

Compulsory Composition Course

There is a movement afoot in the Arts Faculty to require freshmen to pass a "competency test" in English composition. Those who failed would have to take a compulsory course, Remedial Composition. Later the test -- and if necessary the course -- would be mandatory for all U.P.E.I. students.

An "experimental test", proposed by the English Department for administration to this year's freshmen, includes essays on such intellectually stimulating topics as "Living Without a Car", "How I Fight Inflation", and "Some Pleasures of Living on the Island".

Writing a "competent" essay on a topic such as these

and passing a multiple-choice test of grammar and diction would be accepted as proof that the student is able to "follow the contemporary conventions of standard written English". One of the objects of this exercise would be to enable U.P.E.I. graduates to "draft effective memoranda."

(Quotes from committee report) I object to this proposal, for two reasons. First, it is one more step, among a growing number, toward uniformity, conformity, and compulsion at this university. Second, it offers a 19th century solution to a 20th century problem.

My first objection needs

little elaboration. Education, if it is to be effective, must be individualized, it must be selfdirected, and it must be rewarding. A compulsory composition course would simply make writing and the written word hateful and repugnant to those subjected to it.

The 20th century problem, to which this scheme is an inept, outdated solution, is the decline - almost the disappearance - of recreational reading.

Without discoursing on the arguments McLuhan and others that our culture is no longer "linear" and "print mediated", it is enough to say that most people born after about 1950 (some would suggest a much earlier date) have not been encouraged to read, or been exposed to good writing.

Unless they have a mental disability, people who from an early age read many well-written books with significant themes almost invariably express themselves forcefully and effectively, in writing as well as speech. "Effective" expression does not, of course, always conform to "conventionally correct" expression.

It used to be believed that weaknesses in the grammar and diction of "unschooled"

people could be eliminated by composition or rhetoric courses. Often these courses induced bland mediocrity, but at least there was a foundation - widespread book readership - for this kind of instruction. Today, for most persons of university age, there is none.

In my judgement, there is only one satisfactory way to transform student non-writers into proficient writers, and that is to persuade (not force) them to read books and periodicals of quality. Some of these students then may want to improve their writing style - perhaps to imitate an admired author - and will enroll in elective composition and creative writing courses.

Any other method, especially the one proposed, will merely produce "disfunctional literates", to coin a phrase, the kind of "educated" university graduates who dictate the fatuous inter-office memos and draft the turbid committee reports with which all business and professional people are bombarded these days.

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Adventure into peace & satisfaction

There's going to be a little surprise at U.P.E.I. next Friday night at 7:30. The Duffy Amphitheatre is going to lift off the ground.

We're going to drop off those bundles of worries in our heads and settle down to finding the real peace in our lives.

Peace lives in our hearts. So first we'll have a love song by Lynne Colucci and Alex Perlman. And then the action will start. Freddy von Draeger, professor of political science, with his keen insight into the life and values of man, will examine the basic understanding that is needed to bring humans into real harmony on earth. As Freddy put it, mankind seems to be on a sinking ship. But we're not going down without trying.

Next, Mrs. Donnelly, a well known Baha'i of Charlottetown will introduce another perspective on bringing peace into the world on a practical level.

Then Min Chiang, professor of humanistic psychology, will appear with not only the resource of psychology, but also with the Buddhistic viewpoint, which he is well acquainted with. As Min pointed out, this forum is a rare and valuable event because actually, the speakers have no limitations on what they are going to say.

We are simply looking for peace and no one knows what may happen. But one thing is for certain. If we get together with a real desire in our hearts, a greater understanding of life is sure to evolve. Next, the simple rhythm and flow of nature will be portrayed in a short dance by Lynne Colucci.

Father Kelly of the Catholic Church and professor of the classics and latin department will then address the forum. He is a sensitive man and will express his experience on how a Christian may find peace in his life.

Afterwards, Ron Wagner and Lionel Stevenson will fill the hall with another song of love. Then Michael Panella of the Divine Light Centre in Charlottetown will speak. He will express his experiences of how peace may be gained by meditation. Also from his involvement in the Divine United Organization on a practical level may form the framework for a world of people who may peacefully live and work together.

After another gentle, yet powerful song, the "Storm Was Coming" by Allan Cardiff, the speakers will be open to questions from all. Also, anyone in the theatre with deep feelings to express will be wel-

comed to speak. This may be the time when real spontaneous discovery can take place. With the first talks as a groundwork for interaction, we can proceed to share the understanding we've each come to in life. We tend to hold in our deepest feelings from day to day, because we don't seem to get the chance to express them. But this is a chance to share our experience, and that's where the love comes from. The more we share, the more beautiful the experience.

After individuals are fin-

ished speaking to the group as a whole, we'll break up into a general discussion with herbal tea, hot chocolate, and home baked natural foods for a refreshment. If anyone has music or any real expression to give from your heart, and you want to be planned into the program, call Alex at 892 - 8143. Call also if you want to bring any publications, pictures, records etc., that you feel would be valuable to people in finding peace.

love, Alex

