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# COMMENTARY

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Monday, November 19, 2001

*Editorial*  
**Act of discrimination  
 brings up question**

An unfortunate event occurred on Thursday night when Emerald reporters attempted to attend a news briefing for local media at McKenzie-Willamette Hospital. Our student journalists were discriminated against because of their casual appearance and lack of paperwork.

After it was confirmed that Emeritus Physics Professor Bernd Crasemann and his assistant opened an envelope with a granular substance and feared they may have been exposed to anthrax, an unidentified University employee checked himself into the hospital. The employee was scared that he had come into contact with the biological agent while handling the suspicious letter.

The magnitude of this incident prompted the Emerald to send reporters and photographers to the hospital for a media briefing to discuss the situation. Many other local news reporters were present to hear what hospital spokespeople had to say. However, Emerald reporters were not immediately allowed into the conference because they apparently didn't look like "real" journalists and did not have "press passes."

Hospital workers and security team members further complicated the situation by shuffling our news team back and forth between hospital entrances four times. They were told to go to the different entrances for the briefing, and wasted more than 30 minutes searching for a viable entrance.

Finally, after the conference was virtually over and other members of the press (notably television news crews) were leaving to prepare their stories, security let the Emerald reporters inside. After more than half an hour of cutting through red tape, our reporters were able to question Tom Hambly, McKenzie-Willamette's manager of emergency services. Luckily, Hambly realized the importance of getting news to University students and granted us an interview.

Getting accurate, thorough and balanced news to students is the Emerald's primary concern, especially when an event such as this happens on campus.

But more importantly, the incident raises serious questions: Who determines what a "legitimate" reporter looks like or what a "legitimate" news organization is? Who issues press passes? If those who issue the passes don't like the way a news organization covers a story, can they revoke the passes?

These issues are being discussed by the Eugene Police Department, which has formed a committee to look into media access issues. Right now, the committee is seeking input on an identification policy that would require members of the media to provide credentials to gain access to events.

Credentials or not, members of the media need access to sources in order to inform the public. The Emerald reporters were trying to do just this, and they showed identification and told the security guards the name of the hospital's spokesperson, who they had been instructed to ask for when they arrived. The hospital should apologize for the embarrassing incident.

## More weeks = more education

In case you haven't figured it out yet, students at the University questionably enjoy a quarter-based educational system. Three times a year, 10 weeks at a time, we drag ourselves through the mud of an academic rut. Every term it is the same old thing.

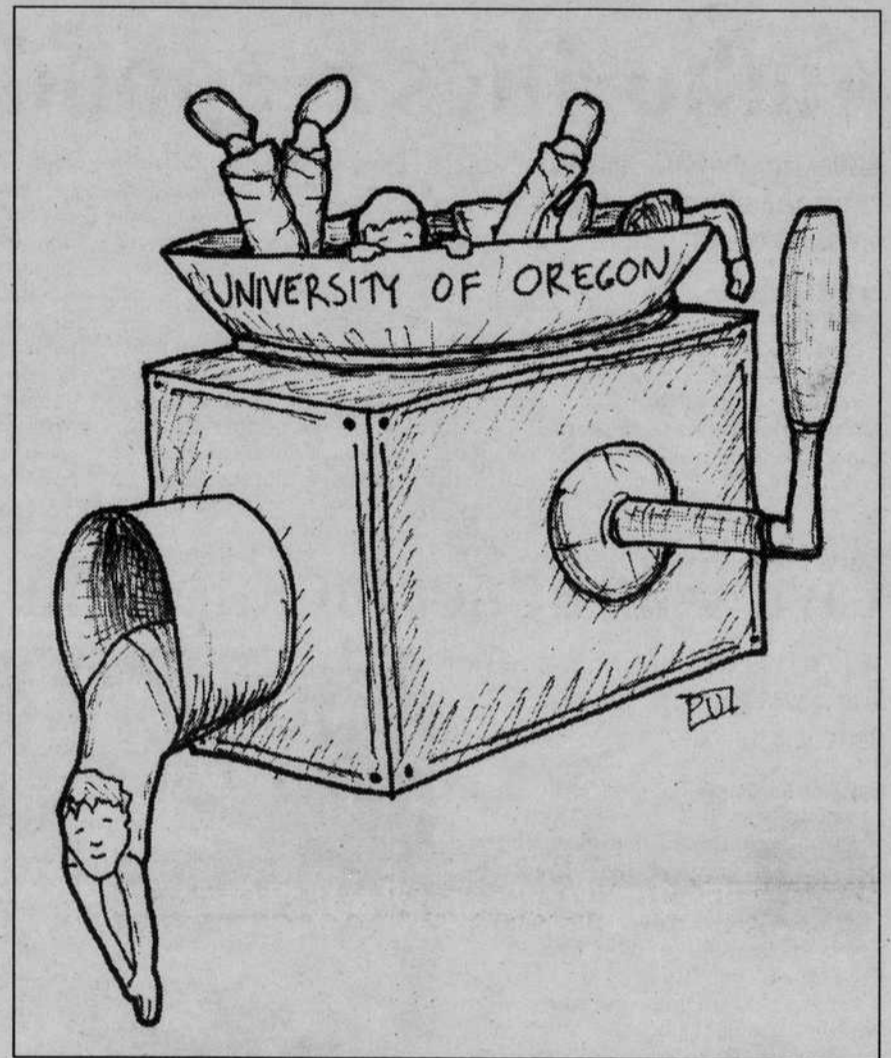
For the first and last weeks, you basically do nothing. Weeks four and five quickly arrive — along with the midterms. Pretty soon it is week eight, and you have finally just started to understand the underlying theme of the course. By this point, you see the light at the end of the tunnel, and the words "getting a good grade" are replaced with "just hoping to pass."

