

Linnea M. Aycock

“I feel I am succeeding when my class has already begun the discussion before I arrive.”

LINNEA M. AYCOCK
Associate Professor of English



After visiting one of Linnea Aycock's graduate seminars, a colleague reflected that "anyone who attended Lynn Aycock's English 250T would get a very good picture of what graduate instruction in the humanities is supposed to be like." From the collective exchange of ideas in a graduate seminar to the spirited discussions in a freshman composition class, Aycock's emphasis is on student involvement.

"My goal as a teacher is to motivate students to think and read critically, and to write about ideas that touch their personal lives," Aycock says. "I guide class discussions, ask probing questions, and comment on students' writing. But I am only the catalyst. People learn through their own discovery of meaning, through their own creativity. Watching that process unfold in the classroom or in individual conferences is one of the most exciting aspects of teaching. I learn something from each class meeting."

Students appreciate her enthusiastic support for their work. As one student says, "Her interest spills over, creating an atmosphere of intense involvement and participation. Even the shyest students in the class are able to speak up without the intimidating notion that their comments may be all wrong. She inspires us to think, instead of giving pat answers that discourage questions."

Aycock received her A.A. degree from Fresno City College in 1969 and then transferred to CSU, Fresno to major in English. After receiving her B.A. (*Summa Cum Laude*) in 1971 and her master's degree (*with distinction*) in 1974, she received a fellowship to the University of Iowa, where she received her doctorate. Aycock didn't plan to return to Fresno, but ten years later, when offered a position at CSU, Fresno, she was delighted to come back to the valley.

In the four years that she has been teaching full time at CSU, Fresno, Aycock has had an opportunity to work in areas that reflect her varied interests. Her first semester she supervised student teachers in the public schools. That spring she took over the English Internship Program for a semester, an experience that led to teaching technical writing last spring. From the fall of 1984 to the spring of 1986, she directed the English Writing Laboratory. During this time, she taught several writing and literature classes, including Freshman Composition, Twentieth Century British Literature, Images of Women in Literature, and graduate seminars in the Twentieth Century British Novel and Virginia Woolf. Aycock is also active in all phases of faculty governance. She has served on numerous committees at the department, school, and university level, including the Executive Committee of the School of Arts and Humanities, the Undergraduate Curriculum Subcommittee, and the Academic Senate.

To balance the mental challenges of her job, Aycock jogs at least three miles a day and tries to make time for other sports such as biking or swimming. "Top on my list is racquetball," adds Aycock. "On the court, you'll see a completely different side to my personality."

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

Partly because I have a passion for literature and writing that I want to share. And partly because I want to give back some of what teachers have given me. When I was growing up, teachers provided the stability and encouragement I didn't have at home. They gave me tools to enrich my life, and a few changed my life profoundly. The possibility of doing that for someone else is a continuing challenge and inspiration.

Did you decide to become an English teacher when you were in high school?

I loved English, but didn't want to teach high school. At the time, I couldn't see any practical alternatives. I started college as a sociology major, then dropped out to work and travel.