

# THE VOICE

MAGAZINE  
**THE BEST OF 2003**  
Vol 11 Issue 52  
December 31, 2003

Special  
year-end  
edition

**ALL OF YOUR  
FAVORITE ARTICLES  
FROM THE PAST YEAR**

**UNIVERSITY NEWS -  
WHAT CHANGED AT  
AU IN 2003**

**SELECTED VOICE  
FICTION**

**Plus: News on the upcoming AUSU elections, an AUSU job posting, Classifieds, and Conference Connections.**

# BEST OF THE VOICE - 2003

Dec 31, 2003

Volume 11, Issue 52

## Welcome To The Voice PDF

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*The Insider*

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first!**



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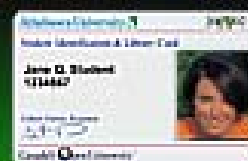
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Here are a few memorable letters sent to The Voice this past year. We'd love to hear from you. Send your letters to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org).

[Published April 30, 2003 v11 i18]

Dear Editor,

Re: Tutors – Emails

I sympathize with the students that feel ignored by their tutors! So I want to offer some unasked for advice!

A tutor once told me she received 100 emails in a single day and it was hard to go through them because many of them did not have coherent subject lines. With the fear of viruses and spams, she had to be careful about what she was opening, especially if she didn't know who it was from. I could not find any official university policy on email communication, but maybe it would make work easier and faster for the tutors if concise subject lines were used, for example:

**Subject: AU\_COMP123\_StudyGuide qs**  
or **Subject: AU\_PSYC231\_TME 7\_Attached**

As well, the body of the message could be in bulleted or numbered form rather than paragraph form, so that the tutor could type a response directly below each question, for example:

**1. What are Pavlovian dogs? (Ch.10, pg.88, Psych213 Textbook)**  
(Tutor's Response) >> **Pavlovian dogs are...**

Also, use plain text instead of Rich Text as this uses up less memory on the tutor's hard drive (and yours as well). I use this format and I usually get a response within 2 business days.

**Sincerely,**  
**Nimra Ahmed - Athabasca University Student**

*Excellent advice! I'd add that coloured stationery, emoticons and signature files with poems won't impress your tutor. Compose your email just as you would a handwritten letter and use an email address that includes your name, not a nickname.*

*For a good primer on basic email etiquette, see this link:*  
<http://www.iwillfollow.com/email.htm>

## THE VOICE

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**Editor In Chief** Tamra Ross Low

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**THE VOICE ONLINE:**  
**[WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE](http://WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE)**

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University's *The Insider* for its  
frequent contributions

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**[Published May 14, 2003 v11 i20]**

Nimra brings up some excellent points that I'd like to build upon.

Tutors often teach more than one course, and if you're a student in any of the AU Admin or Management programs, you're likely sending your course questions and assignments to the Call Centre, which oversees many different courses. The Call Centre highly recommends putting the following information in the subject line of any email you send, either to a tutor or to the Call Centre:

**Program - Your Full Name - Your Student ID Number - Reference to Your Message**

For example, if I'm sending an email asking questions about Chapter 7 material in FNCE 370, my email subject line would read:

**FNCE 370 - Shirley Barg - ##### (My 7-digit ID number) - Ch. 7 Questions**

In a conversation I had with a Call Centre staff person, she told me how horribly delayed responses to students' assignments and questions can get because no references have been given as to who sent it or what it's pertaining to. Call Centre employees have to try to find the information based only on the student's email address.

It's nice to know that we, as students, have ways to make sure we get responses to our questions or assignments marked and returned in the quickest time possible simply by putting the right information in the subject line of our emails to tutors and the Call Centre.

**Shirley Barg**

*Thanks for the information, Shirley. It's important for all students to remember that when you send an email you must always assume that the reader won't know who you are or what you are writing about, so make sure to provide enough information to clarify your identity and purpose. It might really speed up response times!*

**[Published May 14, 2003 v11 i20]**

Dear Voice Editor,

I was delighted to read the editorial in The Voice, Vol 11 Issue 19 re: student finances. It was informative and I hold strong feelings about this, being a grandmother and a brand new AU student (just today). I don't even have the materials for my Course NURS 438 - I don't know who my tutor will be, but one thing I am sure of I am delighted to be able to take part in an open university.

I am an old girl, 52, and when I first went back to school in 1981, I was 30 years old. I needed to take academic upgrading, I did attend classes everyday, but I could work at my own speed. This was a good thing for me. I read fast. I need to be able to lead my own pace. Anyway I got my RN diploma with three small children ages 4, 6 and 8.

Now today I start the process of working on a degree. What a blessed thing modern technology is. I can access a wealth of material online. I can still work shift work and take a course. I could register, sign up for a course in a very short time. And I could speak to a student advisor on the telephone via a 1 800 #. I feel ecstatic. Gaye Duren-Purdy the student advisor was very helpful to me. I am prepared to work hard, I want the knowledge, but I am so grateful I can start learning and working toward my Degree starting on June 1st.

What a privilege it is to live at a time such as this. There are challenges in this world- many, and I have seen my share, but today, this day I have become an AU student and I am positively delighted.

**Carolyn Vaughan RN - Nova Scotia**

*Thank you, Carolyn, for your enthusiastic words. Your delight and your appreciation of the opportunities afforded by open university are wonderful reminder to all of us of what a tremendous opportunity we all enjoy. I wish you the best of luck in your studies.*



FIRST IT WAS ELECTRICITY  
THEN IT WAS NATURAL GAS

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a bill 43 policy  
ALBERTA'S STUDENTS ARE GOING TO PAY

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RESTRICTED ACCESS TO ALBERTA'S POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

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lenses and doors and thousands of qualified and motivated students being left behind.

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# A HOLE IN THE HEART

Sara Kinninmont



Ground Zero - the sign reads:  
"The human spirit is not measured by the  
size of the act, but by the size of the heart"

Published on September 3, 2003 [v11 i36], *A Hole in The Heart* gave Voice readers a glimpse of the aftermath of September 11th from two angles: the commercialized, tourist curiosity that Ground Zero has become, and the raw, emotional aftermath that still haunts the citizens of New York.

A few months ago, I found myself, quite unexpectedly, planning my first trip to New York City. For weeks, I pored over travel guides, and checked out websites, all in an effort to compile a must-see list for myself. With only four days in the city, I wanted to make sure I was organised. I didn't want to miss anything.

As the departure date neared, the list grew and grew. I had no idea how I was going to fit it all in. The list included things like SoHo and TriBeCa, Greenwich Village, NYU, Washington Square, Chinatown and Little Italy, Times Square, Fifth Avenue, Central Park, and Rockefeller Center. I definitely knew what I did and didn't want to see, except for one place: Ground Zero.

In all honesty, I wasn't sure I wanted to go to Ground Zero at all. My feelings were ambiguous. On one hand, I wanted to go so I could comprehend the enormity of it, to try and reconcile the images I'd seen repeated again and again on CNN; yet, at the same time, I was worried that I would be going for the wrong reasons. I didn't want it to become just another must-see on my list, somewhere between the Statue of Liberty and the Staten Island Ferry. It seemed crass and disrespectful. Sort of like one of

those people who slows down when they drive by an accident on the highway, except on a much grander scale of course. In the end, I decided to leave it up to chance. I didn't plan on going, but I didn't rule it out.

After two days of exploring Manhattan and loving every minute of it, it became harder and harder to ignore the fact that there was a hole in the heart of the city; a hole that was now as much a part of the city as any of the places that had made it on my list. Finally, on the third morning, I decided to go to Lower Manhattan and see it for myself. I got off the subway, made my way up the stairs, and headed in the direction of where the World Trade Center had once stood. As I walked, I worried that I simply wouldn't feel anything. Would I be one of those people who after growing up with excessive violence in movies and on TV would be unmoved by the visible aftermath of its manifestation in real life? Would I be numb to it? That truly scared me the most. Being a twenty-something who had never known life without TV, and who is quickly forgetting life before the internet, I hoped that seeing Ground Zero would help me dissolve the disconnect that occurs when you are bombarded with violent imagery every day.

One minute I was walking along the sidewalk surrounded by skyscrapers, the next I was faced with towering metal fencing. From a distance, it looked no different than any other construction site, except that many of the buildings surrounding it were enshrouded in black mesh tarps, almost as though they were mourning the losses they had witnessed.

