My first two weeks at University of Oregon have been pretty busy and pretty amazing. It feels somewhat like I’ve been thrown into a whole mix of things and expected to go along with the flow. But at the same time, I don’t mind. My classes have been easy to find, the workload hasn’t really been that bad, and I’ve made a good group of friends from all different corners of the campus.

This quarter, I am taking World History 104, and an Into to Folklore 250 as part of the FIG, as well as Writing 122. I was able to enroll in Writing 122 due to my SAT scores, and I am one of the few freshmen in that class. When I walked in on the first day, there were probably no more than 20 people of all grade levels. The professor came in, and led us in small discussions about writing and making valid arguments. It was informative and concentrated, and it gave me the impression that this is what all my classes were going to be like. That image was dashed away once I walked into the lecture hall at Pacific for a History class of about 200! Thankfully, both History and Folklore have smaller section classes every Thursday that I attend with the rest of my FIG group.

I enjoy the fact that I’m in a residential FIG, because I get to see others who live in my hall in each of my classes and if I ever have a question about the homework, I can just wander two doors down and compare answers with a good friend of mine. I’ve also made some good friends with people I met at Introducktion, who live over in Hamilton. Also, I still frequently see my friends Daniel and Olivia, who also graduated from
Hillsdale High School and went to the University of Oregon. My girlfriend Fiona, who is a student at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, also visited this weekend and got to see what life was like on campus. She was amazed at the size of the school compared to her small private campus with an undergraduate class of only 2,000.

I have mostly stayed inside the past week doing work. The work from my classes is not so much hard as it is time consuming! I feel like I spend all my afternoons in my dorm room taking notes after notes after notes on reading. Although, with my laptop with Internet, Facebook and Youtube, and a mini-TV connected to a Nintendo Gamecube, I am very easily distracted. When I have got out of my dorm, it’s usually to frequent the dining halls, which offer delicious and hearty meals usually for no more that 5 meal points, or roughly $5. I also participated last Sunday in the LARPing sessions, where Eugene residents garbed from chainmail to fencing costumes gather with homemade foam blades to beat the snot out of each other. The rules are actually very disciplined, and the frequenters are a very tight-knit community that seem a little snobbish to beginners. However, I did have a friendly conversation with a young man clad all in black, battled with a foam rapier, and referred to himself as the Emperor Napoleon.

This journal writing seems a little lacking in juicy details about the life of a freshman, but hopefully as I get used to my schedule, I should have many more experiences to write about. Until next week!
The workload is coming down a lot more this week, and I am starting to feel the toll of still being in freedom summer mode and trying to stay ahead in work. There is something to be said for the good old days before technology, when students had the choice to sit down in their rooms and do homework, or go outside to run and play and cause mischief. Nowadays, being constantly plugged into everything with the Internet is a serious distraction. Whenever I sit down to my laptop to start a paper, I always inevitably log in to Facebook for “just two seconds” to check on what’s going on with my friends, I tell myself. Half an hour later, I’m scouring Youtube for random videos, and an hour later after THAT, I’m reading all issues of a web comic, or hitting the random article button on Wikipedia. Anything to do BUT writing my essay. It’s been very hard not to procrastinate.

Speaking of “good old days before technology,” I picked up one of my favorite series at Smith’s Family Bookstore on 13th Avenue to re-read, S.M. Stirling’s Dies the Fire trilogy. These were the books that first got me interested in going to college in the Pacific Northwest, because all the events in the books take place in Oregon, specifically along the Willamette, Corvallis area, and Portland. The alternate history novel imagines a modern 1999 suddenly without working technology or gunpowder by a blinding flash of light. Society decays as the world struggles to adapt to the neo-Dark Ages, but the trilogy chronicles lucky survivors banding together and rebuilding, and fighting epic battles across the state of Oregon. This book has
definitely not been helping my procrastination issues, but it’s great to pick it up again and be able to re-read what first got me interested in the area.

The two biggest projects I had due this week were my first essay in Writing 122 and my first Folklore essay. Writing 122 has an interesting concept we’re learning called the “enthymeme,” sort of like an evolved thesis that revolutionizes the idea of the three-paragraph argument. The final draft is due next week, so all we had to bring in was the first draft to peer edit. It was in response to an essay about the nude male form used in advertisement, and it brought up a lot of discussion and arguments about body image, mass media, sexism, and homosexuality in society today. I am interested to see what grade I’ll end up getting on my final result next week. The other essay, for folklore, was just a response to one of the 4 online readings we had last week. It was supposed to be a very easy short essay, but I just had such a hard time focusing and getting it done. By the time I started the night before it was due, I had stressed myself out too much and ended up over thinking the concept into a long, fancy, but poorly formed essay. Too late to change it, I turned it in the next day, and am dreading to see the graded result next Thursday. Live and learn however. Perhaps this will teach me the importance of time management my freshman year.

