

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

Numerical grades offer advantages to students

Editor: Grading students differs little from grading meat, eggs, fruit and vegetables at Texas A&M University. Broad letter grades label individuals like standardized products.

Report cards only outline a student's achievement under the present grading system. But numerical grades offer many advantages to the hard-working student.

Blanket letter grades cover each student's ability. In the same course, for instance, one student may receive a 70 average, while another gets a 79. Yet both are rated as C students.

Students, meeting course requirements, should be given the raw score they have earned. Or else, their efforts become insignificant.

They are discouraged, as a result, to strive toward their potential. If indeed students know they cannot raise their grade through a final, they will allow their point average to drop to a border grade.

But they might maintain (or try to raise) their average if a numerical grade showed how close they were to the next letter. Competition then would be in every raw score itself.

Many universities nationwide use numerical grades. Moreover, I have overheard many students speaking in its favor on campus.

Isn't the extra administrative work, which is required for a change to numerical grades, worth serving the students who want A&M to rank high academically?

The grading system should serve to the advantage of the hard-working student.

—Phylis West

guaranteed us by the founders of this great nation.

SSO is currently comprised of four members but we feel assured that if the wool is lifted from discriminating eyes, many students will flock to our cause.

—L.F., '77
—S.T., '78
—B.K., '77
—W.W., '78

Do gays want support or help?

Editor: I am sure that the article in Tuesday's Battalion concerning the court case of the Gay Student Services Organization (GSSO) vs. Texas A&M University aroused many different feelings among the student body. I consider it my duty as a student to express those emotions which I felt.

I feel that the education of the problem of homosexuality is proper and necessary. However, homosexuality is a problem that needs to be dealt with properly. Convincing a homosexual that homosexuality is purely a socially oriented problem and is not a situation requiring correction within the individual is an atrocity.

If the objective of the GSSO is counseling to correct the problem of homosexuality I would suggest support for it. If it is to condone homosexuality I recommend that the student body of this university organize and support this institution's stand against the GSSO.

—James A. Holley, '76

Baseball team needs attention

Editor: I would like to know why The Battalion repeatedly refuses to acknowledge the Aggie baseball team. In the issue of Tuesday, February 22, 1977, a picture on the front page told about the Aggie victories over McNeese State, but where was the follow-up story? In other issues the baseball team is stuck on the last page or completely ignored.

The baseball team deserves as much recognition as any athletic sport on campus.

We have a good team, but with this kind of coverage no one knows about it.

Also, I have never seen Reveille IV at a baseball game, yet our mascot appears at all football and basketball games. Isn't she everybody's mascot? Or just a "chosen few?"

Please show a little consideration for the guys on the baseball team who work hard and represent their school well.

—Charlotte Wagner

Grades do not gauge knowledge

Editor: The test scores and resulting letter grades that some professors issue are not, in my opinion, a fair representation of students' knowledge.

I refer to courses in which professors give exams, not to evaluate a student's knowledge of the particular topic, but rather to get a "desirable" distribution of final scores.

Questions on such exams are typically based on insignificant bits of information that the professor did not cover, but are fair game because

they can be found in some remote part of the text — or are so ambiguous that the best of several correct answers must be chosen.

The scores, naturally, turn out to be very low, and the "desirable" distribution of grades can then be achieved with the professor's application of his bell curve.

Ultimately, 75% of the class will receive a C, and the rest will be evenly distributed over A's, B's, D's, and F's.

Quoting one professor who used this technique, "Most of you are average students, and average students should receive an average grade. Only the exceptional will achieve higher in this course."

I fail to understand the logic, for are we not at A&M to learn to become more than average citizens? I hardly think that the professors I describe are giving us a chance.

—Jeanne Graham, '79

Readers' forum

Guest viewpoints, in addition to Letters to the Editor, are welcome. All pieces submitted to Readers' forum should be:

- Typed triple space
• Limited to 60 characters per line
• Limited to 100 lines
• Submit articles to Reed McDonald 217, College Station, Texas, 77843. Author's name and phone number must accompany all submissions.

Slouch by Jim Earle



"IT'S JUST LIKE HE WRITES HOME — HE SPENDS EVERY NIGHT WITH HIS FACE IN A BOOK!"

Unfinished agenda for an idealistic generation

An interview with Carl Oglesby, past president of Students for a Democratic Society

Carl Oglesby has been called "a man both troubled and profound" by Phillip Luce, author of a 1971 book entitled "The New Left Today: America's Trojan Horse."

Oglesby's profundity is apparent upon meeting him, and his troubled nature stems from his unceasing campaign to introduce more democratic and egalitarian principles into the United States' governmental system.