Two years ago, we saw history being rewritten before our eyes. We witnessed, from the comfort of our living rooms, a day that will go down in history. September 11th 2001 is now one of those days where anyone you talk



to can tell you where they were when they heard (I actually found out when I called one of my Athabasca tutors for a phone quiz, and she told me).

As I looked around, I tried to come to grips with the fact that thousands of people had lost their lives in this very square block. The images I'd seen of the planes, smoke, fire, people running and crying and screaming, of people hanging from windows, jumping out of windows, of the towers collapsing, of people trying to outrun a wall of debris, of firemen, of policemen, and later of families crying and searching, of missing persons' posters, of hope, of fear, of anger, of terror; later yet, of clean up efforts, and memorials, and remembrance. All these images swarmed through my mind, yet as I stared down into the huge hole in front of me, it all seemed unfathomable. How could those horrible things have happened here? I simply could not reconcile the images I'd seen for days, on a screen in my living room, with the scene I saw before me. They seemed so far removed from each other. While I remembered the horrible images I'd seen, I felt a myriad of emotions; yet as I peered through the fence at a cross made of steel girders, I felt little.

I looked around me. A sadness overtook me, and not for the obvious reasons. All around the fence there were people with cameras around their necks jockeying for position, trying to get pictures. To my left there was an Asian family posing in front of the fence with big smiles of their faces, as though they were at Disneyland. All along the sidewalk opposite the fence were stalls selling 9/11 memorabilia, and certainly no lack of people willing to shell out money for a flag, a pin, or even a glossy magazine featuring pictures from the tragic day. It made me sick to see blatant profiteering and consumerism thinly veiled as patriotism and mourning. The more I looked around the more disillusioned I became.

As I walked down along the water towards Battery Park, I had mixed emotions. I was glad that I'd been, in that I may have always wondered if I hadn't. At the same time, I was extremely disappointed. I felt as though I had just witnessed some sort of sick roadside attraction. If anything, the visit to Ground Zero had made my emotional disconnection from the event even greater.

The next morning, I got up determined to enjoy my last full day in the city. I took the subway over to Greenwich Village for an early breakfast and a day of exploring. It was as I was walking around that I came across a metal fence, nothing like the one at Ground Zero, yet related to it all the same. Covering the fence were little hand-painted ceramic tiles, which looked as though they had been painted by children. Each one depicted an image that revealed the feelings of each child in relation to September 11th.

It was as I stood looking at these tiles that I truly felt a connection between the horrific images of that day and the feelings of the community that had had to deal with it. The simplicity and beauty of them seemed so far removed from the glossy commemorative magazines and buttons being sold for a profit, which is what made them all the more powerful. The tiles were simply depictions of feelings in relation to the terror of that day. I was, in essence, looking at a display of feelings. The fact that, in a city of millions, these tiles have remained untouched and intact is a testament to the power they hold. It was right there in Greenwich Village, in front of that fence, miles away from Ground Zero, that I truly felt the hole that that day had left in my heart, and the hearts of all who witnessed it.

*Photos provided by the author*





# THE HARRIED STUDENT THE DISEMBODIED STUDENT BODY

By Audrey Karperien



Long time Voice writer Audrey Karperien's articles always receive high praise for their originality, insight, and quirky, smart humour. *The Disembodied Student Body*, published on February 26, 2003 [v11 i09], is both an imaginative tribute to the diverse and diffuse nature of the AU student community, and a vivid example of Audrey's unique style.

Smack. Smack. Smack. Thousands of hits on thousands of tables. Thousands of AU study guides flip open, computers whirl to life, monitors emit, emails ping back and forth. And the spirits of thousands of distant-edders cheer in renewal of their commitment to the vow that they will one day finish TME2. We grit our teeth and show ourselves, the AU student body.

I'm good with that image. Except the student body part. How absurd. We're no student body. I mean, we are anything but corporeal. We seldom even see each other; classmates often exist only in our abstract hopes and beliefs. We are way too dispersed for that allusion. We're no body.

I'm not suggesting we lack cohesiveness. We have common goals. Like, we all wish AU would just grant us our degrees on speculation or for good behaviour maybe. And we bond. Every evening we start up the distant ed machine knowing we aren't the only one. We have strengths and we can be grouped in a common category. But you can't draw a circle around us and say there we are. We have this necessary distance component that just won't reconcile with the notion of a *body*. I mean, we all exist, share commitments, and submit to the laws of distance ed, but we're not so physically and tangibly connected, you know.

Think of it this way. If you photographed the higher education scene in Alberta keeping your GPS-o-matic tuned to select the student ID cards of anyone over the age of 18, you'd get some fairly well-defined, blob-like, slowly moving masses at the Universities of Alberta or Calgary, or even at Red Deer College, right? There would be this visible manifestation over some demarcated square meterage, with skinny tendrils moving rapidly outward on the weekends then retracting slowly Sunday nights. You could clearly call any one of these amoeboid patches a student body—and if you were a bad guy with a nasty laser, you could easily track those bodies. But not so at AU. Oh, we would pervade your world, nasty bad guy. But you would never find us. At AU, you'd get virtually no signal at the home base, loose dotting throughout the province, then ever less concentrated signals as you vainly spread your target out over the roundness of the globe.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying our hearts don't all beat as one. You know they do. But we're not doing the Bunny Hop, here, right?. We're not hanging out in res, eating the same menu at Lister Hall, and cramming for exams together. We all have our own menus, time lines, identities.... The point is, we are so diverse that if we were a body, we would give multiple personality a whole new meaning.

We are, in fact, so not a body that we aren't even like the components of the Iron Giant after he blew himself up and saved the world from a misfired military missile. All his blown apart self-seeking robot parts set out from around the world to reunite with their centre, to recreate their body. Well, we are all homing in on essentially the same beacon, so that *if* we ever got together you might call us a body. But the fact is we remain disconnected on so many levels. And that is very, very good because if we did fall into the Iron Giant analogy of a body then we would have to be a dismembered body, which is no better off than being a lased or loony body.

So, if we aren't a student body, then what are we as we smack open our common study guides in isolation from each other, as we form, seek, and meet common goals without sharing even one little Bunny hop? How should we think of ourselves in this diffuse network of vaguely bonded people who squeeze some academia in on the side, and who, by happenstance, can claim to be virtually un-laseable? We aren't a student body, because we don't need that kind of vulnerability. No, instead we are the Athabasca University student soul.

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*Audrey is a distance ed maven and part-time writer living in the shadow of barren mountains, beside yellow-red lake beds without lakes, amongst the tormented Joshua trees, in the Mojave Desert in the United States. She is finishing her last year of an honours Master of Health Science degree, in preparation for a distance ed PhD in how to get a distance ed PhD. A mother of four, she sporadically sleeps, is in love with fractal math, and has found peace where neuroscience and Java programming meet.*

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## Albertans are the highest earning graduates in the country; PEI in last place Tamra Ross Low

Originally published September 10, 2003 [v11 i37]

This week Alberta Learning released a report which compared provincial tuition rates and the average salary of post-secondary graduates according to their province of residence.

"The comparison shows post-secondary graduates earn more money over their lifetime, experience fewer and shorter periods of unemployment, and have improved health and overall life prospects compared to those with only a high school diploma. While these benefits hold true for graduates in all provinces, the comparison also shows that graduates in Alberta earn among the highest gross salaries in Canada and, when taxes and cost of living are factored in, enjoy the highest take-home pay in the country."

Albertans' tuition rates are in the middle of the pack with an average fee of \$4487 per year. The highest rates are in Nova Scotia (\$5557) while the lowest, by far, are in Quebec (an incredible \$1862 a year!).

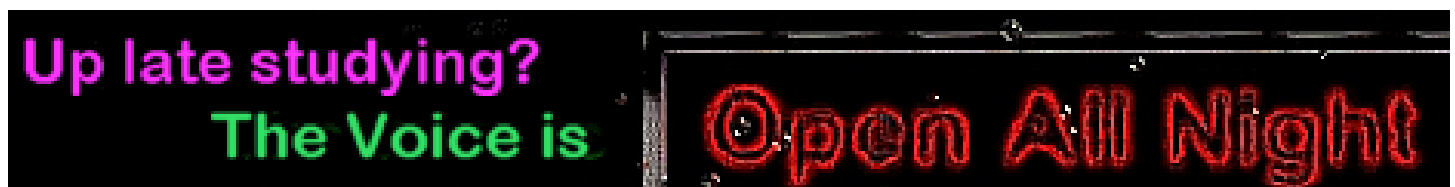
Alberta grads with bachelor's degrees will earn more than \$46,000 a year - the second highest gross salary in Canada [after Ontario] and the highest in Canada once taxes and cost of living are taken into consideration. Diploma and certificate holders fare even better, with an adjusted salary of almost \$29,000, which is \$2000 more than the second-place earners in Ontario.

