

Teaching remains fresh for Pyfer

By **BILL CALVERT**
Staff Writer

A concern about the attitudes of students and a desire to be open and honest with them characterize the teaching of Jean Pyfer, associate professor of education.

Pyfer teaches adaptive physical education, which deals with the treatment of perception and movement problems of the handicapped.

Because of the nature of the courses she teaches, Pyfer finds her classes rarely dull.

"It would be difficult to keep the class interesting if you were dealing with the same information year after year, but that's not the case," Pyfer said recently. "The case is that we're always dealing with new information and new ways to use it.

It's the students that keep it interesting because they come up with new ideas in terms of 'Okay, here's the stuff—what do you do with it?'"

THE FLOW OF fresh material in her classes and the emphasis on its application provide a firm base for Pyfer's teaching philosophy. She said she tried to encourage open-mindedness and originality toward her class' subject matter in her students.

"You can either teach to open people's minds, or teach them to be followers who are dedicated to what a few people have said, and literally close them to knowledge," she said. "I think it's important that every student have a firm foundation in whatever discipline they're in and an open attitude in using that information."

Pyfer has taught at the University of Kansas for the past seven years. During

that time she has been involved with the Perceptual-Motor Clinic in the department of health and physical education, in which perceptual and movement problems of handicapped children are diagnosed and treated.

PYFER SAID THAT when she arrived at KU, a professor in the department wanted to start a clinic and asked whether she wanted to help in setting it up. Because she had degrees in physical education, educational psychology and special education, she said, she felt qualified and accepted the position. Two years later, the professor left KU, leaving her in charge of the clinic.

The clinic is an important educational tool for students in observing tried and true treatments of perceptual-motor disorders, Pyfer said. She said it supplemented her three-pronged classroom approach: learning the tried and true methods, discussing current theoretical positions, and critiquing the information to find better ways to apply it.

"I COULDN'T HAVE planned it better even if I had known what I would be doing today," Pyfer said of her present position. "I feel I'm learning more from my students than they have ever learned from me."

Pyfer said she first became motivated to teach after she graduated from high school when she saw the attitudes of high school graduates who applied for jobs at the office where she worked. The people she worked with there and the job seekers were often more concerned with job benefits than with job demands, she said.

"Quite frankly, I didn't like the quality of

youngsters I saw coming out of high school," she said. "Their questions were usually 'What's my salary?, How much sick leave do I get?, When's my vacation start?.' Maybe I'm work oriented—I don't know. There was no attention paid to questions like 'What do I do in my job?'"

AFTER WORKING six years as a clerk-typist and a private secretary, Pyfer went back to school and graduated from Indiana University with a doctorate in physical education.

The system of giving grades to percentages of students sets up a competitive situation in which the students work against each other instead of cooperating, she said. This stifles creativity, she said, and discourages interactive skills, which she considers important.

"If they all end up with perfect scores, it's fine with me," she said. "When they have a say-so as to what these things are going to count, they have made a personal commitment as to how much effect they are going to make. I don't think teachers should run around clubbing them to do things."



Jean Pyfer