

# The Graduate Student Advocate

The City University of New York

March 21, 1990

Volume I  
Number 5

## English Program Moves to Change Requirements

students question new exams

*Questions of departmental politics are often best resolved within their respective departments; but occasionally events occur which are of interest to neighboring disciplines and the academic community as a whole. The recent events in the English department seem to us to raise questions about "disciplinary" in general, and about policy-making practices and student involvement in our institution. Similar concerns are happening across the nation; Columbia has recently made major changes in their program and exam structure, as has SUNY Buffalo. At the Graduate School, battles are being waged over curriculum concerns in the Art History program [see article page 1], as well as in the Sociology and Cultural Studies programs.*

After several weeks of heated discussions, the English program appears to be near to finalizing a set of changes for its comprehensive examination requirements. These changes were motivated by dissatisfaction with the examinations on the part of both faculty and students. Martin Stevens, Executive Officer of the English program, told students, "I'm not happy with the exam, period. I've never been happy with it. I don't like the exam that we've given. I wish we could have a better system where we could deal with comprehensiveness, which I'm very much in favor of. I think that an exam where the average grade is about 30 to 32 out of 50 is an indication that we are really doing something enormously wrong."

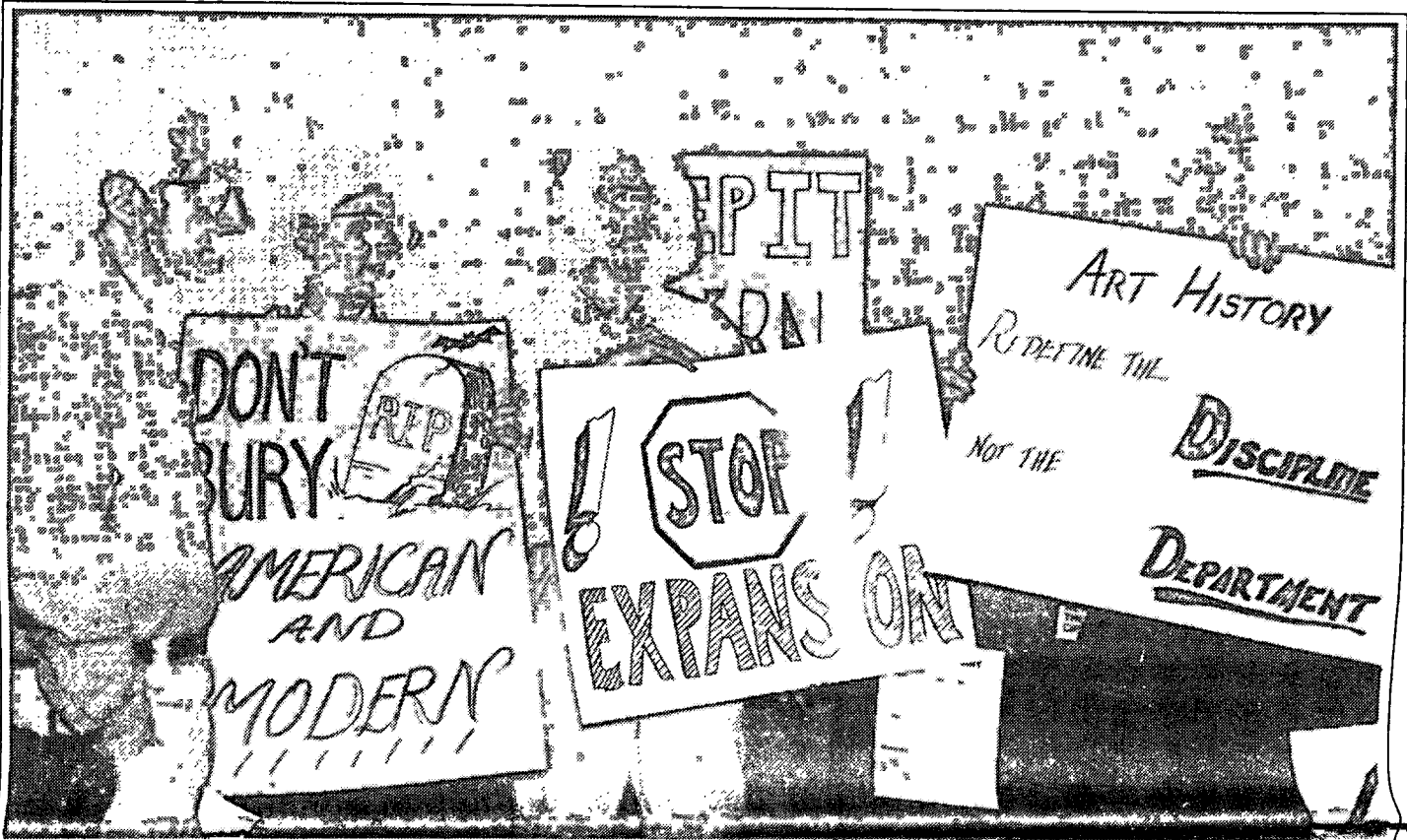
Both examinations have provoked criticism from students, but matters came to a head several weeks ago when a comprehensive examination was administered to students which differed in significant ways from previous examinations.