Alberta masters and doctorate holders earn more than those in any province in both gross and adjusted dollars. Ontario ranks a steady second place for all types of degrees, while British Columbia is more variable than most - standing at third place for certificate holders, sixth place for high school grads, masters and doctorate recipients, and seventh place for those with bachelors degrees. PEI's grads are the lowest earners.

Albertans have been enrolling in post-secondary education in droves. Alberta enrolment has been among the highest in Canada, with an increase of 4.5 per cent last year over the previous year.

"It is estimated that Alberta's publicly funded post-secondary institutions served more than 134,000 full-load equivalent students in the 2002-03 academic year, and there are currently more than 40,000 apprentices registered in Alberta - an increase of 50 per cent since 1997. "

<http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/news/2003/September/nr-PostSecPays.asp>



# FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

## A new grading system

*Debbie Jabbour*



**Published on December 18th, 2002 [v10 i49], Debbie Jabbour's explanation of the new AUSU grading system is so comprehensive that AU provides a link to the article on their website. If you've been having trouble understanding how the new grading system affects you, read on...**

AU is going to a new Alpha/4.0 grading scale for undergraduate studies, effective January 1, 2003. This is an important change; part of a province-wide project that will see all four of our universities moving to a common scale. What does this mean for students?

Currently AU students are marked on a percent grade scale (0%-100%). University of Alberta uses a 9 point system, while the Universities of Calgary and Lethbridge use different versions of the 4 point alpha scale. This has created complex transfer situations when students move from one institution to another. It has even resulted in downgrading of marks, particularly when transferring from Athabasca University to the University of Alberta (this occurs with University of Lethbridge to U of A as well).

Obviously a better solution was desirable, so in 2000, the Universities Coordinating Committee, responding to an initiative by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, established the Common Grading Systems committee to identify a grading scale that was "academically sound, attuned to the needs of students, and readily recognized by other universities, professional licensing bodies, employers and the public"(1). The CGS Committee recommendation was to convert to the "4.0 grading scale that distinguishes between A and A+ in alpha but not on the 4.0 scale"(2). Not only will this facilitate within-province transfers, it is hoped that inter-provincial transfer arrangements and graduate school admissions will also be simplified, since most North American universities use the Alpha/4.0 scale.

Alberta already has one of the most efficient systems of transfer credits, operated by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)(3). ACAT is working with other organizations across Canada to examine articulation agreements between educational institutions, building on the premise that "credit transfer mechanisms are essential to lifelong learning and employability"(4). The Alberta Online Transfer Guide is a handy tool that allows Alberta students to easily verify course equivalents among all of the participating Alberta universities, colleges and technical schools (5). British Columbia also has an extensive transfer guide, but other provinces still have foundational work to do on such a system (6).

ACAT is also part of the Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University courses, adopted in 1995 by the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC). The goal of this Protocol was to ensure cross-Canada recognition and transferability of all post-secondary credits. Alberta's universities and colleges were the first to affirm the Protocol in 1995, indicating that their practices already conformed to the Protocol (7). Most other provincial universities have followed suit. For students taking Athabasca University courses, the ease of transfer between institutions and provinces is an absolute necessity, and the change to a common grading system is another improvement to the process.

On the 4.0 scale, an A and an A+ both convert to a 4.0. This has given rise to concerns among students who feel that their "+" honorific will be lost. For example, a student transferring to the U of A under the old 9-point scale would receive a 9 with an A+, but only an 8 with an A. In some universities this is adjusted for by adding to the 4.0 scale and assigning a 4.3 to an A+. Alberta universities argued against doing this, since this could artificially inflate marks, and disadvantage students transferring to professional schools that do not mark higher

than a 4.0. The U of A cites evidence that such inflation does occur, and that maintaining grading standards by keeping the 4.0 cap is a better way to proceed. A 4.3 "A+" is often rounded down to a 4.0, while an "A" would be rounded down to less than 4.0, so advantages to a 4.3 system are "minimal to non-existent"(8). The U of C points out that universities using the "fine GPA" will recalculate marks based on their own criteria. They are addressing this by allowing instructors to put the "+" on student transcripts to make external evaluators aware that a student's work is outstanding (9).

On the other end of the scale, the D- has been eliminated, and a grade of D is considered minimum pass, with an F a fail. This will help alleviate problems that previously occurred between institutions where minimum pass grades were different. The U of A "9 to 4" site gives a very helpful explanation of how failing and minimum pass grades will be converted (8).

Athabasca University previously used a transfer equivalent scale that assessed a mark between 90-100% (A+) as equivalent to 4.0, with an 85-89% (A), equivalent to 3.8. With the new policy, effective January 1, 2003, Athabasca University will conform to the same scale as the other Alberta universities and A+ and A will now both be equivalent to 4.0.

The second part of the change involves the calculation of the Grade Point Average (GPA). At Athabasca University currently, a student's overall grade standing is currently calculated on a straight percentage/average basis. This means that student average is calculated by adding up total percentages from all courses, then dividing by the number of courses. Now the GPA will be calculated on the following weighted average:

$$\text{sum of (grade point X credit hours) / (sum of credit hours)}.$$

The formula and grade assignments are explained in detail in the Undergraduate Grading Policy, but an example of how GPA is calculated is given below (10). Grades will be calculated based on the following scale. To simplify this, I'm not listing the exact grade points for each percentage, but they are listed in detail in the AU Undergraduate Grading Policy (10). An example would be the percentage variance from 80-84, which would be calculated as 80=3.70; 81=3.76; 82=3.82; 83=3.88; 84=3.94.

| PERCENTAGE | ALPHA GRADE | GRADE POINT |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 90-100     | A+          | 4.0         |
| 85-89      | A           | 4.0         |
| 80-84      | A-          | 3.7         |
| 76-79      | B+          | 3.3         |
| 73-75      | B           | 3.0         |
| 70-72      | B-          | 2.7         |
| 67-69      | C+          | 2.3         |
| 64-66      | C           | 2.0         |
| 60-63      | C-          | 1.7         |
| 55-59      | D+          | 1.3         |
| 50-54      | D           | 1.0         |
| 0-49       | F           | 0.0         |

If you take 5 courses, here is a rough example of how your GPA would be calculated (numbers are truncated):

|           | Credit hrs | GRADE | Grade Point |
|-----------|------------|-------|-------------|
| Course #1 | 3          | A     | 4           |
| Course #2 | 3          | B     | 3           |
| Course #3 | 3          | A     | 4           |
| Course #4 | 3          | C     | 2           |
| Course #5 | 3          | F     | 0           |
| TOTAL     | 15         |       | 13          |



Sum of (grade point X credit hours)/(sum of credit hours) = weighted average (GPA)

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \#1 & \#2 & \#3 & \#4 & \#5 \\ (4 \times 3 + 3 \times 3 + 4 \times 3 + 2 \times 3 + 0 \times 3) / 15 = 2.60 & \text{(weighted average)} \\ \text{GPA} = 2.60 \end{array}$$

The implementation of the new scales will take some time, and for a while grades will be listed in both formats. The start date for this conversion is January 1, 2003, and any undergraduate courses with start dates of January 1, 2003 and later will use the new scale. Those of us who are registered in courses with start dates prior to January 1, 2003, will still be graded the old way. Student transcripts for courses after January 1, 2003 will only display the Alpha grade and corresponding grade points. Student transcripts that include courses with start dates prior to January 1, 2003, will be modified to display the new alpha grades; the percentage grades for start dates prior to January 1, 2003; and the new Grade Point Average based on the 4.0 scale.

Instructors will also need to adjust to the new marking system. At the U of A, instructors are being oriented to the new system and encouraged to "separate marking and grading...using verbal descriptors (excellent, good, etc.) in evaluating the student performance and to assign the alpha grades accordingly (11). The new system, therefore, is much more than just a change of marks, it requires a change in how instructors and students think. It will be of benefit in reducing some of the subjectivity used in marking. On the other hand, students who work hard for individual percentage points may feel disadvantaged. It will take all of us some time to get used to the new system.

