

FEATURES

Critical theory groups take discussion beyond the classroom

By Winifred Sease
Staff Writer

Many students count pages until their reading assignments are done and never would pick up a book not listed in the class syllabus.

But some students just can't get enough.

And for them the option of going to interested peers to create a space for growth and exposure exists. That is what Michael Strong did.

Three years ago, Strong, then a graduate student in the English department, along with Thomas Cohen, assistant professor of English, organized a reading group and lecture series called Positions to make "wide-open, broad attempts to create a community of people to talk about things they think are interesting," Strong said.

"I do not speak for everyone, but I am interested in making myself part of a community of thinkers," he said. "Things I was interested in talking about were not offered in my classes as a graduate student. Positions provided a space intellectually and literally to talk about theory."

Strong and Cohen were interested in talking about literary theory and cultural studies. Along with discussion, a lecture series was formed to bring speakers and more perspectives to campus.

Started in fall 1988, Positions contin-

ues to run the lecture series that will sponsor three speakers this semester: Judith Farquhar from the UNC anthropology department and Catherine Belsey and Janice Radway, both visiting lecturers.

The Positions reading group still meets at 7:30 p.m. every Tuesday in The Hardback Cafe to discuss readings.

The readings are chosen and put on reserve by Kathy Pories and Mary Floyd-Wilson, co-presidents of Positions and graduate students in the English department. They try to relate readings to the lectures. This semester they will be reading Belsey's and Radway's works, among others. But they said readings were flexible based on participants' interests.

"(Positions) wants to further develop the areas of literary theory and cultural studies," Pories said. "It is fulfilling a real need for graduate students and more of a curiosity for undergraduates."

Awareness and knowledge of theory and cultural studies should improve graduate students' teaching skills now and in the future, Pories and Floyd-Wilson said.

"You learn more in reading groups than in classrooms because it is on you, it pushes you a lot harder," Pories said. "(Reading groups) make you think. It's a community effort."

Cohen said, "Theory is a place where disciplines have cross-pollinated and



The Positions critical theory group meets Tuesday evenings in the Hardback Cafe

created new intellectual currents." An important part of the group is its interdisciplinary, inclusive nature, Strong said.

Not just for graduate students, literary theory has undergraduate followers as well. Christopher Diffie decided to start his own critical theory group on campus a year ago. The group comprises mostly undergraduates, though all are welcome, he said.

Diffie said he started the group because he was interested in theory and wanted an arena to discuss ideas and

issues he was not finding in classes.

The group has discussed the works of authors such as Dierrda, Foucault and the French feminists, Cixous and Kristeva at its 7 p.m. Thursday meetings in 118 Hanes. The readings are varied and are selected by the group.

Cohen said theory could be used as a bridge for undergraduates to expose themselves to new things and to become aware of various perspectives.

But what exactly are critical and literary theory? Simply, everyone has a certain lens

through which he cannot help but view literature, art and the world. Studying theory calls attention to and works to recognize and examine these lenses.

"Theory opens up the text and allows you to tease out the implications and subtleties of the text," Pories said. "It shows you how texts are informed and formed by social, cultural and historical factors."

Floyd-Wilson suggested that dealing with theory taught one how to ask questions and provided a reminder that there was rarely an answer. "With theory you are always undoing your own assumptions."

Strong said he thought literature was

the most important, dense and complicated way an individual or culture articulated itself. "Literary theory allows you to talk about literature historically, politically and economically."

Dawn Dreyer, an undergraduate who attends the critical theory group, said: "I want to figure out what I bring to the text. Theory gave me a language to express some of the things I have been feeling. Theory is a breaking down so that you have to rebuild."

Both groups meet in an informal, relaxed atmosphere and invite all interested students. All readings are on reserve in the Undergraduate Library.

Bus

ably require an administrative decision of some sort."

The aid would be offered only for next year, but if the system still needed help alternate plans would be considered, Heyd said.

"In future, if there is not enough from the funds to pick up the slack, we may have to work out a different arrangement," he said. "For example, giving the transportation system the interest and not touching the principal."

Mark Chilton, town council mem-

Wellness

home," she said.

Wayne Kuncl, housing director, said he saw two possible solutions to the problem. One wing of the floor could be reserved for the program while the other wing would be left for returning residents, he said.

Officials also might give students first choice, after squatter's rights, of where to live anywhere on campus.

Sander said he liked the idea of splitting the floor and was in the process of identifying how many students would be returning to second floor.

Brockmann said splitting the floor would not work. "I really believe in order for the wellness floor to be successful we need to use the whole floor."

