Dear Silk Road FIG student,

Welcome to the University of Oregon, and to the Silk Road FIG! I am Patricia Komoda, your FA (FIG Assistant) for the fall term. I hope you are enjoying your summer! During my freshman year, I was in the Silk Road FIG, just as you are now.

I am currently a sophomore majoring in Chinese with a language focus (I also know some Japanese), although I am considering taking on another major or minor related to the field of health or anthropology. I have my eyes set on becoming a medical translator or interpreter, but I am not sure exactly where I will go in this field. My family currently lives in Salem, OR, but I was born in Wailuku, HI and spent my childhood in Gilbert, AZ. On campus, I am the Director of Finances and Campus Outreach for Students for Global Health, where we raise money for world health causes, as well as spreading awareness of global health and social justice issues. I am also a member of the Kendo Club. Kendo is based on Samurai swordsmanship.

Mark Unno, your FIG professor, is the department head of Religious Studies at the University of Oregon, and teaches East Asian religions. His specialty lies in medieval Japanese Buddhism. He currently lives in Eugene with his wife and two cats, Onyx and Taata. He also loves ice cream metaphors, and tells a great story!

The primary focus of the Silk Road FIG is East Asian religion and history, starting from the beginning of history up to around the 1800’s, and even today. You will be taking these courses with the rest of the freshmen in your FIG. The first is REL 101 - World Religions: East Asian Traditions, taught by Professor Mark Unno. The other course is HIST 190 – Foundations of East Asian Civilizations, taught by Professor Andrew Goble. Then, there is REL 199 – College Connections, co-taught by Mark Unno and me.

Throughout the term, we will draw connections between the two courses. We will also take some trips to the library to get you acquainted with the resources there, as well as a visit to a local Buddhist temple. Eventually, we will have an informative tour of the campus museum’s East Asian collection guided by Professor Unno himself!

You will be able to meet us, as well as the rest of the students in your FIG on Friday, Sept. 21st during the Week of Welcome. We will be meeting in Columbia 150 at 11am. We are also attending the University Convocation on Sunday, Sept. 23rd. We will be going together, so do not worry about getting lost! Remember to bring your Student Handbook with you when you come to campus.

We would like for you to complete some summer reading before we meet. Please read this: http://teachingaboutreligion.org/whatisreligion.html. Then, read the following passage:

Once Zhuangzi dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuangzi. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuangzi. But he didn't know if he was Zhuangzi who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi. Between Zhuangzi and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things. (From the Zhuangzi)
We want you to compare this passage to what you have read in the first reading. How compatible is Zhuangzi’s dream to Larue’s definition of religion? How are they not compatible?

Feel free to send me an email if you have any questions! We would love to hear from you, and learn more about you as a person. 😊

Sincerely,

Patricia Komoda and Professor Unno

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