Oglesby, along with Jim Kostman, have been on the Texas A&M University campus for the past three days presenting a lecture-seminar series on "The Politics of Conspiracy" sponsored by Political Forum.

The three-day program will be wrapped up tonight at 8 in Rudder 601 with a lecture by Oglesby on the "Yankee/Cowboy Theory of American Politics."

Oglesby is the author of a recently released book entitled "The Yankee Cowboy War: Conspiracies from Dallas to Watergate" in which he speaks of competing power elites and points to the importance of the Howard Hughes empire and the assassinations of the 1960s in the determination of our domestic and foreign policies.

His writings have appeared in "Life," "Nation," and elsewhere. He is also the author of "Containment in Change." He has traveled extensively for the past three years with the "Who Killed JFK?" program.

Oglesby served as the national president of the Students for a Democratic Society in 1965. He was a member of the SDS long enough after that to witness the disintegration of the group.

The following is a partial transcript of an interview of Oglesby conducted yesterday by Battalion editor Jerry Needham in which Oglesby offers some insights and comments about some of his experiences.

Battalion: Is America any more democratic now than it was in 1960?

Oglesby: Yes. There's a spirit of curiosity and skepticism now — basic to a healthy democratic life that I think one didn't find in the country in 1960. It was about to wake up. But, remember in 1960, we were just coming off the '50s — the silent generation — gray flannel suit, everybody looking out for themselves, trying to be organization people.

So you can't say that things were very hot or turbulent or excited or that people were passionate about government in 1960. But that was also the period of Kennedy and his campaign and the whole thing about the Peace Corps — the development of a new idea that you could actually play a role, that you could get involved, that government was something that belonged to ordinary people.

And that's a very democratic spirit. That was the spirit of the early SDS — the early New Left.

Then that fell off towards the end of the '60s with the coming of the Weathermen and these awful fights between the Weathermen and progressive labor where a lot of us just got out of it because we couldn't deal with what was happening and it was breaking our hearts and there wasn't any power left to it.

Then I think there was a period of a couple of years of decline and sorrow and recrimination but then comes Watergate and so many of the complaints that SDS people had been making to deaf ears during the latter years of the '60s about big brotherism in the government, total surveillance and the use of the federal police powers to pursue political purposes at the expense of political adversaries of those who had power were proved true.

I mean all that stuff that's come out after Watergate, we were saying before Watergate but nobody believed it. They thought that we were exaggerating, telling stories.

But now we can backdate. We can go look at J. Edgar Hoover signing his name to the counterintelligence program memoranda in May of '68 which set out to destroy the left, not for any particular reason except for ideological reasons.

So, it's fluctuating up and down. Sometimes the spirit is high and sometimes the spirit is weak. Sometimes it seems there are real open-

'People come out to do things when they think there are things they can do.'

ings for democracy to reassert itself, and then other times it seems like every crisis we go through shows that power is just more and more locked away from ordinary people and in the hands of specialized elites.

Battalion: What about the widespread political apathy apparent in America today?

Oglesby: I think there's a real question about apathy now. I have been trying to resist the theory that people are apathetic.

Battalion: Well, the percentage of people voting in national elections keeps dropping.

Oglesby: Yes, but that doesn't seem to me a proof of apathy. That, on the contrary, could be an indication that people are actually concerned about government and that they're not going to play games. They're not going to make choices that are unreal. They're not going to vote for politicians who don't really discuss the issues, who try as hard as they can to look like one another and not be different from one another, who disagree about small points.

Ultimately, the people are going to have to find more direct ways to express themselves than by just



OGLESBY

staying home. I'm not sure that just staying home in the bicentennial elections was necessarily a sign of not caring. It might have been a sign of broken heart — feeling that democracy had already been so badly subverted and corrupted and kicked around and abused by everything that had been happening from Watergate on back to the assassination of Kennedy.

Battalion: Do you think that the SDS was a victim of media and government propaganda? If so, to what extent and in what ways?

Oglesby: We did very well with the media. I think that on the whole until the last couple of years — '69 to '71 say — after which I don't really think there is a New Left anymore, we were successful in bringing people around to our point of view. Remember, more and more people turned against the war. The arguments that the anti-war people had been making gained more support as the war went on.

And that happened in the media as well as generally in the society. So I think that we were doing all right in that respect. I think that we were doing quite well, and if we had not been frightened and enraged by the kind of intimidations that were coming down, maybe we would have been able to hold to that course and stay loyal to a democratic movement.

But you know what happened. Around the close of the decade, especially with the election of Nixon, a new generation of people in SDS came up, the Weathermen, who said look, this guy Nixon is not going to open any doors. Kennedy had been assassinated, King had been assassinated, Fred Hampton in Chicago in 1969 was assassinated — now it turns out it was by the FBI and Chicago police.