The written comprehensive is the first of two examinations required by the Ph.D. Program in English; the second is an oral examination of the student's area of specialization. A student cannot progress to the second examination or receive an masters *en route* without passing the comprehensive.

Problems with the comprehensive examination have most frequently been associated with Part I of this three-part test, frequently referred to as "trivial pursuit." This section consists of 50 identification questions drawn from a reading list which includes four Norton Anthologies, 18 novels, and Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms*. Students have complained that the extent of this list (the anthologies alone contain over 10,000 pages) makes this part of the test nearly impossible to study for. Students have traditionally relied on previous examinations in order to determine what works are likely to actually appear on the test. As Professor William Kelly of the Examination Committee put it, "It was our sense that what people did when they confronted

*Continued on page 13.*

## Art History Students Protest Plans to Expand Program



By George McClintock III

March 16 —Astonished members of the Graduate School community thought they had stepped back twenty years as they walked down the tunnel to the Mina Rees library from 3:00 to 5:00 this Friday afternoon. Students from the Ph.D. Program in Art History were demonstrating outside the open door of Room L02, in an attempt to make their voices heard at a meeting of their program's doctoral faculty with faculty members from art history departments at the CUNY senior colleges. The professors—and six student representatives—had gathered together to engage in a controversial debate concerning plans to expand the doctoral curriculum that has plagued the Ph.D. Program in Art History since its inception twenty years ago.

### Growing Pains

According to the December 28, 1970 resolution of the Board of Higher Education founding the program, "The curriculum will initially provide a thorough professional training in Art History with a concentration in the specialized fields of American Art, Modern Art and Criticism.

From this base, the program will gradually expand to cover the more traditional areas of specialization in Art History." In contrast, the 1987-1989 Graduate School Bulletin states unequivocally: "The Ph.D. Program in Art History program is dedicated to the development of scholars, teachers, museum personnel, art critics and other professionals in those areas of the arts specializing in American and modern art and art criticism." Doctoral training in the program is not limited to modernism, however. The Bulletin also states: "Students in the program are required to complete a concentration in an unrelated minor field, an area of art history removed from his/her major field (i.e. pre-nineteenth-century Western art or non-Western art)." Students usually fulfill the unrelated minor field requirements by taking courses at the senior colleges.

The question of curriculum expansion is particularly troublesome for the doctoral faculty, who must now defend their modernist tower from a powerful assault launched by their counterparts at the senior colleges. It is precisely the contradiction between the stated intention of the Board of Higher Education to "gradually expand" the

Ph.D. program and the doctoral faculty's twenty-year-old reluctance to encourage any expansion beyond the bounds of modernism that so frosts art historians from the senior colleges, who cannot be appointed to the Graduate School simply because they may be specialists of European art before 1800, or of the art of non-Western cultures. The doctoral faculty, whose desire to maintain the integrity of the program's modernist concentration is supported by the students, must now answer to CUNY college art historians, who have not been allowed to share in the prestige, the salaries and the limited teaching requirements of a Graduate School appointment, and who no doubt see their exclusion as a purely arbitrary.