Overall the change will be of particular benefit to students at Athabasca University, since we rely so heavily on the ability to transfer courses easily. Implementation in Alberta is just a beginning - since all the provinces of Canada have agreed to work toward implementing the Pan Canadian Protocol, it is likely only a matter of time before other provinces follow suit and move toward a common grading system as well.

If you want further information on the background of the conversion to the 4.0 scale, the U of A 9 to 4 website is an excellent resource that offers a clear and coherent explanation of the process (8). I'd also encourage you to check out the ACAT website (3). It contains a great deal of interesting information on transfer patterns for universities in Alberta; and for Alberta students, the Online Transfer Guide is extremely helpful. For a detailed explanation of how Athabasca University will be implementing the change, see the Undergraduate Grading Policy (10). Don't hesitate to ask questions as well – the Registrar's Office will be happy to explain how it all works; the AUSU discussion forum has a topic thread on the new grading system; and you can email any of AUSU's Council members for information.

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**Barbara Godin**

**Barbara Godin's first Voice contribution, published August 13, 2003 [v11 i33], reflected the perspective of many mature students who have found new reasons to love learning, and embrace that time of life when once again, life's goals can be all about you.**

As I reluctantly approached my fiftieth birthday I wondered if turning fifty would really be as traumatic as I had heard. Fifty certainly did not feel or look like it did when I was thirty and looking ahead. However, the gray hair was real, as was the soft jaw line, among other things. Furthermore, I know I eat pretty well the same quantity of food as I have for as long as I can remember, but it is becoming more difficult to keep that "girlish figure." By the way, had someone turned up the heat? Maybe it was global warming, but everywhere I went I felt so much warmer than I used to, even to the point of spontaneously breaking out in a sweat with no effort.

Though being a grandmother fits in with the stereotypical fifty year old, or should I say "middle-ager," I am also working toward my university degree. This was not a common occurrence 20 years ago, but something that seems to be happening more frequently in the over forty age group. Perhaps this is the baby boomers' way of trying to catch up on what we missed, during the drug culture of our youth.

Against the urging of family and friends that I must have a party - a huge party, big celebration, rent a hall, go on a trip - April 6, came and went fairly inconspicuously. A small party with family and friends and I became a middle-age baby-boomer, joining so many of my cohorts already basking in the glow of acquired wisdom.

Though now only months into my new era, I do feel different. Hey I'm 50, I don't have to make excuses cause my waistline isn't like that of my 29-year-old daughter, or try to compete with the Susan Lucci's of daytime TV. I don't need surgery or botox. I'm proud of that wiry gray hair that sticks straight out as if having a mind of its own.

Most important, I don't feel I have to please everyone else, or aspire to make everyone like me. Nor do I have to put my dreams on hold while helping others carve their path in life. Now I can cultivate pleasing myself. I can give myself permission to fulfill my own dreams and strive to make the rest of my life happy. Becoming 50 allowed me the permission to finally accept myself without apologies. Turning 50 is all right!

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*Barbara is working towards her B.A. in English. She enjoys writing in her spare time. Barbara is located in London Ontario and can be reached at [barbgodin@sympatico.ca](mailto:barbgodin@sympatico.ca).*

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Published on September 10, 2003 [v11 i37], *Internet Addicts* brings Voice readers information on a very simple and practical method to determine if internet use is becoming excessive. If awareness is the key to avoiding addiction, then read on, and learn the signs of problem internet use.

The internet has become so important and widely used in our society today that some people are beginning to spend extraordinarily large amounts of their time online. People are using the internet for activities such as school, work, games, banking, social interaction and much more. It seems that the internet is an amazing system capable of satisfying almost any need. But is there such a thing as spending too much time on the internet and can this be unhealthy?

For a system that is used for so much there is amazingly little known about the nature and psychological implications of internet addiction (Spears). That is why Dr. Nathan A. Shapira of the Evelyn F. & William L. McKnight Brain Institute of the University of Florida embarked on a study of internet addiction that was recently published in the Journal of Depression and Anxiety. According to Dr. Shapira the purpose of his study was to obtain criteria that could be used to diagnose individuals with problematic internet use and identify appropriate subjects for future studies.

CNN and Tom Spears of The Ottawa Citizen summed up the method and results of Dr. Shapira's study, which involved face-to-face evaluations of two groups of people; one group consisted of 20 volunteers with admitted problems with internet usage and the other group consisted of 17 college students selected at random. His study revealed that the people with internet usage problems spent more than 30 hours a week on the internet. They also used the internet for recreational purposes ten times more than they used it for more productive activities such as work and they had an average of five other psychiatric disorders such as bipolar disorder, depression or alcohol abuse (Spears; CNN). Dr. Shapira also put forth five factors that may be used to determine if someone is likely to have an internet addiction. He sums up these criteria with the acronym MOUSE:

**M**ore than intended time spent online  
**O**ther responsibilities neglected  
**U**nsuccessful attempts to cut down  
**S**ignificant relationship discord because of use  
**E**xcessive thoughts or anxiety when not online

Hopefully, Dr. Shapira's study will be followed up on by other scientists because there are still a lot of unanswered questions. Psychiatrists are still not sure exactly why some people use the internet more than others, what the long term effects of internet addiction are and whether or not it should be classified as a psychiatric disorder itself or just a side effect of other psychiatric disorders (Spears; CNN).

As a student attending an online university, where most of my academic interactions will involve the internet, I would be very interested in seeing this line of research continued. I know through personal experience how easy it is to get carried away on the internet and lose track of time. I do not fit all of the MOUSE criteria and I do not consider my internet usage to be excessive or unhealthy, but I do see how it could be easy to become addicted. It would be very useful to know why and how certain people develop internet addictions so that precautions can be taken to prevent it.

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*Bill Pollett*

Published in the September 24th, 2003 [v11 i39] issue of *The Voice*, *Unlearning* is a wry look at educational goals, and a plan to do it all again, in reverse!

If all goes according to my plan (but really, why should it?) by June of the year of our Lord, 2007, I will have completed my masters degree in literature. This will be the fulfillment of a promise made to myself many years ago (whilst drunk on Peach Schnapps in an abandoned church on the edge of the Arctic Circle) to once and for all set aside childish dreams of a life as a spokesmodel for the car air-freshener industry. Having achieved this educational milestone I will, of course, have ever so shrewdly positioned myself for a career as a coffee shop barista.

Far from resting on my laurels, though, I will enjoy only the briefest of celebratory dinners (I'm thinking instant noodles and Pabst Blue Ribbon) before swiftly enacting Phase Two of my life plan. This stage will involve the gradual and systematic unlearning of all the academic twaddle that I have previously absorbed. As every quantum physicist knows, the cosmos will one day reach the outer limits of its expansion. At this point, the galaxies will begin to draw back in upon themselves. Possibly time will begin to run in reverse (which means I should probably hang onto that skinny white leather tie at the back of my closet). Always on the look out for a good role model, I plan to conduct myself in a similar fashion on a scholastic level.

First of all, I will forget all of the nonsense I'll have had to cobble together for my thesis, which will probably revolve around the relationship between Quebecois gothic literature and Bakelite chafing dishes. From there I will move backward through my undergraduate years. I will no longer be aware of techniques or allusions of any kind. I will forget that there is any qualitative difference between Eliot's "The Wasteland" and the lyrics to a Barry White song. I will once again relish writing that tells instead of shows.

From there, it's on to high school (be gone, unsolvable algebraic word problems) and elementary school (catch ya later, verb declension; au revoir rudimentary French) before setting my sights on the greatest triumph of all: the total erasure of everything I learned in grades K through One. At this point, if everything gels, I will once again be able to colour way, way outside the lines. I will be ignited by wonder at the sight of satellites and sand dollars. Like my daughter, I will be able to converse with Dalmatians and dragons. Ultimately I will be able to run naked around the kitchen shaking my booty and singing loud, off-key versions of "Coconut" without the slightest hint of embarrassment.

Okay, with that part I'm already there.

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The Sounding Off column is where AU students have their say on a variety of topics. It can be difficult to convince students to comment, and this column often is not included in *The Voice* due to a lack of response. Once in a while, however, a topic strikes a chord within readers, and many write in, making this column a powerful statement of the passion of our readers, and a fascinating read. For this retrospective issue, I have selected three of the topics that sparked the best response.

Remember, readers may submit ideas for future Sounding Off columns...

### AU students sound off on Gay Marriage - July 2, 2003 [v11 i27]

I think that this is a wonderful thing. Why should only straight people enjoy such things as prenuptial agreements, lawyers, divorce, property settlement, custody fights, alimony and such.