Brockmann said she realized that any change could be difficult, but students had to realize that change of community was a factor no matter where they lived. "Every year community is different."

Kuncl said he planned to meet with staff and students to discuss ways to resolve the conflict. "It's my intent to get back with the students and deal with their problems."

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ber, said the town would be forced to negotiate with the federal government about decreased funding if the program fell through.

"Without University aid we will have to go to Washington," Chilton said. "We have to first speak to our two representatives, Tim Valentine and David Price."

Chilton said he did predict some opposition to the bill.

"I can see some resistance to the idea because it is unprecedented," he said. "The concept of a one-time grant presents an unusual situation."

Chapel Hill Mayor Ken Brown said that he was very happy about the plan and that he hoped University administrators would approve it.

"I would certainly be pleased to get help from anyone," Brown said. "We are going through very difficult times and would also appreciate support in lobbying the government to raise our funding."

Thieves

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said. CVI employees often visit the complex to install new service, and representatives have found no violators, she said.

Susan Flaughter, a leasing consultant for Woodbridge Apartments in Carrboro, said one incident of cable theft had been reported.

"One person called and said someone had taken someone else's cable," she said. "It was an isolated incident. No others have been reported so far."

Elderkin said unauthorized cable use can distort television pictures or interrupt service for paying customers in an entire apartment building.

Curricula majors gain wide range of knowledge

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series looking at the differences between department and curricula classes.

By Robin Lowe
Staff Writer

Picking a major can be one of the hardest decisions in a student's life.

While some students float around from department to department trying to find a home, others know their whole career path before they graduate from high school.

UNC has an answer for students who just can't narrow it down to one major.

The administration has allowed for different curricula, or topics of study, more narrow than large departments. Instead of concentrating on one area, these curricula draw faculty from many departments to give students a wider range of knowledge than a typical major.

"In my opinion, (majoring in a curricula) is a positive thing, because it has a broader base. Students are required to take classes in a variety of fields," said Richard Cramer, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Numerous curricula fill the pages of the undergraduate catalog of majors; aerospace studies, Afro-American studies, African studies, American studies, applied sciences, criminal justice administration, East Asian studies, industrial relations, international studies, interdisciplinary studies, Latin American studies, leisure studies and recreation administration, public policy analysis, peace war and defense, religious studies and Russian and East European studies.

Katherine Dix, a senior from At-

lanta, chose to major in sociology and earn a certificate, which is similar to a minor, in women's studies.

Focusing on a specific area such as women's studies enables students to study a topic from all different angles, Dix said.

"You're pulling from all these different sources and areas, like sociology, political science and literature, but you're only getting information about gender," she said.

Dix added it was sad that special classes had to be taken in order to learn about women's contributions to history and literature.

"In traditional classes you don't get information from a woman's perspective," she said. "In history and English there are a few token women, but their roles are basically under-represented. It should be more integrated (into the introductory classes), because some people graduate without ever learning about women's roles, because not everyone takes classes in these areas."

Elizabeth Goacher, a December graduate with a degree in African and Afro-American studies, said, "The biggest advantage (of majoring in a curricula) is the interdisciplinary aspect for people who are looking for a broad background."

Goacher plans to go on to graduate work and said African studies suited her needs better than classes in history. "African studies is such a broad topic that even the history and political science departments are not able to encompass or appropriate all the knowledge in this area," she said.

As one of the first graduates of the African and Afro-American studies curriculum, Goacher said she wished there were more funding and student

interest in the curriculum. "There are not enough people using the department, but there is a lot of interest in the general classes."

An interdisciplinary studies major incorporates several young, smaller programs which have not yet grown into curricula. Folklore, Renaissance studies, environmental studies, women's studies and urban studies all offer a degree in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in a specific area.

Students also can combine classes from established departments with curricula to form a major in interdisciplinary studies. This gives the student the most freedom to choose their own path.

Michael Luger, chairman of the public policy analysis curricula, said that discipline applies theories from sociology, economics and the sciences to add to the analysis of public sector decisions. In addition, majors in public policy must take a core of courses focusing on specific analysis of policy.

"(Majoring in public policy analysis) lends a certain advantage to students," Luger said. "Not only in what you learn, but having cohorts with the same interests."

John Florin, an adviser for international studies, said, "In many ways, international studies is true liberal arts, because it assumes the student has developed enough interest to carve out their own path." International studies majors must take classes in one or two languages, a specific area of social sciences and pick a global area to study.

"Our program broadly gives students the opportunity to focus on international issues and to literally think globally," Florin said.

About 325 students are currently majoring in international studies, and Florin said the program had grown tremendously in the past 10 years.

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