

Students select course grades

By CLIFTON LEWIS
Staff Writer

By the time Bob had been in Political Science three weeks, he already knew he would get a B for the semester. He had signed a contract for it. He didn't like it, though. He could have made the grade much more easily un-

der conventional grading system. Another student felt it was a champion. "I like it because whatever you work for if you get it you make it, if you know what I mean."

The contract grading system allows the student to select his grade in a course, and in doing

this he selects the amount of work he will do. He signs a printed contract, and upon completing its requirements is guaranteed the grade.

The revolutionary grading system, introduced last semester at TAMU, is being used in a few classes this spring. If it works well, it may spread throughout the system.

For a C, students may only have to take exams and go to lecture. For higher grade contracts, extra work like papers or group projects may be assigned. In addition, tests for the A group are harder than those for Bs which are harder than test for C students. But everyone must score a high percentage, perhaps as high as 90 per cent, on their test.

Dr. Warren Dixon and Dr. Robert McKelvin of the Department of Political Science are very enthusiastic about the new system. "Often it is unclear what a student

has to do for a course, and this generates anxiety. We are trying to eliminate this by agreeing with the student on what's required. The student is at ease when he knows what to expect," Dixon said.

"The student realizes his own learning capacity," Dixon continued. Even if he signs the minimal (C) contract he learns his material well. The higher the grade contracted for, the clearer the subject matter becomes. We are not concerned with the speed of learning, but rather with its thoroughness."

"The instructor has plenty to do, too," interrupted McKelvin. "He's always there for help, and he sees that the student stays within the reasonable limits of the course." The student is largely on his own, he said.

Both talked of how the classroom time is valuably used for discussion and interaction, not lecture. The student gets most primary information outside of class. Reading, which is done at the student's own rate, is at least as effective as listening, they said.

The student takes tests and does projects, according to contract, to demonstrate his learning to the teacher. The idea of demonstration is also used for the conventional method of testing. However, under the contract program there is no curve to "distribute grade points like a limited amount of pie." Down with statistical garbage!

The contract program has many administrative kinks to be worked out. Also, a problem would seem to be student cooperation. Though the system is past being experimental, students are often unwilling to try something new and be perhaps more on their own.

Sometimes, it seems, students are more resistant to change than is the administration.

Batt News Summary

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
National

JOHNSTON, Pa. (AP)—Residents of the 12th Congressional District vote Tuesday in a special election which has drawn attention as a barometer of Watergate's impact on the voter mood. In the first federal election of the year, Republican Harry M. Fox, 49, will square off against Democratic state legislator John M. Murtha, 41, for the congressional seat left vacant following the death of Rep. John Saylor, a Republican who had been elected to 13 terms. Fox was Saylor's executive assistant for 24 years.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.—U.S. Circuit Court Judge Harvey M. Johnson ruled Monday that President Nixon had no authority to order a permanent halt in construction of the controversial Cross-Florida Barge Canal.

Johnson said only Congress could decide the ultimate fate of the waterway, which Nixon halted in January 1971 on environmental grounds. It was one-third complete at the time.

ELLCOTT CITY, Md.—Michael Doyle, a 6-year-old first grader at Centennial Lane Elementary School, is this year's poster child for the National Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation.

Cystic fibrosis is a disease which affects the lungs and digestive system. "Mike cannot get any better, he can only get worse," said his father, Anthony Doyle. "But our hope isn't for a cure, just a control, like with diabetes, because now all you can do is treat the symptoms."

But, says Michael, "Everybody has their own problems. Mine happens to be CF." The DoYLES'

younger son Mark, 4, has shown no signs of the disease.

WASHINGTON—Negotiations intensified to end the spreading independent truckers' shutdown. The drivers still were at odds over the government's objection to their key demand—a roll back of diesel fuel prices.

But the Nixon administration moved to give the truckers some financial relief by asking Congress to allow the Interstate Commerce Commission to speed approval of new regulations to allow a pass through of increased fuel costs.

International

BATLEY, England—Terrorists blew up a busload of British servicemen with a 50-pound bomb hidden in the luggage compartment. The blast ripped the bus apart like a can opener, killing 11 persons and wounding 14.

Police said they suspected the Irish Republican Army, which is battling British authorities in Northern Ireland. It was the worst terrorist atrocity in Britain since guerrillas blew up a paratroopers' mess hall in Aldershot two years ago, killing seven persons.

Embargo continues despite U.S. hopes

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP)—Syria appears to have dashed American hopes for an early end to the Arab oil embargo.

Newspapers reported Monday that Syrian President Hafez Assad won firm pledges from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to continue the embargo until the Syrians sign a disengagement pact with Israel on Syrian terms.

And Syrian Foreign Minister Abdel Halim Khaddam said Syria will settle for nothing less than an Israeli commitment to "total withdrawal from Arab territories conquered both in the 1973 and 1967 wars."

Arab oil ministers are scheduled to discuss the oil embargo against the United States at a

meeting in Tripoli, Libya, on Feb. 14. The reports on Syria hinted at what conditions may be set for lifting the embargo.

Lebanon's pro-Egyptian newspaper Al Anwar said Saudi Arabia's King Faisal assured Assad he "will continue to support Syria whether by the presence of Saudi troops on the Syrian front or through the continuation of the oil embargo against the United States."