In response to the doctoral faculty's failure to expand the program, art historians from the senior colleges formed the Committee for the Expansion of the Ph.D. Program in Art History. Last year, the group, led by Professor Barbara G. Lane, Chairman of the Art Department at Queens College, and composed of professors and students (two) from Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Hunter, Lehman and Queens Colleges,

*Continued on page 8.*

## Inside:

Repression in Nepal.....	7	Around & About the Center.....	2
Jean Gallagher on Art.....	9	Editorials & Letters.....	4
Gary Gilbert on the Canon.....	6	Reflections & Commentary.....	5
Thomas Smith on Gary Gilbert...4		World.....	7
Ed Marx on David Lodge.....	9	Arts & Events.....	9
David Weisberg on Vineland.....	9	Announcements.....	12
& Mr. Update.....	3		

## Around & About The Center

### Poetry New York

Readings at the Gas Station.

A reading series commemorating the third issue of *Poetry New York* (published by CUNY Graduate Center). The first reading will be on Wednesday, March 21, followed by performances on 4/11, 5/1, & 5/8; featured poets of the March 21 reading will be Enid Dame, Denise Duhamel, Joel Lewis, and Bernie Earley.

Enid Dame's latest book of poems is *Lilith and Her Demons* (Crosscommunications, 1986). Her short stories have appeared in various publications, including *Confrontation*, *Minnesota Review*, and *Fiction*. She currently works as an Associate Director of the Writing Program at Rutgers University. She is also co-editor (with Donald Lev) of *Home Planet News*.

Denise Duhamel recently received a New York Foundation of the Arts Fellowship in poetry. She is presently Writer in Residence at Hucknell University. Her recent poetry will appear in *Southern Poetry Review*, *Gargoyle*, and *Confrontation*.

Joel Lewis is author of *Entropia* and *3 Works*, both published by Gaede's Pond Press. He is the editor of *Bluestones & Salt Hav' An Anthology of New Jersey Poets*, published by Rutgers University Press.

Bernie Earley teaches writing at Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY. He has recently published poems in the *Bad Henry Review*.

Future readings in the series will include contributors such as Armand Schwerner, Bruce Andrews, and John Ash.

All readings will be held at the Gas Station, Avenue B and Second Street, at 8:30 pm. For more information, call 212-228-4587.

### Wanted: Volunteers For Census

New York City's 1990 Census Project is underway and volunteers are desperately needed. An estimated 450,000 city residents were not counted in the 1980 Census and \$675 million in federal funding was lost as a result. Unfortunately, the residents not reached by the Census are frequently those with the most need of assistance. These residents may not be aware that Census information is completely confidential or they may simply have difficulty in filling out Census forms.

Assistance Centers to provide direct help for residents with questions or trouble filling out forms have been established, but volunteers are needed. Assistance Center Volunteers would work in their neighborhood, site of choice for the period of March 23 through April 15. Training for volunteers will be available.

CUNY is taking an active part in helping to make the 1990 Census a success. Students and staff interested in aiding efforts should contact the Census Volunteer Hotline at (212) 566-0800, between the hours of 10 A.M. and 5 P.M., Monday through Friday.

### Oyez! Oyez!

From Carina Yervasi

DSC Do-Chair for Communications

Nominations for program and at-large representatives for the 1990-1991 Doctoral Students' Council elections are now in the mail, winging their way to all students matriculated at the Graduate School. Students who for one reason or another do not receive their ballots may request a copy from their program assistant, or from DSC officials.

Although the ballots state that nominations are due March 27th, the deadline has been extended until April 2nd.

Students must elect representatives in order to receive funding from the DSC. Your participation in DSC elections assures student representation, as well as funding for student projects, at the Graduate School. ☞

### Mystery Homophobe in West Hall

A homophobe in West Hall? Hard to believe isn't it? For the last month or so, flyers announcing the meetings of the Organization for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns at the Graduate School have been consistently ripped off the bulletin boards on the tenth floor of West Hall. Each time a flyer is ripped off, it is immediately replaced by new one. ☞

### Committee for Cultural Studies

#### Redefines the First Person Pronoun Plural

*To say "we" is not to effect a simple unity, not to efface our differences from one another; but rather to register our commitment to one another and to cultural studies as a location which crucially demands the ongoing re-examination of the locations each of occupies both separately and collectively.* —Cultural Studies Newsletter, March 1990.

### Gay & Lesbian Students Association Reception

March 23; 6:00—10:30 P.M.  
Grace Building: Room 40-48.

The Graduate Student Advocate

Attention  
Writers:  
Please  
Submit  
Articles  
Columns  
Commentaries  
Reviews  
Cartoons  
Photographs  
By  
April 12th



*I cannot comment on the canon, it would jeopardize my neutrality.*