

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Other schools should adopt GPA standard

For business majors, making the grade now has new meaning, as the business school set new guidelines for grade point averages in major, minor and pre-business classes.

We commend the school for taking the University's first step in letting students know that a minimum level of work will not result in a B+ or an A-. Average work deserves a C, and curves exist for a reason. In an average class, average students do about average quality work. Students are being given advance notice that if they want a higher grade, they will have to earn it.

An argument certainly can be made that curves such as the ones adopted by the business school don't hold up in each and every class. Sometimes a class is filled with overachievers, and a GPA cap has the potential to hurt some of those students. But if the University community uses that argument to rationalize having no set standards, then everyone's effort is devalued. A grade ought to mean that a certain level of work was accomplished.

It's also worthy to note that the curve established by the business school is somewhat liberal. For major core business classes, grades must fall between a high C+ and a high B. We don't know how the school chose this range — perhaps it reflects the mean grades for business majors — but the average grade is now set at above average.

A stronger reason to argue against the business school's move is that other departments don't have the same standards. People outside the University don't know which departments have standards and which don't, so students in other majors are getting better grades for less work.

In response to that argument, we have a challenge for the other departments on campus: Get on the grading-standard bandwagon. If a University education means that students are "citizen scholars," as the administration has claimed, the coursework and grading policies should reflect it.

We challenge you, as instructors, to challenge us. How can students want to achieve greatness when you expect nothing more of them than the bare minimum? Give University students something to be proud of — a grade they actually deserve.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.

Online Poll

Each Monday, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit dailyemerald.com to vote.

Last week: Do you support Bush's proposal to invade Iraq without U.N. approval?

Results: 108 total votes

Yes — 24.8 percent, or 27 votes

No — 67.6 percent, or 73 votes

Don't know — 5.7 percent, or 6 votes

Don't care — 1 percent, or 1 vote

Leave me alone! — 1 percent, or 1 vote

This week: What's your favorite Oregon ski area?

Choices: Hoodoo, Mt. Bachelor, Mt. Ashland, Willamette Pass, Timberline Lodge, Mt. Hood Ski Bowl, Mt. Hood Meadows, Other, Don't know, Leave me alone!

Do homework before going to war

The nations that currently comprise the Middle East were formed as a direct result of Western intervention following World War I. In many cases, these arbitrary national boundaries do not coincide with the ethnic, religious and political identities of the people who live in them.

This, combined with the fact that the concept of a nation-state was only introduced — forcibly — about 80 years ago, is somewhat to blame for the continual unrest in many of these young countries. We can no longer afford to consider the region in terms of separate nation-states. This is not Europe, where people have developed national identities over centuries of common experience. If we're headed for war, we need to study the peoples who live in the area.



M. Reilly Cosgrove
 Separate this

Take Lebanon, for example. The Maronites, a Christian people with some ties to Catholicism, originally accounted for roughly half of the population; Muslims comprised the other half. The government was arranged accordingly, with political power divided in two. In more recent times, Muslims became much more populous than the Maronites, and their attempt to gain more political control resulted in war. Add to the mix another religious community, the Mowahhidoon, or Druse, who are neither Muslim nor Christian — the exact beliefs of the Druse are kept secret — and you can see that political stability would be difficult.

But wait! We're not done! There are two main groups of Muslims: The Shiite and the Sunni. The Sunni are more wealthy, more educated and dominate positions of power and prestige. This inequality is also a source of conflict. These domestic conflicts are often much more of a threat to the livelihood of the average resident of the Middle East, and as a result often take precedence over issues of national relevance.

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Students have political influence with votes

Guest commentary

This November, you have an opportunity to shape the political future not only of our own state, but also of the entire nation. With the Senate so closely divided, the contest between Gordon Smith and myself is one of a handful that can determine which party controls that chamber's gavel. It is up to Oregonians — and especially young people — to help decide what course of action our nation should pursue.

The stakes are unmistakably high: Environmental policy, funding for higher education, and preserving a woman's right to make her own reproductive decisions all hang in the balance.

The good news is this: In Oregon, *students matter*.

I think I see a few people smirking at the back of your classroom. They're skeptical of my last claim.

As Oregon's secretary of state, I've visited more than 100 schools and can understand your frustration. You feel that politicians aren't paying attention to your priorities. You

MID-EAST POLITICS 101



Peter Utsey Emerald

In the war between Iran and Iraq during the mid-'80s, the Reagan administration switched sides repeatedly and saw fit to sell arms to both countries. Both blamed the unsatisfactory conclusion on the United States and claimed they would have won if America had not intervened.

And let's not forget the continued support the United States provides Israel. In a recent comprehensive poll, published by the Washington Post, Arabs in general listed the rights of Palestinians as the third most important political concern in their lives. Rest assured that all Arabs opposed to the Zionist movement have no illusions as to where Israel gets its state-of-the-art planes, tanks and missiles. In the same poll, Arabs were found to "have a strongly negative overall view of the United States based largely on American policy toward the region."

According to the Associated Press, there are around 8,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, and this continued occupation is creating unrest. This fact, combined with the United States, Japan and Saudi Arabia failing to deliver a promised \$180 million in aid could make an opposition movement in

Afghanistan a real and dangerous threat.

Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden before him, both make exceptional poster children for military action in the Middle East.

One man is accredited with assassinating his own relatives, gassing his own citizens and repeatedly attacking his neighbors. The other is charged with several acts of terrorism against America, the latest of which resulted in nearly 3,000 civilian casualties.

But for lasting peace to be possible in this region, Western powers must come to better understand the people who live in it. I don't want to pick up an M-16 and go charging across the sand dunes until I know exactly what it is I am charging into. If drafted, I would go to war with Iraq, or al-Qaeda, or whomever, but I don't want to die because Bush was too busy babbling about "evil" to do his homework.

Contact the columnist at michaelcosgrove@dailyemerald.com. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

know that the federal government doesn't spend enough on grants for college tuition (which have been in steady decline for two decades) because you've signed for the loans. You know that, nationwide, 18-34-year-olds often cast *one out of every 10* ballots counted — even though you make up nearly *one-third* of the voting-age population.

Does it have to be this way? Are you doomed to a vicious cycle of underparticipating and being underserved in return? Of course not.

You need only look at the last presidential election in order to discover your influence. In 2000, Al Gore carried Oregon by a mere 6,767 votes. That year, the Oregon Youth Vote coalition single-handedly registered 27,000 young Oregonians to vote — approximately four times the number of votes that decided the outcome. Now, take those 27,000 votes out of the picture. Might the outcome have been different?

Let's be clear: Oregon students deserve a senator who will be accountable to them. I support increasing Pell Grants by \$1,000 over the next three years, so that more college students have the opportunity to complete their degrees and develop the skills to

improve their marketability in this tough economy. I also support increasing the number of Pell Grants available, so that more low-income students have the opportunity to pursue a degree.

The bottom line is that we all benefit when we make quality college education affordable and accessible to students. Society shares the economic benefit of a highly educated workforce, enjoys the innovations made possible by new scientific research, and celebrates the cultural advances of artists and scholars. Participating in elections is your best opportunity to remind your elders of these truths.

So, if you're not registered to vote, *get registered!* It's easy — you can find a form online at www.oregonvotes.org. When your ballot arrives in the mail this October, mark it and mail it in.

With your vote, you'll be standing up to counter the opinion that young people don't care about politics — or, even worse, that you haven't the means or opportunity to make a difference.

Here's to proving them wrong.

Bill Bradbury is the Democrats' nominee for U.S. Senate.