Faisal is the acknowledged leader of the embargo. Al Anwar said he agreed to make the relaxation of oil pressure "dependent on Israeli commitment, either direct or through the United States, to accept Syrian terms for military disengagement."

The Lebanese newspaper Al Bayrak said Kuwaiti ruler Sheikh Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah made a similar pledge to Assad.

Assad met with both Persian Gulf leaders over the weekend.


Saudi Foreign Minister Omar Sakkaf announced Monday the embargo would only be lifted "when the United States stops taking a pro-Israeli stance" and guarantees Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the eastern sector of Jerusalem.

Teague gripes about ignoring splashdown

Congressman Olin E. Teague complained to the presidents of NBC, CBS and ABC about the failure of the three major networks to schedule live coverage of the Skylab Astronauts' splashdown. Teague, who is chairman of the House's Science and Astronautics Committee, wrote the three network presidents today.

In his letter Teague drew a parallel between the "P. T. Barnum, circus-like" coverage of the recent Ali-Frazier weigh-in and the lack of coverage on something that is of "lasting importance and affects posterity." The Texas Democrat told the network bosses that it took minutes to analyze the fight; but will take decades to analyze Skylab's wealth of information.

Teague said, "I believe the upcoming splashdown deserves live coverage by at least one network." The Congressman added that he was dismayed that the splashdown is not going to be covered.

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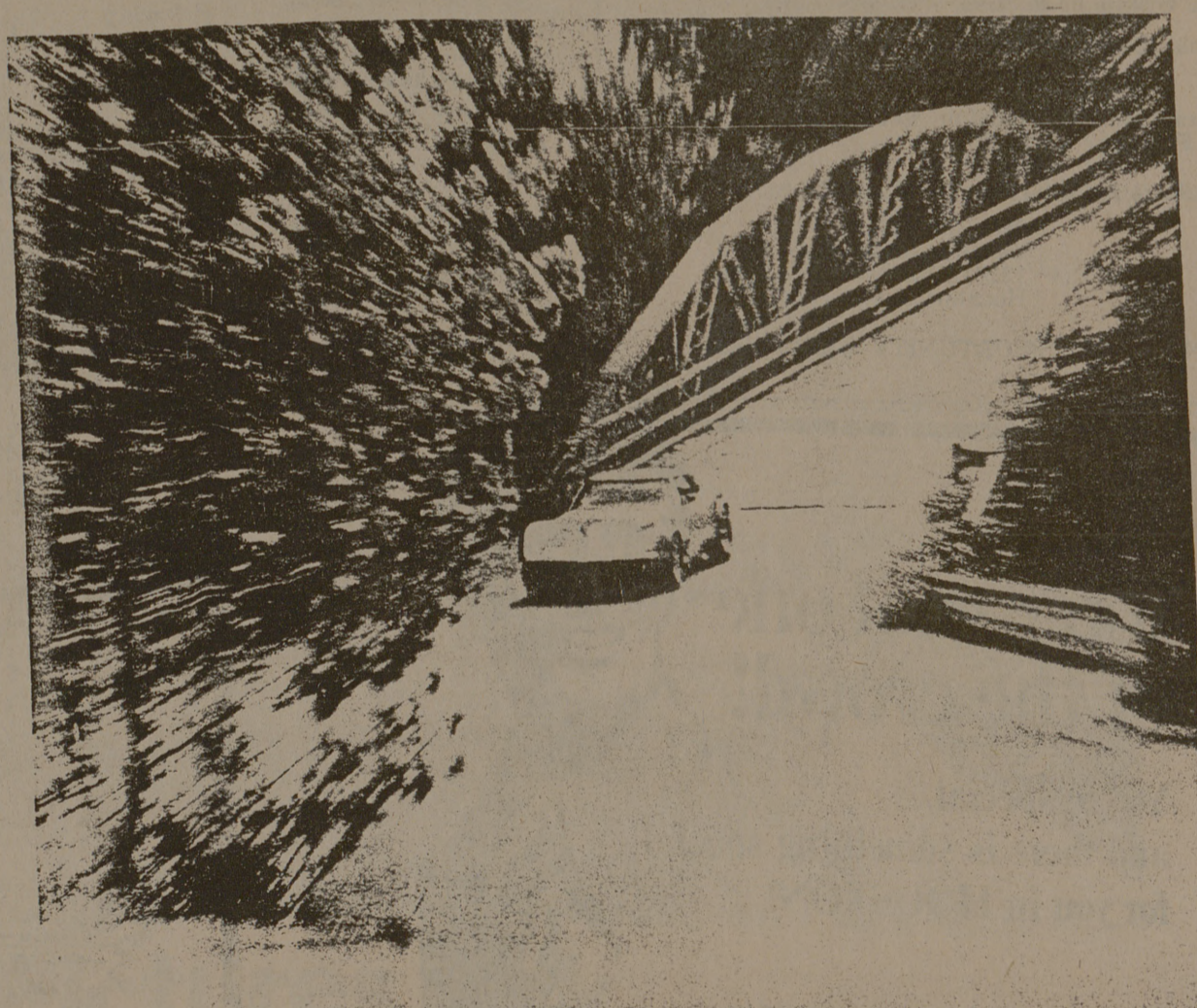
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