On a lighter note, I spent my Sunday night with the rest of my FIG in the Earl/McClure lounge preparing for our History 104 midterm on Monday. Our FA Matt deserves huge props for voluntarily giving up his time in order to help us study
for a class he probably already took. It was a big help getting review and advice from a sophomore the night before our first midterm of college and by the end of this night, I feel confident that I can kick butt on this History midterm. I think the entire wing of McClure felt the same way too.

Next week, I vow to myself: time management, little to no procrastination, and better essays!
This week was pretty relaxing and pretty enjoyable. My classes did not assign so much work than what I usually get each week. The World History Midterm that I felt so prepared for went well, and made my Thursday even better when I got it back with a big fat B on it. That compiled with my first Folklore paper as an A- gained me a lot of compliments from back home. I’m also psyched that I plan on doing my Folklore fieldwork project on the fan culture of The Legend of Zelda, one of my most favorite video games. I’m hoping I will get some good responses due to the rich mythology, debates, and fan fiction online that Zelda fan communities have to offer.

But enough about academics and the week. On Friday night, I got together with my friends from home Olivia Walton and Dann Abreu to go play organized Capture the Flag all night. I had the idea to dress in all dark clothing and wrap black t-shirts across our faces as ninja masks. We thought we looked pretty cool…until an ACTUAL ninja showed up to the game; the man was wrapped head to toe in black, had black makeup on his face, and only communicated through gestures…. if he communicated at all. Most of the time I spent guarding the flag, but Dann said it was pretty terrifying to have a ninja pursuing you all the way out of the enemy territory. The game was kind of a bust, as there were only about ten people playing… I heard the games were epic the first week when they had about 30 people on each side. It was a pretty fun alternative to going out to parties, and better than sitting around doing nothing, though.
The next night I had been looking forward to all week. It was the 5th annual Paranormal Investigation of University of Oregon led by the Pacific Paranormal Research Society, a chance for students to confront their fears of the supernatural by learning and hunting for them from the experts. We sat through a lecture by the husband and wife team, complete with some spooky pictures and sound bits, and then we got to go into the cemetery as a group to look for spirits. We used old fashioned dousing rods to communicate, asking yes or no questions (Cross for yes, don’t for no). I was a little skeptical of the whole technique, but IF it actually works, I might have had a conversation with the spirit of a man whose family moved to Eugene, who didn’t go to the University of Oregon, but his children did, and who drove and owned an automobile. I didn’t pick anything up from the audio, and nothing explicit from the photographs. I plan on going back to the gravesite to check the date to see if it was true: if the man buried there died 1864, then I’ll know the system is BS. However, I’m still unsure if I believe in ghosts or not. I’ve included a picture with this journal of the picture I think was the MOST LIKELY to contain paranormal evidence. I think I see the outline of feet or something near the base of the headstone. Again, I’m not sure.

Next week is Halloween! Can’t wait!
Journal #4 – Week of October 26th- November 1st

Tough week for me as far as classes go. I’m learning the hard way not to fall behind on reading assignments. I had to play catch up on two essays we had to read for Writing 122, but fortunately I could survive the discussions in class with a brief glance over.

The discussion sections for History are what are really stressing me out. Each paper I’ve gotten back, INCLUDING the self-analysis of my study habits, have been Cs. Yes, the paper in which I write about needing to work harder on not getting Cs got a C. I admit it, the papers seems like no big deal because they’re only one page long, and I save them to the last minute to do. That’s where the quality suffers, and I know it. Boy, does my GTF know it too. I resolve from now on to start my papers at least a few days early and give myself a chance to revise and look over it before turning it in. I should probably go in for office hours as well, but he doesn’t seem too approachable. I know it would probably be extremely beneficial to do so, but I think I need to be well prepared so he doesn’t think I’m wasting his time. Ah, maturity and preparedness.

Speaking of which, that’s the OTHER reason I can’t stand our History section. I love my FIG and the people in it, but I swear, some specific individuals need to think before they speak. Our GTF is a very sarcastic, very blunt, very strict, and very arrogant, and is not afraid to show it when provoked. Some of the adjectives used above could also
describe some of the more talkative members of the class, and this leads to just playing “Who Can Come Up With A Clever Quip” rather than actually discussing the history class. Seriously, guys. We know you have your opinions about everything. Think about if it relates in any way to the topic at hand before you blurt it out in an effort to seem clever. You come off seeming like a jackass. This way, I won’t have to spend my Thursday afternoons learning how full of themselves some people are and actually learn about the topic I signed up for. Wow, ranting feels good sometimes!