On the serious side, however, there are so many lonely people in this world, who are we to begrudge someone who has found someone to love.

**Michael Wiseman**

On my journey to joy I have learned many things. One of these is that when a person finds someone to love, we should celebrate not condemn.

I moved to northwestern B.C. several years ago from a conservative state in the midwestern United States to marry the man of my dreams. Where I came from simple cohabitation was (and bizarrely enough still is) illegal! The possibility of marriage between same sex couples - considering that was like considering bringing Martians to dinner.

My life has since been transformed. Not only have I found my soul mate, but I have also found my soul-peace. I have been blessed to live in a "diverse" community. My blonde-haired, blue-eyed self can walk into a store and be in the minority - lost in the sea of humanity's infinite variety. What an awesome, life-changing experience!

One of the greatest expansions of my social universe was being allowed into the lives of co-workers and community members who also happen to be in same-sex relationships. I have found these to be fully-realized, well-educated couples who have true, respect-filled, long-term committed relationships. One couple in particular taught me some important ingredients for a healthy marriage: saying no is okay - you'll still be loved, if you say you'll do something do it and then don't complain after, treat your partner as your best friend and greatest ally, your relationship is your safe haven, and always feed your passion. I will be eternally grateful to the two amazing women who shared their life so freely. They've been together 25 years. To be honest, that's one of the longest relationships I've known and it amazes me how much love and respect they have incorporated into their daily lives. I have since opened my eyes, heart and life to others who are also in same sex relationships and find my life and that of my family to be much richer.

I realize that some people feel marriage is a religious construct and as such can only occur in relationships sanctioned by the church. I disagree. The state sanctions marriage apart from the church. Religious affiliation is not necessary to validate a state sanctioned marriage. So, why then should religious, conservative values direct the state's law when it comes to recognizing same-sex marriage?

I believe the stability of marriage, of long-term committed relationships contributes to the stability of a society. If churches choose not to sanction same-sex marriages, so be it. I believe that as responsible members of the

state we must support the good, stable and respectful relationships of our neighbours, co-workers and friends. They deserve our respect and should be treated on an equal basis in the eyes of the law.

I have a great admiration of Canada and its progressive, open attitudes. I am proud to be part of the Canadian world that encourages and accepts the variety of its people. I applaud the couples who have spoken out and fought to be placed on equal footing with the current, conservative social standard of marriage. I pray the government, the provinces and the people of Canada will expand their social universe and applaud individuals, couples and families who just happen to include same-sex partners. It is vital to treat all members of our societal family as equals and to celebrate the love, commitment and respect they share.

Thank you,

**Shelby Raymond**  
**Terrace, British Columbia**

Homosexuality has been around since the dawn of time as much to the dismay of our conservative government here in Alberta. Roman emperors "initiated" young boys (hey, the Catholic church still does this;-) ), and before colonization Native Americans had berdaches, male individuals who lived like females. Berdaches quickly disappeared because the settlers were so adamant about not accepting them, but the Natives never questioned this practice, so why should we? Who are our government officials to decide that same sex marriages are wrong? Governments once thought females voting was wrong, and that segregation was right. Females fought to win the vote, and now no one thinks anything of it. Non-whites fought for equality and now instead of segregating them governments are encouraging acceptance. It will take some time, but same sex marriages will become just as common in society as women voting and non-whites drinking out of the same fountains as whites.

Marriage should be based on love, respect, trust, attraction and admiration, not gender. Marriage over the years has evolved, once taboo issues like sex before marriage, pregnancy before marriage, divorce, adultery and the oh so taboo practices of oral and anal sex (once considered illegal among heterosexual couples) are all now generally accepted by society. Who we choose to love and how we choose to make love with them should be of no concern to the government. What the government should concentrate on are ethics, road repairs, national security, child welfare, education and health. The government, especially in Alberta, is treating homosexuals as invaders attempting to take over the province, convinced that if same sex marriages are allowed, our country will go to crap and these homosexuals will "convert" everyone, especially our vulnerable children. Fear, more than common sense is directing their decisions. What is there to be afraid of if we allow homosexuals the right to marry? Really, marriage is just a piece of paper and property rights. Their fear that if same-sex marriages are allowed then governments are acknowledging that there is nothing wrong with it and whoever is for it must be hiding homosexual tendencies themselves, and macho Albertan men would never admit that! I say, marry whomever you want, wherever you want and whenever you want, the government has no place deciding that for you!

**name withheld**

### **AU students Exam Horror Stories - May 7, 2003 [v11 i19]**

I'm sure many of us have strange stories to tell about writing exams! I am currently working towards a Certificate in French language proficiency, so exams, especially in another language, can be unnerving.

During one of my final exams, about 10 minutes in, a fellow seated a row over from me sneezed several times, then proceeded to sniff every few minutes for the next 2 hours! I thought I would go nuts, but tried my best to concentrate.

During another exam, the lady seated next to me talked to herself (actually whispered, but equally annoying). I don't think she was doing French, otherwise I would have listened in!

**Sue MacKenzie**

When I was taking an accounting course, I and two other students started a small study group here in Edmonton. We would meet at a restaurant or someone's house to work through problems together and study

for the exam. One evening we were talking about how the sense of smell could trigger very vivid memories. One of the group got the idea that if we studied with a scented candle burning it would help lock the information into our minds. The drawback, though, was that to unlock our supposedly vivid recollection of what we were reading, we would need to burn the same type of scented candle when we wrote the exam. We decided we'd each take a candle with us into the room when we wrote the exam.

The day of the exam I packed my candle and matches into my bag, and off I went to AU's Edmonton Learning Centre. When I explained what I wanted to do to the exam supervisor, she looked at me rather disbelievingly, but said I could burn the candle as long as no other student in the room objected to it. I later found out that my study partners chickened out and didn't take their candles to the exam room.

I can't confirm whether the scent unlocked my accounting-saturated brain cells, but I did pass the exam with a decent mark. However, I'm likely the only student to ever, quite literally, burn the proverbial flame of knowledge during an exam.

**Shirley Barg**

I encountered an psych exam that only had a handful of short answer questions that needed to be limited to 2 or 3 sentences. The questions had nothing to do with the quizzes, I could only answer three of them. In order to have passed this test I would've need to memorize the entire text! Needless to say I failed the exam, and had to rewrite it again. I don't know yet if I passed. The rewrite was just as difficult as the original exam!

**Sandra Moore**

I wrote one exam where everyone seemed really stressed - the room was totally hushed and tension filled the air. People were hunched over their papers in deep concentration and you could have heard a pin drop. Then the guy up front nudged his desk forward, and the large plastic clock hanging high up on the partition wall dislodged and clattered down onto his desk! They guy shot back about 6 feet, and half the room jumped up and yelped! I nearly wet myself. I don't think anyone had much success concentrating after that.

**Tamra Ross Low**

## **AU students on the US War on Iraq - March 12, 2003 [v11 i11]**

### **DEBASED**

Small meaningless men  
Egos of a king  
Worlds turn thou remain the same  
Delusions of equality  
Wars fought on holy ground  
For posturing and things  
We look to them as leaders  
All they are, are fiends  
Continues through the ages  
Resolution an elusive thing

**Kim Anderson, 2003**

I'm still sitting on the fence on this one. Wars are never good, thousands of innocent people die, families are separated, violence is witnessed. Mind you though, tyrannical dictators who do harm to their own people are never good either. Either way, people will die. It's horrendous to believe that thousands of people can support Saddam, out of respect or fear, probably more of the latter. Wouldn't it be best to just get rid of Saddam and his regime? With all the technology the US military has can't they just point a missile to his house and shoot?

With only American news stories to go on, how can I honestly make an informed decision about what I believe would be the best thing to do?

**Sandra Moore**

Comedian Jay Leno recently said that Bush may be the smartest military guy in history - waiting until he destroys all of Iraq's weapons, then he declares war. I'd argue that this is not military smarts, this is bullying at its finest. And I have a lot of questions...

Who or what has given George W. Bush the right to dictate a regime change in Iraq? I've heard that he believes he has god behind him in this fight. According to the Dan Rather interview with Saddam Hussein - Saddam too, believes that Allah is with him. Terrorists flying jets into buildings also think they are doing the will of god. What makes Bush's god superior?

