Dear FIG Student,

I hope this letter finds that you are well and have been enjoying your summer to the fullest. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you in your decision to be a Duck and signing up for a Freshmen Interest Group (FIG). Our FIG, Stories We Tell, will look at the role stories play in our lives. We will look at how stories create social realities and influence the way we understand the world around us and ourselves as individuals. But before we get into that let me first tell you a little about myself.

My name is Aric Avina and I am from Scappoose, Oregon. I am in my final year at the UO and I am majoring in Comparative Literature, Philosophy, and Spanish, but lets face it, I’ve changed my major about half a dozen times, who is to say it won’t change again? When I first came to the UO, I was a declared music major and even though that has changed I am still incredibly active in the music community and sing with UO’s Chamber Choir. As you might’ve guessed, I am totally and completely addicted to music: listening to it, writing it, singing it (hopefully not badly). Besides that, in my free time I like to rock climb at the SRC (Student Rec Center), throw Frisbees around, and hike. In terms of my academic interests, I am interested in our conception of different types of identities such as the self and national identities. In other words, I like the stuff our FIG is going to talk about.

So back to business, our FIG will do two things. The first is that it will connect the materials from two classes: Scandinavian 251 Text and Interpretation taught by Dr. Michael Stern, and Philosophy 110 Human Nature taught by Dr. Vallega. Once a week we will meet in a “College Connections” class to discuss the materials from the two classes that will be taught by Dr. Stern and myself. The second thing that our FIG will do is learn some of skills necessary to be successful at a University with over 23,000 students. The reason we do this is that many students, myself included, felt lost during their first term of college as it can be difficult to navigate such a large school. If any questions or problems arise don’t worry; I will be there to help.

I’m sure you are wondering about what your professors are like, and, I have to tell you, you will be working with two of my favorite professors at the UO. Dr. Stern and Dr. Vallega are both incredible professors who care about their students and their students’ success. At the same time, they are two of the most challenging professors I have worked with as they both challenge their students to think critically and analytically about the material that is being examined. With the two of them you are going to have a blast.
Back to the FIG class, we do have two assignments for you that you must complete before we meet. The first is that you must go on youtube.com and look up a video called “Chimamanda Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story” and watch it. The video is about twenty minutes and is a great introduction to some of the concepts that we will be discussing. While you are watching it, think about how stories create social “realities” at large and also how they have impacted your own “reality.” The second is that you must send me an email at aavina@uoregon.edu so I can invite you to our FIG’s Facebook group so that you can get to know each other before the beginning of the term. Additionally, there will be a questionnaire that I will ask you to answer and post on the group’s page.

Dr. Stern and I are both extremely excited to meet you this fall. We will have our first mandatory meeting Friday, September 21st at 11:00 am in Columbia 150, make sure you are there! Additionally, we will have another meeting for University Convocation on Sunday, September 23rd, which is also mandatory. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will assist you in any way I can. At any rate, have a great summer and I will see you soon.

Take It Easy,

Aric Avina