

God-awful class goes multi-media

by Mary Voboril

Pounding rock music greets unsuspecting students as they walk into class the first day. Then, as lights are dimmed, they watch a mindbending collage of 700 slides ricochet strobe-like off three screens.

"Forty-five God-awful lectures?" one slide asks.

"No, no!" frenzied students scream on the soundtrack.

This is Jim Rosowski's way of introducing students to his renovated Biology 001 course.

Most upperclassmen would not recognize it.

Ten per cent of the course grade is determined by a cooperative letter writing project about ecology.

All exams, including the final, are open-book, making memorization unnecessary.

There are fewer God-awful lectures, and they are sandwiched between films, video tapes and discussion sessions.

Even the familiar \$8 (used) brown textbook has been scrapped. Rosowski instead uses mimeographed handouts and assigns readings in six paperback books.

The first part of the four-credit hour course concerns world problems like the population explosion and pollution. As the semester wears on, the material become more specialized as students study the molecular aspects of biology.

Some things have not changed. Richard Booher's lab section still is required. Traditional subjects like photosynthesis, genetics and evolution are covered in the same depth as before, said Rosowski, an assistant professor of botany.

But relevancy is the theme.

"Students always gripe that they don't have any impact. It doesn't have to be that way," Rosowski

said.

This is one reason he started letter writing projects. Working in teams, students research a problem. Then they prepare a letter to the person most responsible for creating, maintaining or eliminating the problem. They offer praise or criticism where due.

Rosowski said his students have written "just about everyone, including the Pope, the President and Johnny Carson."

In about a week, a topic for group discussion will be the nature and role of science in the controversy on race and intelligence. Through an investigation of this issue Rosowski hopes to illustrate the limitations of science and its impact on the layman.

He said he hopes discussions of this type will provide a basis for consideration of other issues students will be confronted with throughout their lives.

One of the paperbacks required for the course contains writings by more than 60 different authors.

"A student should come out of this course able to read a science section in *Time* or *Saturday Review* and most of the time understand what's going on," Rosowski said.

He said he has no fears that open book exams will encourage loafing.

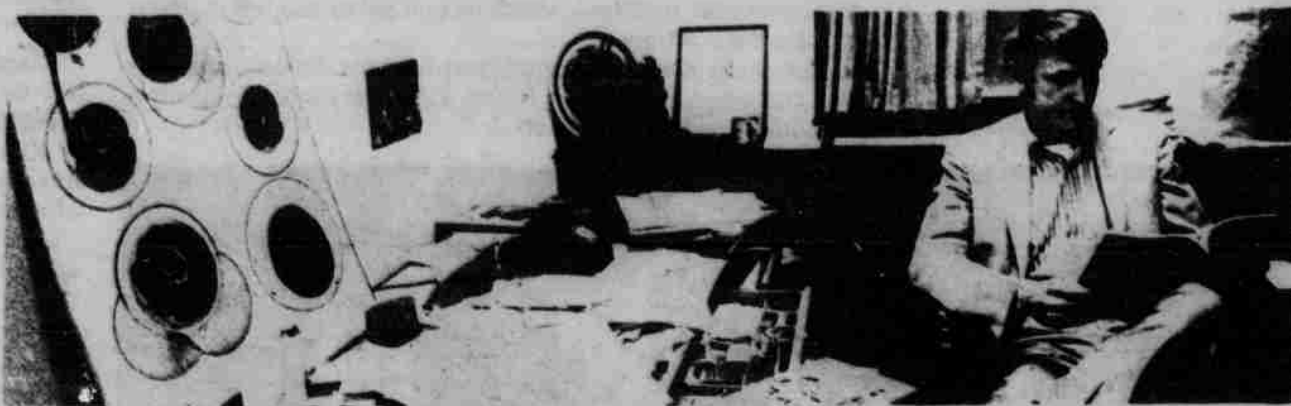
"Facts are of little value in themselves, they must be applied," he said. "In this course having your notebook or textbook with you during an exam won't help unless you have already read and thought about the material."

The new class format began when Rosowski became dissatisfied with the traditional lecture approach often necessary with large classes. A year ago he started meeting with 10 former students and persons interested in improving the course. Together they worked out the present activities. The class was offered this semester for the first time.

"We are still bound by traditional procedures and their limitations, but we are making an effort to improve the biology experience within the framework of a large class," he said.

Next semester Rosowski's elementary biology will meet at 10:30 MWF in Henzlik Hall. The fall schedule sheet lists the room wrong, he said.

Rosowski, who has taught at UNL three years, received his Ph.D. from the University of Arizona. Recently he coedited a 900-page supplementary text in phycology, the study of algae.



Jim Rosowski. . . "We are making an effort to improve the biology experience."

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