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## ■ In my opinion

### Grading system gets an F

Finals week has (finally) come, which can only mean one thing: Let the bitching about schoolwork commence. Not that you haven't been doing that all term.

Personally, I have come to the conclusion that the University system makes absolutely no sense. Students pay teachers to educate us, yet they are then allowed to tell us how much we're learning. The whole situation seems akin to a boss paying her employee to clean toilets and the employee turning around and telling the employer how much she is or isn't happy with the cleaning job. If I'm paying someone to do my housekeeping, I'll be the one to tell the receiver of my hard-earned money exactly how well they did. Shouldn't it be the same with education?

We are currently paying a large amount of money to attend this University and receive an education. If I have paid to be taught something, shouldn't there be a repercussion for the teacher rather than, or at least as well as, the student when knowledge has not been taught?

Although teachers cannot be responsible for the self-failings of their students, it still seems unfair that they are allowed to judge how much a particular student is learning. I pay the teacher to teach me, and then I get slapped with the label of failure if the teacher deems that I haven't learned the correct information?

I think many students have been part of a class in which they became exposed to important educational material and gained wonderful skills of analysis and understanding, however,



AILEE SLATER  
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

their grade on a midterm or final did not necessarily reflect this education. A situation like this is the ultimate spit in the face: Students have paid someone to teach them, they have been taught, but an arbitrary grade makes it seem as though this learning never occurred. Their newfound education is not recognized, and they have, in essence, paid money to be told that they are idiots. If I want to be told that I'm an idiot, I could just get drunk and leave embarrassing messages on the phone machines of attractive men — for free.

Then there is the constant fountain of stress, emerging from that oh-so-reviled spigot of essays, quizzes and final projects. There seems to be an assumption that stress is the best way to facilitate learning. People willing to admit this underlying assumption would rightly be told to go sit in a corner and think about what they just said. Stress usually leads to two things: Procrastination, because stress makes every assignment more daunting than it actually is, and poor work as a result of this procrastination.

Eliminating the system of grading would surely do away with both of these problems. Suddenly, the purpose of schoolwork will be to garner knowledge, rather than to gain an artificial

mark of how much learning one had achieved. Instead of concern about the symbol of achievement, achievement itself will be most prized. Stress in students will be significantly lessened once work is being done for reasons of personal satisfaction. Although some may argue that grades in college are essential to determining that the hardest workers are accepted to graduate school, perhaps a decrease of focus on grades will actually lead to more fair admission policies. Time not spent calculating grades could be used by teachers to write recommendations for the students who have truly shown the ability to work hard and be motivated to educate themselves.

This columnist understands that a world without grades is a fantasy utopia, populated by over-enthused learners who work hard not out of fear but out of excitement for their own continued education. Reality might instead yield a slew of frustrated students and teachers, not giving or receiving the education they deserve because of low expectations on the part of the university system as a whole. But, just maybe, removing our current system of grading would lead to classrooms of a higher caliber. Students who work hardest would be surrounded by similarly ambitious and intelligent peers; as for teachers, their time could be spent concentrating on exceptional students who want to learn, rather than wasting resources grading the sub-par work of students who didn't care enough to do a good job in the first place.

[aileeslater@dailyemerald.com](mailto:aileeslater@dailyemerald.com)

## ■ Editorial

### Celebrate a new holy day this year

We live in a nation whose citizens come from every corner of the planet. For this we are fortunate, especially during this time of year, the holiday season, when the colorful falling leaves turn our thoughts to the profound — life and death, family and humanity — and when many religions and cultures in the world celebrate a holiday or festival.

A remarkable phenomenon and a reminder that for all of our misunderstandings, at the most basic, we are all the same.

According to a recent survey, only about one-fourth of Americans are familiar with the teachings of Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. Most likely, even less know the difference between Sikhism and Baha'i or between Hmong, Chinese and Russian New Year festivities. As citizens of a diverse nation, it is our responsibility and privilege to learn about the culture and faith of all Americans.

So as homework this winter break, take the time to learn about a faith different from your own. Read passages from a different religious text. Attend a different holiday service and talk with somebody about his or her beliefs.

We see acts of religious hatred every day in the newspaper. Sometimes it seems as if those of different faiths will never be able to live in peace. We rarely see the little moments of understanding, friendship and love. Each of these moments goes a long way toward healing the conflicts of the past and present and toward establishing a future of mutual respect and inclusion.

Your second homework assignment for the holy days is to reflect on the importance of the American ideal of secular government, where people of all religious faiths, and no religious faith, are equally endorsed and served. In these annoyingly politically correct times, expressing the appropriate holiday cheer can be a maddening exercise in vagueness. But the impulse underlying is a good one, even if it has gone way too far. We need to remember this now more than ever.

Lastly, the holy days of winter break are a time to give to those less fortunate. You don't need money — the most valuable thing you can give is the one thing we will all have: time. Whatever your talent is, there is a charity that could use your services.

Good luck on finals. Have a great winter break, a joyous holy day season and a happy new year.

Why annoy your friends and family with self-righteous rants when you can annoy thousands of your peers every week? And get paid for it!

The Oregon Daily Emerald, an independently run student newspaper, seeks an opinionated writer to join our team of weekly commentary page columnists for winter term. Candidates must be well-versed in politics and current events and have a journalistic sensibility.

The application form and job description are available in the EMU Suite 300. Please submit the application form, your resume and three work samples by Dec. 31 at 5 p.m. Both journalism and non-journalism majors are encouraged to apply.

The Oregon Daily Emerald is an equal-opportunity employer committed to a culturally diverse workplace.

## INBOX

### Media covering wrong country's election fraud

Wonders never cease. Fraud has been alleged in the Ukrainian presidential election, and here comes the U.S. press galloping in on white horses with 24/7 coverage.

I have some questions for the media. Why the deathly silence concerning our own presidential election? Are 10-hour

lines in our so-called democracy a news story, given that these occurred in the crucial swing states of Ohio and Florida, possibly disenfranchising tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of voters in populace-democratic-leaning counties? Is it a news story when corrupt elections supervisors willfully keep working machines in warehouses while voters had to make do with only a couple of machines in several Ohio and Florida

counties? Is it a news story when Volusia County, Fla., employees are seen illegally throwing signed memory cards and poll tapes representing 100 precincts into garbage bags?

Several members of Congress and hundreds of organizations lobbied relentlessly for legislation requiring that these electronic voting machines issue paper receipts in case of needed recounts or anomalies that needed investigation. Republicans fought

it tooth and nail. Why would legislators proactively resist a verifiable paper trail? Why isn't this a news story?

Sen. Richard Lugar is right to question the illegitimacy of the Ukrainian election based on exit polling variance. Using Lugar's logic, the presidency of George W. Bush is also illegitimate.

Gerry Rempel  
Eugene