Democracy? My understanding of democracy is that it represents the will of the people - not the will of a foreign government. How can you impose or force democracy on people? Is this not a paradox? I wonder who will be next on Bush's list of countries requiring a change of government? Has Bush asked the Iraqi people what they want?

Does Bush really think that launching war against Iraq without the support of the U.N. (or much of the world) will reduce the hostility the Middle East already feels for the U.S.? Won't this increased hostility escalate terrorism?

Check out: <http://www.rootingoutevil.org/>, an organization that is challenging dangerous nations by "sending a weapons inspection team to the United States to inspect the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons produced and concealed by the Bush regime."

**Debbie Jabbour**

While in the long run it may be necessary to do something to keep Saddam Hussein and his sons contained, the way the United States is going about it seems completely wrong to me. A unilateral attack will only serve to increase hostility to the United States and expose its citizens (and through them, us) to a larger threat of terrorist retaliation.

I would feel a lot more comfortable about the entire thing if the United States government was not so obviously trying to spin its own people into believing in the necessity of the invasion. What are the real reasons that the White House is afraid of telling its own people?

**Karl Low**

**Student Trevor Siwak chose to respond in photo, with these images from an anti-war rally in Ottawa this past weekend:**







**All photos by Trevor Siwak**

The USA economy is a war-based economy. It has been proven that the growth is tremendous when they are in some conflict with some other country. After a conflict, USA helps rebuild the country, increasing their productivity and in turn helping their own economy. Also, it is a fact that USA gets over 70% of their oil from the Middle East. Therefore, it is very important that USA gets the oil at a lower price. Can you visualize a \$50.00/barrel price? Can you see the rate of inflation in the USA? Look at what we are paying with a \$32.00/barrel price. Look at the increase in the rate of inflation in Canada after an increase of a few dollars.

Finally, who trained Saddam! Who was instrumental in putting Saddam as a dictator in Iraq? We all know what dictators do when left alone. Look at Africa, South America, etc. and see what happens.

They say that 50% of the population in Iraq are 14 & under. What % are women? What % is left to defend their country? I am not defending Saddam, but there must be a more diplomacy and humane way of dealing with this situation.

Bush keeps saying God Bless America, but about the defenceless and innocent people in Iraq.

One more question – Why cannot Bush and Saddam have a duel instead?

**Nick**

I rarely believe politicians and always look for hidden agendas. But, I don't automatically disbelieve either, or I figure I'm no better than someone who swallows everything without question. Now, though, I've lost all faith in the US government. It was never established that Bush was fairly elected, yet he accepted his office as though it was his divine right; By popular vote, he was far from popular. His lack of knowledge and understanding on most issues is frightening, and his drive to divert attention from his failure to deliver Osama Bin Laden [a foolhardy and childish promise] is clear. Perhaps Saddam is a threat, but without question Bush will benefit enormously from this war. It chills me that the most popular Presidents in US history have been the ones who have led wars, and that Dubya's approval ratings skyrocketed the moment the Trade Center went down. I also sense that Bush is driven to 'put down the varmint that his Daddy couldn't.'

That US citizens are denouncing countries that do not back their war only reinforces the importance of not bowing to US pressure. They guarantee their citizens free speech, but won't abide countries that hold different views. How can they promise intellectual freedom to individuals when they can't permit it in independent nations?

**Tamra Ross Low**

## VOICE FICTION FEATURE



**Marilyn Oprisan**

**Marilyn Oprisan was the first AU student to respond to our call for submissions for the Voice Fiction Feature, introduced this year. While some readers have felt that fiction is superfluous in a university publication, overall the response to this column has been excellent, and the number of students eager to submit their fiction grows each month. Thus, the Fiction Feature column has helped the Voice to meet its mandate of providing a forum where AU students can publish their work - whatever style they choose, on a broad range of subjects.**

***Silly*, published on April 9, 2003 [v11 i15], is a moving and startlingly real story that demonstrates that people of all ages and walks of life are just people, needing love, understanding, and someone to lean on. The barriers we create to control how human beings express those needs are all in our mind, and are a sentence of loneliness for many.**

The chicken smelled done. On the next commercial Fay eased her knitting off her lap, groaned herself to her feet and went off to the kitchen. Her daughter-in-law used a meat thermometer to see if a chicken was done. Young people were so silly.

She was a good daughter-in-law though; she and Fay's older boy gave Fay three healthy grandchildren. Fay's younger son, David, still lived at home. A man in his thirties. But at least it meant Fay didn't have to live alone like most of her Mah Jong ladies did.

She took the chicken out of the oven, set it on a trivet and then realized she had intended to make coffee cakes that afternoon. Fay got out two pans for two coffee cakes, one for the Mah Jong ladies tonight and one for Paulie this afternoon when he came over for sex. Fay found it funny she even liked the sex. She never liked it all the time her husband was alive. But Paulie was different. Gentle. Sex and gentle never went together for her before. Not in the prison camps or with Mort. It was nice, Paulie's way.

She got out the flour and brown sugar and the butter and cinnamon and all the other ingredients. Such a luxury to have as much sugar and butter and cinnamon as you wanted in the house. It was so many years since the war, but it still felt strange. You thought from the past, you didn't think from now. She didn't like riding in trains. Even now, years later, she felt like she was back in the train to the camps, whenever she was in a train. She made her son buy a plane ticket, even when it was only a few hours to go somewhere.

And even now, seven years after Mort died, she was still tense when she heard a car come in the driveway in the evening. Afraid it would be one of those nights, even though now it was only David coming home and he never hit her. A man hit his wife but a boy didn't hit his mother.

David was a good provider. He could afford as many plane tickets and as much brown sugar and butter as Fay wanted. He made good money in his lawyer office. Still, it would be better if he were married. Paulie would be

better off married too, but for now it was nice to have him come around.

She just had time to throw the ingredients together and get the cakes in the oven before the movie started again. Her friends all watched soap operas in the afternoon, but as often as she has tried, she can't stay interested. It's all I love you and who loves who. Silly.

There was a knocking at the kitchen door. The door has glass in the top half and wire mesh in the bottom half. Who ever had such a door in the old country? Like it would ever keep anyone out. Then she realized she had strong wooden doors in her house in the old country and they didn't keep her and Mort from being taken away to the camps, now did they?

She looked over from the stove to see it was Paulie. Something must be wrong. It's Tuesday; he wasn't supposed to come over for sex before three. She let him in the door.

"Paulie, something's wrong?"

Paulie's eyes were so pained. Such beautiful blue eyes like a girl's. He fell against her and buried his face into her bosom.

"Fay, he knows. David knows."

She cradled his head, stroking his hair as he stood there holding onto her. Soft brown hair. On top of his head was the only place Paulie had any hair. Her sons were both hairy apes like their father was.

"No, no," she crooned, "It's all right. It's going to be all right."

He pushed away from her and stood staring. "All right? You didn't see his face! He's ready to kill me!"

"Come into the living room. Sit down. Tell me about it."

The only part of him that moved was his eyebrows up and down all over his forehead. Such a good-looking young man. Even his

eyebrows were beautiful. Fay had to take his two hands and lead him into the living room; he was too shaken up to move by himself. She turned off the TV and put her knitting into the basket, before settling him and sitting down beside him.

"Now, tell me what happened."

He clutched at her hands. She wished she could go and wash the chicken and cinnamon smells off, but Paulie was squeezing her hands too tight.

"I went over to his office to get him so we could go for lunch. He was sitting at his desk. He said 'You've got one minute to get your ass out of here.' Fay, I just stood there. I didn't get it at first. Then he stood up, just standing there at the desk and he said 'I'll kill you. I swear I'll kill you if I ever see you at my house again. Don't you ever go near her again.' That's what he said, Fay. I didn't know what to do. I shouldn't even be here now but I had to tell you . . . The look on his face, Fay. Like I was a monster."

"He had to find out some time, Paulie. You're partners in the same office."

"Fay, are we really doing anything so wrong? I'm a single man. You're a widow. You're not my mother, you're HIS mother. It's not really wrong, is it?"

"Of course not. It's a little strange, but of course it's not wrong. I still don't understand why you even want an old lady like me but who's complaining?"

He dropped her hands. "You don't get it, do you? I've told you over and over again, Fay. I love you. The women my own age - they're all after me for my looks or my money. But you, you've seen life, you've seen death, you've seen . . ."

"You're talking like a soap opera, Paulie. My husband loved me. That, I don't need again, thank you very much." She had told Paul about how David's father was, just like she'd told him

how it was in the war and in the camps. Young people. They can't even believe things like that happened. Who knows, maybe if somebody took Paulie away to a prison camp he might change, like Mort did.

