to or quotes from not only the full range of classical and modern rhetoricians but a wide range of literary critics, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, semanticists, linguists, psychologists, logicians, and communications theorists. Kinneavy has come a long way in a relatively short time from his A Study of Three Contemporary Theories of Lyric Poetry published in 1956. Yet with all the learning displayed in this book, Kinneavy's style is admirably lucid and free from jargon.

Despite its price, this book should become a staple text in upper-division and graduate courses in rhetoric, in training courses for teaching assistants and prospective teachers, and in summer institutes and in-service courses for veteran teachers. After reading this book, Directors of Freshman English would be able to design more purposeful programs, and all of us should be able to teach composition more effectively. Edward P. J. Cobett

Ohio State University

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