The quarter system does have some advantages. While all your high school buddies are heading back to their semester schools, you are sitting back enjoying the wonderful days of a late Oregon summer. Students in a quarter system get the opportunity to take 50 percent more

classes than our semester counterparts. This adds variety and more room for those classes we really want to take. The quarter system also makes the torment of having to take a required math class at a liberal arts college much less painful.

Proponents of the quarter system also argue that students can graduate in a shorter amount of time. This is fine for those who are going to college to simply get their credentials, but some students are here for much more.

If you are attending college for its original purpose of gaining knowledge, then the semester system is much more learning-based. Switching to a semester system would provide us all the opportunity to obtain a higher quality education. We could complete an assignment, receive it back and actually have a chance to learn from our mistakes before the next assignment is due. Most classes in the quarter system produce a measure of a student's performance entirely too late for it to be corrected. This isn't an excuse for laziness, but a rational observation that a quarter system is a barrier to the actual process of learning.



Peter Utsey Emerald

Being a college student in today's world is much different than in the past. Students must manage a full load of classes, a part-time or sometimes full-time job and — they hope — with the time left, a social life. In the quarter system, if you have to work the night shift the day before a quiz and do poorly, it will haunt you for the rest of the term.

The semester system should not be implemented just so we can all spend more weeknights at the bars, but we must be realistic and understand that college is much more than just quizzes, papers and midterms.

Fifteen weeks of school gives students more time to take in the information, analyze it and then finally understand it. It is also a good idea for students at a research university to actually have time to do research. Time, though, is at the top of every college student's wish list, and the quarter system just makes it even worse.

The bottom line is the quarter system pumps students through like a factory with a bad product. The University needs to follow the lead of the nation's top universities and transition into a semester system for its own good — as well as its students.

Jeff Oliver is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald. He can be reached at jeffoliver@dailymerald.com.



Jeff Oliver  
 Columnist

## Letters to the editor

### Radical Arabs threaten Israel

Pat Payne is correct in pointing out the relationship between Nazis and Arab extremists, but he does not go far enough back in history ("End home grown terrorism," ODE, 11/06). In fact, a number of Arab leaders, most notably the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, were notorious Nazi sympathizers during World War II.

The Grand Mufti did everything within his power to make it impossible for the Jews and Arabs of Palestine to live in peace, agitating Arab attacks on the Jewish inhabitants who lived in the region or immigrated there upon their release from the Nazi concentration camps. These attacks were a major cause of the United Nations' partition of Palestine that resulted in the creation of the state of Israel.

This legacy of anti-Jewish racism has

persisted among the radical Arabs to the present day and is one major reason why Israel cannot put its own security at risk. They are living among a sea of people who will not be satisfied until Israel is obliterated.

Geoff Cooper  
 law student

### Right against rights

In response to Attorney General John Ashcroft's order to take action against Oregon doctors who prescribe lethal drugs for terminally ill patients: I just love how Republicans support states' rights, except when they don't like what the states are doing.

Chuck Slothower  
 freshman  
 pre-journalism

### Stein for governor

Only one candidate for governor has taken a stand against the crippling rate

increases approved by the state Public Utility Commission. It was Beverly Stein. She demanded that the commission demonstrate some leadership by rolling back rate hikes.

It's not the first time that Bev Stein has stood up to the PUC. In the late 1970s, she sued the PUC on behalf of senior citizens and was successful in postponing a rate increase.

Stein is one candidate demonstrating leadership in this time of economic crisis. We're already in a recession, and increases in the cost of living and natural gas when we're already in a recession will absolutely cripple some manufacturing companies.

I wonder where the other candidates are on this issue. That's only one of the many reasons I'm supporting Stein for governor.

Arnold H. Ismach  
 emeritus professor of journalism  
 University of Oregon

## Poll Results:

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, [www.dailymerald.com](http://www.dailymerald.com). We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

**Last week's poll question:**  
 Do you agree with Oregon's assisted suicide law?

**Results:** 88 total votes  
**Yes** — 65 votes, or 73.9 percent

**No** — 22 votes, or 25.0 percent

**Don't know** — 1 vote, or 1.1 percent

The results speak for themselves: Oregonians voted for choice.

**This week's poll question:**  
 What is your favorite aspect of Thanksgiving break?

**The choices:**

- Food
- Football
- Pilgrims
- No class
- Don't know