"I just feel so dirty. David's my best friend. Damn it, he's like my brother. You're his mother. That makes me almost like your son. That makes me a mother-f . . . "

"Paul! Don't you use bad language in this house!"

He dropped to the floor at her feet, crying now, with his head in her lap. There wasn't going to be any sex this afternoon. Paulie probably wouldn't come around any more at all after today. She just waited, letting him cry.

While sitting there, with him crying in her lap, she detected the done-cake smell coming out from the kitchen. She'd better go attend to the cakes but she couldn't just leave him there, so she kissed him first. He liked to be kissed. Hard, like in a movie, but of course he wouldn't be in the mood for that now. So she just raised his head up from her lap and gave him a little peck on the mouth. "You stay here. I'll be right back. I just have to check on the oven."

Then she went back to the kitchen, took the two cakes out of the oven and washed the smells off her hands. When she got back to the living room she saw that Paul had collected himself and also got up from the floor and was sitting on the couch. There were still tears on his face but they were old tears. They'd fallen a few minutes ago and were drying up.

He sniffed and rubbed his face when he saw her come back in. "I guess I'd better go. I don't know how I'll face him at the office tomorrow." He sighed, as though trying to expel all the hurt out his body with the sigh. It wouldn't work, of course. Hurt stays inside no matter how hard you sigh it out.

It took another ten minutes of talking and soothing before she got him out to his car. She watched him drive off, hoping he would be able to drive home safely – he was so upset.

David was going to be difficult when he came home from work. There was going to be a scene for sure. He'd probably be too angry to eat. She'd have to take both coffee cakes to the Mah Jong tonight. Or maybe just freeze one.

END

## AU Student Essays Inspiring

Originally published May 14, 2003 [v11 i20]

In contrast to the students with poor writing skills there are a number of AU students who write very well and who demonstrate not just good critical thinking but considerable creativity. These students are often in our senior English courses. I have selected a number of their essays and posted them in the home pages of our English courses so that other students will have examples of the best essays which they can use both as inspiration and as models.

In order to read these essays click on the links below:

Here are some film and literature essays including critiques of Virginia Woolf, Vladimir Nabokov and Wayne Wang: <http://www.athabascau.ca/courses/engl/373/archives.html>

Here is a study of the Cyborg in Cyberpunk fiction and film: <http://www.athabascau.ca/courses/engl/491/machine1.html>

And now an analysis of Calgary poet, Claire Harris: [http://www.athabascau.ca/cll/writers/harris\\_essay.html](http://www.athabascau.ca/cll/writers/harris_essay.html)

**Joseph Pivato**  
**Center for Language and Literature Studies**





## Here's Your Chance to Get Involved! AUSU Elections 2004

Dear AU Student:

Have you wondered how you could get involved with your Students' Union? Have you wanted to play a role in shaping the experience of AU students? Here is your chance! It is election time again for the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU). Elections will be held on March 20, 2004 so get to your post office or computer and send in your nomination for AUSU council today. Send nominations by e-mail to [president@ausu.org](mailto:president@ausu.org) or mail to the AUSU office at 10030 - 107 Street, 2nd floor, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3E4 Attention: President. For further information, call 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413.

Anyone submitting a nomination must be a registered student of AU at the time of the nomination as well as at the close of the election and must remain a student at AU throughout his/her term on council. Students, as defined by the AUSU by-laws, are those who are currently enrolled in an AU course, or who have completed a course within the past six months. If course extensions have been purchased, the revised end date is used to calculate student status.

As stated in the AUSU By-Laws, "Any Active Member in good standing may submit to the Council a self-nomination together with the individual's written consent to act, if elected" (Article 11\_Elections, Section 2-Nominations).

"Member in good standing" means an individual who is a member of the AUSU in any of the categories of membership prescribed in the By-Laws, has paid all fees, and has not been subject to disciplinary action from the University or the AUSU.

Students must submit their name, student I.D. number, address and/or e-mail address, and the individual's written consent to act along with their nomination. Deadline for self-nominations/nominations is January 17, 2004.

All self-nominations/nominations will be acknowledged after the closing date. Nominees will be given an opportunity to withdraw their name from the list of nominees provided their notice of withdrawal is received by the last day of January, 2004.

Debbie Jabbour, President  
Athabasca University Students' Union

*Does the pressure of having to  
study alone keep you up at night?*

**AUSU STUDY BUDDY**

# HELP SAVE CANADA MONEY; DON'T VOTE IN THE NEXT ELECTION!

*Trevor Siwak*



It's easy, it's patriotic, and it's your constitutional right, but what if you had to make a donation to your favourite party to secure the use of the ballot box? And what if you had to keep paying that party each year, until the next election, even if you weren't happy with their performance? Federal Elections bill c-24, passed in June, makes these strange suggestions a reality. On June 25, 2003 [v11 i26], Trevor Siwak asked the questions which bill c-25 begs...

When I heard that the Prime Minister wanted to eliminate large corporate donations to political parties, something happened. I felt something I can't say I had ever felt before: pride, pride in our Prime Minister, pride that he was willing to take a stand against the large corporations which sometimes use money to help manipulate the outcome of elections and then go running for handouts and special attention afterwards. The fact that he came up with this idea *after* he had benefited from the system is not lost on me, of course. But hey you know what they say, never look a gift Liberal in the mouth.

But then it happened, I let my guard down and I got blindsided. What looked like an attempt to even the political-funding-playing-field, turned out to be foreplay for what might become known as the most generous political reimbursement system in the free world; and the best part of it is, it won't require as much time and effort for the parties as the old brown nosing system did. On top of that, it could plausibly sour more voters and lower Canada's already pathetic average voter turnout. Mr. Prime Minister is so hell bent on pushing this through that he has even threatened to try to hold the Senate back from summer recess, until the bill is given senate approval.

What does the new election financing bill entail? First, a ban on *most* corporate and union donations; sounds good so far eh? However, we then move on to the second part; it will see each individual MP and riding candidate receive 60% of their election expenses reimbursed in the next election and 50% in following ones. The old reimbursement was only 22.5%. Lastly, it will also see each party receive \$1.75 ANNUALLY for each vote they receive, yes that's annually! That means \$1.75 for each vote every year for the four years until the next election. Just in case you are interested, if one applies the result of the 2000 election to this \$1.75 formula each party would be getting the following each year, not including the 60% election expense refund:

- Liberals: \$9.2 million
- Canadian Alliance: \$5.7 million
- Conservatives: \$2.7 million
- Bloc Quebecois: \$2.4 million
- NDP: \$1.9 million

Adding these reimbursements to the bill will cost 5 million more per year to taxpayers, on top of the original bill's estimated cost of \$120 million over four years. And these are not opposition figures either, these are figures from within the Liberal party itself, from a senior Winnipeg Liberal MP.

At first glance, one who doesn't care how the government spends our money, might think, great, it sounds fair and even. I mean the theory looks sound; each party gets compensated according to their vote, can't get much fairer than that can you? However the problem is, in the past, a poorly performing government may lose donations and henceforth the ability to run a good campaign, thereby losing the election as they rightfully should. Now, that same party will always have more money than even its closest competitor, therefore giving them an unfair advantage over the others (almost two times as much in the case of the last election) in the

advertising and propaganda field that helps so many people make up their minds when they get to the ballot box. And guess what; they will not even have to work for it by hounding people for money, a process which is the most tedious and hated of all jobs in the political realm. But hey, now maybe those leaders' dinners won't have to be so darn pricey, and the common folk who can't afford \$300 a plate will actually get to see their country's leaders. Don't hold your breath, though.

Another thing that I feel I should point out to those 55% of you that care enough to peel yourselves from your couches and take 5 minutes to cast a ballot is this, your vote will now cost you \$7 per voting family member, remember it's \$1.75 per vote each year after an election ( $\$1.75 \times 4$  years). Yes you will now essentially have to pay for your right to vote. Just because no one collects the money as you walk through the door, you will still pay for it through your taxes; look at it as kind of a hidden tax on voting. Voting tax, darn I knew there was something they hadn't taxed yet! What's next a recycling surcharge to recycle the ballots after they are counted?

