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English 111 may cover alcohol abuse, violence

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by Rebecca Bennett
News Reporter

Incoming New Mexico State University freshmen may have alcohol abuse education and domestic violence awareness added to the areas of critical thinking that are part of English 111.

Stuart C. Brown, associate English department head and member of the committee organizing the new alcohol abuse curriculum, said English 111 courses are well suited to teach new students about experiences they may encounter in college.

"The primary attention is on alcohol abuse ... but also violence and gender relations, something we all face but what students particularly encounter," Brown said.

Because of small class size, English 111 courses provide a safe and interactive opportunity for students to discuss personal issues and critically engage topics as students are expected to do in the course, Brown said.

Wellness, Alcohol and Violence Education coordinator Jessica Adkisson said the information, presented as both reading material and interactive discussion, will include responsible alcohol use, relationship violence, stalking and sexual assault, although the exact topics to be taught have not been confirmed by the planning committee.

The information should help students "make the right decision for themselves, and victims can feel more comfortable coming forward," Adkisson said.

The concept for placing alcohol awareness training and other topics in the framework of English 111 came last year after students of the WebCT-based course Healthy Choices indicated the course material would be best presented in a face-to-face English 111 class, Adkisson said.

Brown said he was asked to join the planning committee on behalf of the English department after the death of NMSU student Steven Judd in November 2004.

Expanding the English 111 curriculum has advantages over the comparable curriculum of University 150 courses, Adkisson said. There are very few classes everyone has to take, especially classes with a writing component, she said.

"Students do not like the idea of mandatory University 150," Brown said. English 111 has the opportunity to critically engage the material, as opposed to University 150, where the same information is presented to the student instead of dissected, he said.

Brown also is not worried about the students who test out of English 111 and get to skip alcohol abuse training. "Eighty-five to 90 percent of students take [English] 111," Brown said. "Students exempted are a distinct minority."

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