

THE OREGON HUMANITIES CENTER PRESENTS
ENGAGING AFRICA

A Symposium Exploring the Future of African Studies

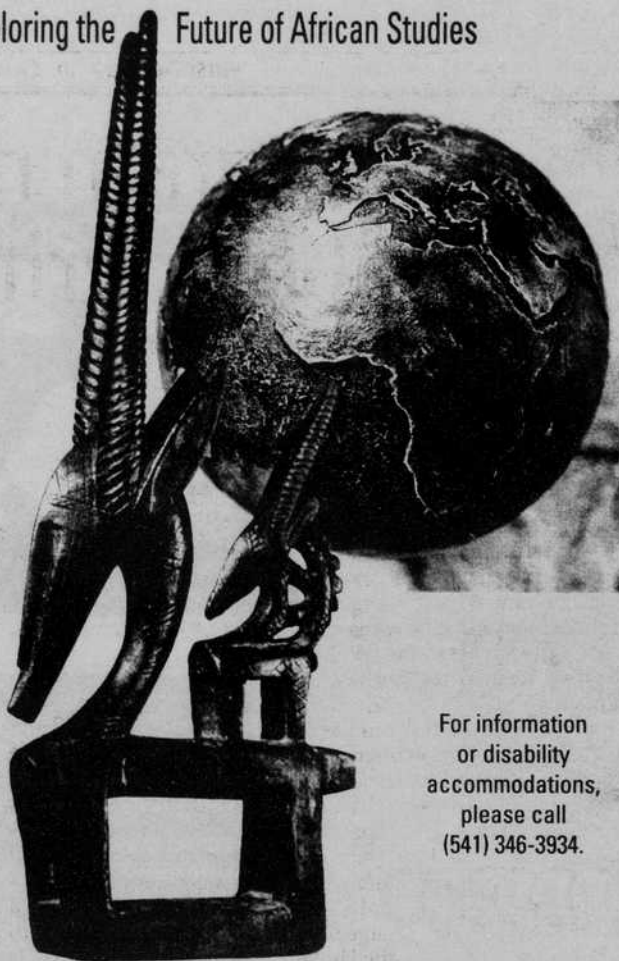
MARCH 1-2, 2001
 Gerlinger Alumni Lounge

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
 Thursday, March 1, 4:00 P.M.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION
 Friday, March 2, 9:30 A.M.-NOON

A LECTURE BY CAMEROONIAN NOVELIST MONGO BETI
 Friday, March 2, 7:30 P.M.
 Beti's talk is in French with projected English translation

All events are free and open to the public.



For information or disability accommodations, please call (541) 346-3934.

UNIVERSITY of OREGON

Peers teach health in peerless fashion

■ The 11-year-old peer health education program offers students compelling events

By Beata Mostafavi
 Oregon Daily Emerald

Students have probably heard the words "sex" and "drugs" in dozens of health classes since middle school, and after repeatedly hearing about topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, harmful drug addictions and unhealthy diet habits from teachers, some college students just may have stopped listening.

But one group on campus has tried using a different approach to draw people's attention back to those themes.

Peer health educators, a group of students enrolled in a health education class, present health issues in creative ways that aim to educate other students without drawing yawns.

From evaluating individual students' diets through nutrition computer programs and performing skits that portray serious issues such as bulimia and anorexia, to writing online articles on topics such as cheese, the group hopes to keep health issues alive while earning upper-division credit.

The group's next event, "Spring Thing," will include a variety of events to make students more aware of issues such as sunburn, sex, alcohol and exercise, with the purpose of encouraging students to make healthy choices during spring break. The event will be held today from 3-5 p.m. in the Recreation Center's lobby area.

Peer health education coordinator Annie Dochnahl said that one of the most unique aspects of the program's events is that information is presented in innovative ways by peers as opposed to "dry" speech formats health experts and teachers sometimes use.

"Even though people may have heard about these issues since middle school, it doesn't mean they have gone away," she said. "The great thing about this program is that students are the ones influencing

their peers through creative ways."

The class started about 11 years ago, when the University offered a separate health major. But even after the health program was cut, the peer-ed class remained intact, with about 15 students enrolled each term. The group hosts interactive presentations and events mainly at the request of other on-campus groups such as Greek Life and residence halls.

Individual students in the class specialize in different subjects that range from sex to drugs and alcohol to nutrition habits and body image. Dochnahl said the class is especially popular among students studying biology or exercise and movement science.

But even students who don't plan to pursue any kind of career involving science can be peer educators. Nora Aaron, a junior art major currently taking the class, said she's involved in the program partly because of her personal interest in body image issues.

"These issues are sometimes overlooked as some of the problems many people suffer from," she said.

Another peer educator, Jessica Geller, a sophomore international studies major, said she's in peer-ed because of her interest in eating disorders and nutrition. She said that through her projects, she's noticed that many people are genuinely interested in the issues but don't always take the initiative to learn about them on their own.

"People have a lot of questions but are sometimes too shy to ask them," she said. "It helps when we put the issues out in front of them."

Geller added that one of the most rewarding parts of being a peer educator is receiving positive feedback from students who leave events more aware of the issues.

"Because we're peers, students are more apt to listen to us and take our advice," she said. "I felt like I actually made a difference with them."

For more information on the peer education program, contact Annie Dochnahl at 346-2843.

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