

Daily Nebraskan

March 16, 1993

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Vol. 92 No. 124



UNL professor defends autobiographical writing course

By Kara Morrison
Senior Editor

Class teaches students to know, study themselves, Hibler says

Autobiographical writing, though sometimes intensely personal, is too valuable of a writing technique to be condemned, one UNL professor said.

David Hibler, assistant professor of English, defended this practice when he recently wrote a letter to the editor of the Chronicle of Higher Education.

The letter was in response to the Feb. 17 article, "Requiring Students

to Write About Their Personal Lives," which questioned the ethics and merit of a writing technique Hibler said he has employed with positive results for almost 20 years.

"They're assuming that personal writing is dangerous or might be abused," Hibler said. "They say that it may lead to intimidation, exploitation and sexual harassment in the classroom environment."

In his recent letter to the editor,

Hibler said "... we who specialize in autobiographical writing empower students by helping them find their voices. We do not diminish them."

Hibler said these and other assumptions made in the article were unfounded and that common sense was used in his classroom to safeguard against negative aspects of personal writing.

Student's papers, Hibler said, are kept confidential and are not read by

graduate assistants. Also, Hibler said, professors know not to act as guidance counselors but are able to point out available counseling resources to students if the student is interested in counseling.

Hibler said autobiographical writing was an important basis for all knowledge and that the ancient philosophy "Know thyself" was "the best practical advice anyone can give."

"Students should have a knowledge of themselves so that they have an understanding of their perceptions," Hibler said.

In contrast, the article questions whether critical thinking or real learning is taking place when personal writing techniques are used in composition classes.

One mistake that is made in teaching personal writing, Hibler said, is when only self-expression is taught or when students are told "to say what-

See HIBLER on 6

Wearing bag wrong way dangerous, official says

By Joel Strauch
Staff Reporter

There's a proper way to wear a backpack—over both shoulders—but most students opt for a more fashionable one-shoulder look.

However, following fashion can be dangerous, health officials say.

Wearing backpacks, shoulder packs or shoulder bags improperly can lead to problems in the back, lower back and trapezius muscle, said Mark Feight, an athletic trainer at Injury Prevention and Care in the Campus Recreation Center.

Hip problems, ranging from minor irritation to pain when standing, can also result from disproportional backpack weight, Feight said.

"The body is designed for balance," he said, "so you throw your hip out to balance the bag."

Students expressed the problems that they have had as a result of improper wear of packs.

"I feel fatigue or cramps in my shoulder," said Chris Worthley, a senior psychology major.

Herb Hess, a senior education major, said when his shoulder muscles became tired, he switched shoulders. This is the treatment recommended by Feight.

"Students should carry less or alternate shoulders, but they get in a habit of using only one," Feight said.

The problems can be amplified if students have had a previous shoulder or back problem.

Rebecca Hinks, a senior biology major said, "I have a pre-existing injury in my shoulder, and I get a lot of pain because I carry too much."

Stretching can be used as a treatment, but the best cure is prevention, Feight said.

Signer shortage ties UNL's hands



Frankie Dougherty, a UNL graduate student studying hearing-impaired education, watches her interpreter during a curriculum and instruction lecture Monday. UNL has a shortage of interpreters available for hearing-impaired students.

Damon Lee/DN

Hearing-impaired students face uninterpreted classes, underqualified substitutes

By Brad Simmons
Staff Reporter

Frankie Dougherty is a hearing-impaired student who needs a sign-language interpreter in her classes. When Dougherty went to her class Friday, no interpreter was there.

So she left. "It was a waste of time to stay," she said. Although the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is required by federal law to provide a sign-language interpreter for Dougherty, it cannot find enough signers who are qualified, said Christy Horn, director of Services for Students with Disabilities.

This shortage happened when the number of deaf students increased from one in 1992 to eight in 1993, she said.

"As a result, we must provide interpreters for a minimum of 54 credit hours a week," said Kim White, a secretary at Services for Students with Disabilities.

But there are only a few sign-language interpreters in the state of Nebraska, Horn said.

Although the interpreters are required to take a proficiency test, sometimes UNL hires interpreters who are not competent enough to keep up in a classroom lecture, Dougherty said.

"It is frustrating. When the interpreter isn't qualified, I lose information," she said.

Few sign-language interpreters exist because "it is a tough job," said Brenda Schick, an assistant professor of special education and communication disorders.

In order to sign proficiently, Dougherty said the interpreter must know three sign languages. Some are purely visual and others spell out English words.

Being an interpreter for college classes is especially difficult because the signer must be familiar with the technical terms in each discipline, Schick said.

"If the interpreter is in a biology class and the teacher says, 'First we must distillate this product,' it will be a problem to understand and translate the lecture if the interpreter does not have a biology degree," she said.

When a qualified interpreter cannot be found, UNL may hire a stenographer to

See INTERPRETERS on 6

Law professors call for civil rights for gays, lesbians

U.S. judicial system should guard against discrimination based on sexual orientation

By Kathryn Borman
Staff Reporter

Two University of Iowa law professors asked about 60 people Monday night to think about the basis of sexual orientation, and to consider whether or not it was a fair basis for discrimination.

Jean Love and Patricia Cain, recently appointed to the University of Iowa faculty from the University of California at Davis and the

University of Texas at Austin respectively, talked and answered questions in the Union Ballroom on the topic of "Securing Civil Rights for Gays and Lesbians."

"Perhaps sexual orientation is part genes and part environment," Love said. She asked if it was possible for one to change his or her sexual preference.

"Can we ask the same questions of a heterosexual?"

Whether sexual orientation was determined by nature or nurture was probably not relevant to the issue of civil rights, Love said.

Love compared the protections against discrimination of racial minority groups and

women, granted under the 14th Amendment, to protection of the rights of homosexuals.

Discrimination based solely upon one's status as a member of a group, such as blacks or homosexuals, and not on one's actions, was an area traditionally protected by the judicial system, Love said.

Cain said lesbians, gays and bisexuals needed the same right that heterosexuals had to individual privacy and protection against unfair removal from a job.

Laws passed in individual states that ban discrimination against gays, lesbians and bisexuals are an effective means of securing those

rights, Cain said.

She urged that gays and lesbians be granted some of the same family rights which heterosexual couples receive, such as the right to power of attorney if one partner becomes ill, and the right to share health insurance plans and retirement accounts.

"I think that's where a lot of grass-roots organization needs to be done," Cain said. "I think family rights issues are central."

The discussion was co-sponsored by the UNL law student chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and UPC Talks and Topics, on behalf of COLAGE, along with several other UNL and community organizations.