If you were on the outside of those things, you would maybe hear a leftist shrieking on the street corner one day that the FBI had killed Martin Luther King or Bobby Kennedy or Jack Kennedy or Fred Hampton or whoever. People just dismiss it out-of-hand as crazy.

So people who were being called crazy for saying what they damn well knew was true decided that

they had just as well not go around trying to say this anymore to people because they weren't ready to believe it. They would have to be educated to the reality of American politics by their own suffering.

And for their parts, these young organizers in SDS decided that the only way to continue politics was to transform politics from a democratic practice into a very anti-democratic practice — a nondemocratic practice with elite groups making decisions for the fellowship, the membership, without including the membership even in on the discussions in the first place, and in the second place, making the decisions take up physical terror — start setting bombs off in bathrooms in the Pentagon and so on.

So I think we partly did it to ourselves, partly it was done to us, partly we wore out, partly the problems that we faced in 1970 were so much bigger than the problems of 1960 that you could no longer believe there was any use in trying democratic methods of reform.

People got very discouraged and embittered and angry and frightened and since all that was happening to a base which was very inexperienced because it was made up of very young people, the decision to undertake violent forms of political reconstruction just sort of seemed to drift out.

Battalion: Did student activism in the '60s, in your opinion, have any lasting effects on the university and its students and our society in general?

Oglesby: When you come back to the university structure, it's really

'If you thought the sun was going to blow up tomorrow, it would not do any good to stage a demonstration. The sun doesn't give a damn.'

hard to see a lot of change. People got reformer here and there. There's still places where teachers try harder to relate to students in a human way, but I'm not so sure that that's lasting.

It may be that it just sort of went under the surface, and that it's about to come back again, maybe next decade. Who can tell about these things?

I think that people come out to do things when they think there are things they can do. But when they get convinced that there's nothing they can do, no amount of criticism of the system is going to produce a lot of activity. Because you not only have to think things are bad in order to go into action, you have to believe there's something you can do to make things better.

If you thought the sun was going to blow up tomorrow, it would do any good to stage a demonstration. The sun doesn't give a damn. To blow up or not, depending on our own laws and if the government no closer to you, no more suffering your power as a citizen than the foreign and distant natural phenomenon, then there's no way that are going to get people excited about its shortcomings.

I think that if there's apathy it probably comes more from feeling that there isn't anything you can do. And then that leads self-protectively to a kind of indifference, like the same indifference that we have toward natural phenomena. There isn't anything you can do, so why worry about it?

That's a dangerous state of for a population to be in especially if it has democratic hopes because have to believe that you can do your world by acting in it with fellow creatures. And if you believe in other people and don't believe in yourself and don't believe in the possibility of political action, first comes anger, indifference, then apathy, hostility even to those who would make a difference.

Battalion: In short, what were the original goals of the SDS?

Oglesby: As the Port Huron Statement says, what we were trying to do, in general, was to democratize politics — in specific terms to the rise of a military-industrial complex that seemed to be making all of the important decisions by itself with no connection to the kind of democratic or republican constitutional politics.

Battalion: Were these modified during the '60s?

Oglesby: I think that that goal objective finally got lost, except some very long-term sense of people would think "Well, we're fighting this thing that's happening right now, and a certain tight creative form of organization necessary for doing that. But in the end when the people win along by making total revolution, they can have democracy again."

The Weatherpeople turned head-on against democracy. Madeline Dorhn would go around announcing the idea of participatory democracy, which is worked on the Port Huron Statement. The bourgeois she would say. And course by that time, everything was bourgeois was awful in the eyes. They thought all good things were proletarian and anything looked middle-class, they'd knock down.

And they thought this thing about civil rights and civil liberties and democratic process and the rule of law were just fetishes of a middle-class that had outlasted time, historically speaking, the longer understood what happened to it, didn't have control of it. (See OGLESBY, Page 6)

The Battalion

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ANNOUNCEMENT

- WHAT: Combat Ball
WHEN: Friday, March 4, right after Town Hall
BAND: "Dennis Ivey and the Waymen"
FOR WHO: Free Admission for All Army, Navy and Marine Cadets in the Corps and their dates
WHERE: Duncan Dining Hall

To Whom It May Concern . . .

The Aggieland '77 requests the presence of a/several representative(s) from the following Corps Outfits to come to the Office of Student Publications, Room 216 of the Reed McDonald Building. The purpose of this visit is so you may identify your outfit photograph, which is to appear in the Aggieland.

- A-1 L-2 W-1 SQ5
B-1 M-1 SQ1 SQ6
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Other outfits will be notified later.

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