

# Battalion

## Classifieds

### Post film reviewer to speak

## True-false exams often the trickiest objective tests

By CARLA SUTTER  
Battalion Reporter

You walk into class five minutes late because you overslept from studying until 4 a.m. Your hands are sweaty. You wonder if you will remember everything you crammed into your head last night. The teacher hands you a test and as you look it over you groan — it's all true-false.

True-false tests can be the trickiest tests given, said Dr. Donald G. Barker, professor of educational psychology at Texas A&M University.

Writing good true-false questions requires knowledge and skill and may only be an indirect indicator of what the student should learn in the course, said John R. Hill of Florida State University in his book "Measurement and Evaluation in the Classroom."

A true-false test is an objective test. Other objective tests are multiple choice, matching and short answer. The term objective means that no human judgment is used in grading the test and very few scoring errors or disagreements with the student should occur, said Hill.

Multiple choice tests are probably the most common tests at Texas A&M, Barker said. The multiple choice tests are easier to grade, he said.

"While objective tests are accurate and reliable in the grading process, they usually don't tap a student's higher cognitive levels like essay tests do," Barker said.

Barker said essay tests are given more frequently in upper level courses and graduate courses because the classes are smaller.

"We wouldn't use multiple choice tests if we didn't have to, but class size demands that we do," said Dr. Rod O'Conner, professor of chemistry.

"When the chemistry department gave its Challenge Exam (a comprehensive problems test) at the end of the semester for students who wanted to improve their grade, it took 45 man hours to grade 300 papers with four professors grading," O'Conner said.

"We would prefer not to give multiple choice tests, but it's not possible because of the time involved," he said. "A&M would go broke trying to do that."

Nancy Hall, 21, an industrial engineering major said she would prefer a problems test to an objective test. "In a problems test you're applying what you learned, it's not just rote memory," she said.

While testing the student's knowledge is the primary reason for giving tests, it's not the only reason, Barker said. Tests are also a motivational and instructional process for the student, he said. Tests give student a reason for studying and learning, he said.

"Students also like to know the answers to the test at the time it's given, and if they can find them correct answer, it can be a positive reinforcement of the student," he said.

Many students feel, however, that teachers care about the tests they give. A senior mechanical engineering major said one of his teachers gave most impossible and bizarre tests. "He'd give something in class and test us over another and then 'Who cares? If you flunk you can take the test over,'" he said.

The amount of tests given is also important, he said. "If tests were given more frequently it wouldn't be as much anxiety," Barker said.

Only two tests are given a semester, it puts a load on the student, because there is so much emphasis put on each test in the grading process.

A good number of tests would be four or five, he said.

Open book and take-home tests can be put to use on certain occasions, Barker said. "A student could show his power independent of time," he said.

"However, the measurement isn't that since everyone isn't responding to the same test. The questions may be the same, but the setting is different," he said.

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