Just in time after a stressful week, Halloween could not have been any more awesome. My girlfriend was able to make it down from Portland with a few of her friends, so after my Folklore midterm was finished, I had the whole weekend to relax and party with my dear friends. On Friday, we got to watch Kubrick’s “The Shining” projected on the wall of Earl Complex’s “haunted basement,” which was totally worth staying up until 1:00 am for. The next day consisted of getting my costume together and sitting around waiting until the evening so I could put it on. My girlfriend and I decided to go in a couple’s costume, so I was The Phantom of the Opera and Fiona was Christine. We based the costumes off the 2004 movie version. I threw together some stuff with what I already had, what I ordered online, and what I found at local shops in Eugene. It turned out really well, and we got many compliments the whole night. I think I startled many of my dorm mates when I said hello to them. With the mask on, and without my glasses, it never crossed my mind that I might be hard to recognize. We watched the epic game against USC in the Living and Learning Center, played live on three pull down screens and met up with some friends afterwards. After a lot of standing around and wondering
what to do, we eventually ended up at the Carson dance party for some safe on campus fun. I’ve heard many stories of other more wild nights, but while I would have enjoyed going off campus for a real crazy party, I enjoyed the way my weekend worked out. At least I can say I remember a really good Halloween weekend.
Another week of work after my fun Halloween weekend. I’m fully taking advantage of office hours next week, in order to work out my grades for History and my project in Folklore.

I enjoyed the discussion we had in our College Connections class about modern history and how to preserve the student life via Facebook. We discussed the question how to record and know the everyday life of a modern student through what they choose to publish online for others to see, and if that has an effect of what is written. Personally, I mistrust relying heavily on the Internet for research and recording history. I have this image in my head of all electronics just crashing in the future, and years and years of our modern history from the late 90s through the 2000s will just disappear. Though I don’t care enough write now to make a manuscript of everything I’ve posted online, I think this is still an issue that needs to be contemplated and addressed by our generation.

I’m also very excited to sign up for classes next week. While having a discussion with Professor Hatfield about the FIG, I brought up the seminar he will be teaching next quarter on the Wild West. This is personally an area of history and entertainment of great interest to me, with a Tombstone poster hanging in my dorm and my roommate playing the Western-genre video game “Gun” on my Gamecube for the past week. I was excited to hear besides studying primary sources from the 1800s, we will also be watching
Westerns and create a final project investigating the relations between the movies and history. This sounds like the college class I want to take, and am looking forward to the seminar.

Speaking of fun college and movies, on the 5th of November, Colin from down the hall held a showing of “V for Vendetta” in the Earl classroom. One of my favorite movies of rebellion and explosions, this was a welcome break from my studies. I even brought my Guy Fawkes mask and top hat to the show, and wore them during the last few scenes. Everyone there was really surprised and impressed at my uber-nerdiness.

I also had a chance to meet one on one with my Writing 122 professor. She is one of my favorite professors this term. She cancelled class on both Wednesday and Friday this week in order to have one on one discussion with each student to give back our first essays and discuss the second one. I was happy to see I got a high B on my first essay, and to hear her say she enjoys my style of writing (especially after getting back all those C papers in History). She read through my second essay quickly and gave me some helpful ideas to consider for improvement. She even let me have the weekend to work on it!

My weekend went pretty well, except for the fact that the Ducks got MASSACRED by Stanford. As well as being a good reality check for the team, this at least assures that I can go back to the Bay Area over winter break and have HALF of my friends talk to me again (the other half being Cal fans).
This week, I figured out something I feel that all freshman need to know as soon as they get to college. Go to Office Hours to get help. I took about twenty minutes out of my Tuesday to talk to Mr. Olsen, the GTF of my History class, about how to improve my writings for the weekly discussions. Every single paper I turned in has come back with a C, so I made the effort (weeks later) to go in and figure out how to improve. Turns out, we had a lot to talk about. I learned to trim down my sentences and the importance of topic sentences to get right to the point. Turns out, the very next paper I get back is a B. Easy as pie. I know I thought I could handle college work with no help at first, as I bet many other freshmen do. But I found out this week that going in and talking to a professor or GTF is one of the easiest and most beneficial things a freshman can do to raise his grades.

Also in my History class this week, I took the second midterm of the term and felt pretty good about it. I didn’t feel as prepared for it as I did for the first one, but during and after the test, I was pretty convinced I did a great job. I gave myself a pat on the back for noticing the multiple-choice questions that were written with the word NOT in them, and using my brain to answer them correctly. In fact, the day after, we went over the multiple-choice questions in the discussion section and I am almost positive I got 100% of them right! I know I only mislabeled one city on the map section, and I felt pretty
confident on the writing, so I have my fingers crossed for an A next week that should definitely help my grade in that class.

Saturday night I spent with one of my new friends Amanda, a resident of Klamath Falls and a Ducks fan all her life, going to the game at Autzen against Arizona State. It was the first home game she had ever been to, so she was very excited. (Why such a diehard fan wouldn’t go to any of the games these past few weeks, I didn’t ask.) We got to the stadium an hour before the game started because we wanted to get good seats in the student section. We sat about four or five rows away from the end zone, right behind all the crazed fans in masks and face paint. We actually ended up sitting with most of McClure and my FIG, so it was great to sit amongst friends and enjoy a great game. The Ducks completely smoked the Sun Devils, 44 – 21 in one of my favorite games this season to watch since the Cal game. This victory really boosted the spirits of us fans, after our bitter defeat by Stanford, and made for a great first game for Amanda to watch. All in all, it was a pretty awesome night. Can’t wait to try and get tickets for the Civil War!!!
This week didn’t go as well as I had planned it out in my head. A week ago, I had it planned out that this was going to be my week to get everything I had outstanding done. I had done nothing with my folklore project yet, so it was going to be my time to catch up, get my interviews, and begin writing it. Unfortunately, I didn’t turn out that way.

At the beginning of the week, I came down with what our beloved History GTF Mr. Olsen calls “the campus crud.” It definitely wasn’t swine flu, or any symptoms that the cold had. I just felt really congested and crappy. I thought it was my allergies at first, and blamed it on the windstorm at the beginning of the week. But it was definitely a little something or other. So because of that, I spent way too much time laying in my room feeling sick and really getting nothing done. Tuesday came and went, as did Thursday, which were supposed to be my workdays. I didn’t even have the weekend to do work, as I visited my girlfriend up in Portland Friday to Sunday. So the Folklore project that’s been outstanding for a month and due next Wednesday...still remained unstarted as Sunday came around. Time to stay up late, get some interviews from my good friends, and get this paper done. From what I hear from my fellow FIG members, however, I’m really not alone. Many others are
still in the beginning stages of their project, so I feel like I’m not a completely hopeless case.

I am so done with the classes of my term. I just want to turn in the folklore project, and be done with that class. For my writing class, I still have some projects hanging over my head in the near future. History seems to be wrapping up nicely however, I’m happy to say. I was excited to be one of the first ones to be able to sign up for my classes on Friday. I had my schedule all planned out on what classes I wanted to take, but then I realized how much more difficult it is to make sure all the classes fit in a reasonable schedule. All my classes seemed to collide, and I spent about an hour figuring it into a reasonable schedule. I know I will be taking an Anthropology class entitled “The Evolution of Human Sexuality,” which I’m interested to see how I handle that; the science class seems to be mostly focused around biology, a subject I haven’t studied in since freshman year of high school. I will be continuing the World History class with History 105, and will be continuing my Italian in Italian 102. Also, for some physical activity, I signed up for Italian Long Sword I, which sounds like a grueling and entertaining class. I always wanted some training in the art of the sword, and it sounded like something cool to have taken, if only for bragging rights. I can’t wait for next quarter to start.
As finals week looms around the corner and the prospect of going home grows ever closer, I want to reflect on how my first quarter at University of Oregon went. I felt like I had the typical freshman experience and learned many valuable things that a new student should know. I feel like I should record them here just in case anyone who cares to know what it was like should care to read.

The FIG was a great program to get involved in. Through Hidden History, a residential FIG, I really got to know and become friends with a lot of my classmates by living in the same hall as them. Spending time in and outside of classes with the same group of people really created a kind of community in the building. Whether we were all gathered in the lounge shouting History terms to each other to study, or all still up at 3 in the morning working on our Folklore projects at the last minute, I felt like I could turn to anybody at any moment and they could understand how I felt. The journal writing was a great way to empty out everything going through my mind and chronicle my experiences. The whole history happening right now concept is still a little difficult to grasp, but I might understand it better when I come back as a senior and read over all the things I was learning as an inexperienced freshman. I can’t wait until that day.

I learned that talking to professors and GTFs are necessary to get ahead in work and classes. Talking to Olsen finally really helped change my writing quality once I saw
what I was doing wrong and what he wanted to see specifically. Meeting and talking with Professor Hatfield outside of the College Connections class was, I felt, the first big step in making connections on campus. I signed up for his freshman seminar on the history of the “Wild” West next quarter and am looking forward to it with anticipation. As he is also a history professor, I hope he can give me some guidance into how to pursue my major and career in history at the University of Oregon.

While I never really went out to the wild parties that college is famous for, I felt comfortable with my social life this quarter. Just chilling around the dorms and dining halls with friends old and new was fun enough. The highlights of my weekends were definitely going to the football games. Although I only got to see the Cal and Arizona State game at Autzen, sitting in the basement with loud, foul-mouthed hall mates watching all the away games was just as much fun. Next quarter, I’ll try to go out more, get to know more people, see more sports games at home, and still somehow stay on top of my work.

Finally, the end of a long, fun, hard-working, informative quarter. Christmas break is just around the corner. As long as I survive finals week, I made it through my first freshman quarter at college. Now I know I can do anything.