At any rate, I can't think of a better place for that money to go then to the same people who can't seem to handle it wisely in the first place. On the bright side maybe now people will make a more conscious and careful effort about deciding who they will vote for. I mean its \$7! That can go a long way. I could buy a Happy Meal, a Slurpee, and still leave enough money to make a phone call. And that would go further to help and satisfy me than my present MP has. At least I get a toy with my happy meal; my MP has never given me any toys! Maybe I can use the money for the phone call to call and ask him if he has any. My guess is if enough people see it the way it is, paying to vote, our election turnout numbers from the past may actually start to look good.

So there it is! I have found a way to lower government spending and save the taxpayers money. It is simple - the less people who vote, the less money these guys will get, the less it will cost taxpayers, the more money we will save.

However, maybe it would be money better spent if we all paid the \$7 and sent these monkeys packing next year, look at it as a positive investment in the country.

#### Reference

Rubec, Stephanie. PM promises public cash for financing, *Ottawa Sun*; Thursday June 5, 2002. Online Edition.



## VOICE CLASSIFIEDS

### Looking to buy, sell, or connect?

The Voice offers FREE classified ads for all AU students. Ads are posted on the Voice website, and in the pdf version of the paper.

Take advantage of the free Voice classifieds section today - email [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org).

Advertisements for products, services, or from non-students are eligible for low Voice rates. Inquire at [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for a rate sheet.



## TEENS' CARS

Wayne E. Benedict



Wayne's first car after the five-car pile-up

Voice readers have followed the Academic progress of Wayne Benedict for several years. On July 30, 2003 [v11 i31], Wayne wrote of his decision to finally become a full time AU student, and of the vehicular sacrifices he was prepared to endure in order to fund his new vocation.

At that time, Wayne had no idea of the opportunities that would come his way just a few short weeks later. Read Wayne Benedict: The Harried Student [v11 i36] to find out what happened next...

Can you remember your first car?

Mine was a 1968 Pontiac Grand Parisian. I was the proudest sixteen year old in

Vancouver when my father bought it for me. I tried to spiffy it up however I could on a shoe-string budget and it was great until I totalled it in an unfortunate accident (see *The Voice* Vol. 9, Issue 34).

My next rides were of similar vintage: a 1968 Cutlass Supreme; a 1970 Buick Wildcat; a 1970 Pontiac Lemans; etc. For all of them I did my best to keep them visually appealing and reliable, if not economical.

Of course I wasn't alone in my endeavours, as my teenaged friends were also trying to become and remain drivers on very limited budgets. Jason Campbell ([www.jgrooves.com](http://www.jgrooves.com)), a very good friend of mine, bought his first vehicle in September 1982—a broken-down old truck. He tried to keep it from falling apart beneath him by spraying it with several colours of paint. In hindsight it was a pile of junk; but to him, it was "his truck."

I found myself reflecting on those times today as I lay on my side in the dirt brush-painting my "new" 1987 Volkswagen Golf in the driveway of my home. I was literally laughing out loud as I watched the rust-paint run down the side of it. I felt like a 38 year old teenager, painting my beater so that it will last a few more months (in this case, a few more years). It actually looks pretty good if you don't approach closer than twenty yards or so; any closer and you begin to make out the brush-strokes dried into the finish.

For the past several years I've contemplated taking my university studies to a fulltime level and recently my wife and I have decided that I should take the plunge. As part of our preparations for life



Jason (left) and Richard Campbell in front of Jason's first vehicle





Wayne's "new" car: rust paint on all but the door

after fulltime work, I sold my 3/4 ton Ford pick-up with a 7.3l diesel engine and bought a Golf 1.6l diesel car. I'm hoping that it will last me through my impending years of study (fingers crossed).

If going back to school doesn't make me feel young again, keeping my new old car road-worthy certainly will. I'm contemplating cutting a hole in the floor-boards under the driver seat so that I can give the engine a helping-hand going up hills—Fred Flintstone-style. Well, I'd better be off now. I have to get to the auto wrecker's before it closes. I need cheap parts and more cheap parts... Better pick up some more rust paint while I'm out too...

## VOICE MERCHANDIZE INTRODUCTORY SPECIALS!



The same Voice mugs and fleece jackets that you have seen pictured as prizes on the Annual Reader Survey page, are also for sale at great introductory prices.

Own your own Voice logo merchandize, and let everyone know that you are a student of Canada's premier distance education provider!

The Voice coffee mug is a white fired ceramic with a two colour Voice logo on both sides.

The Voice logo fleece jacket is soft, cozy arctic fleece in moss green with navy trim and a matching navy embroidered Voice logo on the breast. It features a full zip front, slash pockets, and a drawstring waist cord. Worn alone, it's perfect for spring and fall, and with a wind breaker on top, it's a light, cozy winter jacket.

Because these jackets are a special purchase, we only have the one colour combination, but they are available in roomy small, medium and large sizes. Don't delay, quantities are very limited.

Mugs are just \$8 each, and the jackets are \$35 each until the end of January. Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for information on shipping costs and for ordering information.



[www.ausu.org/clubs/aupss](http://www.ausu.org/clubs/aupss)

*AU Psychology Students' Society*

## DON'T COMPLAIN IF YOU AREN'T WILLING TO FIGHT *Sandra Moore*

Published on February 19, 2003 [v11 i08], *Don't Complain* is a call to arms for students who are worried about changes to education funding, but who sit back and hope that things will improve. At the time of the article, the AU tuition hike was merely proposed -- now it's a reality. Did students do enough to let the government know that extraordinary tuition increases would be an issue affecting how they vote?



*They hesitate, and they regret, and sometimes they petition; but they do nothing in earnest and with effect. They will wait, well disposed, of others to remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret.*

*Resistance to Civil Government*  
-Henry David Thoreau

I have recently heard a lot of complaints from my fellow students about the proposed 7.3% tuition increase at AU. So many students are ready and eager to complain about this proposed increase, but not one student has ever asked me "What can I do to keep this from happening"?

As with any political problem that affects the masses it is hard to motivate people to stand up for what they believe in. Everyone is so convinced that if the government does not want to fund education, healthcare, etc., then there is nothing that can be done about it. Wrong! We live in a democratic society, which means that the people have a voice, but that voice is not very audible to the government if only a few people ever speak up.

On Wednesday February 12th the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS: Athabasca University Students' Union is a member along with the other 3 Alberta universities) and the Medicine Hat College Student's Association put on a thought-provoking, informative forum to educate the general public about the rising costs of tuition. I, along with David Stevens from the MHCA, promoted this event to the 60,000 + population of Medicine Hat and area. David also promoted it for two weeks at the college to the students. We were both extremely disappointed when only 15 people were in the audience to listen to the speakers talk about the effects of rising tuition. Where were the hundreds of students who attend Medicine Hat College or the 300+ AU students who live in Medicine Hat?

As students, as parents, as aging citizens, what will happen to us if tuition increases keep rising at the alarming rates they have been over the past 10 years (209% in Alberta since 1993)? Think of what it is costing you to go to school. If you are in a 4-year Arts degree program you incur over \$20,000 in debt before you convocate. If you want to go on to grad school, tack on another \$10,000. Now if you have a child who will be attending post secondary education in 10 years, it will cost them close to \$42,000 to obtain that same Arts degree if tuition rises another 209%. Do you think you are putting enough into RESP's every month for your children? In order to afford to send your children to school in 18 years, you need to be putting away \$200 per child a month. Keep in mind though they will still have books to pay for, and living expenses. Of course, they can buy second hand books while living on Kraft Dinner and donations from campus Food Banks. Who says you have to be well nourished to learn???

What about our aging population? All of those baby boomers that comprise a good proportion of our population are rapidly nearing retirement age. That means we will be left with a shortage of skilled professionals, especially in the rural areas. Alberta is already predicting a rapid decline in their workforce in the next 10 years. The United States is also feeling the pinch of a shortage of trained professionals, but they are doing a pretty good job coming up here to Canada to entice our Canadian trained professionals to take higher paying jobs down there. It's hard to entice professionals, such as doctors and teachers, to stay in bigger

Canadian cities, let alone expect someone to go to a rural area to practice. The pay will be considerably lower and the chance for continued learning and advancement slim. Can we really expect a new Canadian doctor with a huge student debt to take a minimal rural position, when he/she could easily go to the States or the bigger Canadian cities and earn more?

Some universities are proposing to differentiate the cost of some of their programs. Differentiating tuition is the practice of charging different fees for different programs, based on the cost of delivering that program and the supposed earning power of graduates of that program. The University of Calgary is proposing an increase in the faculty of law from the current \$4,944 to \$10,700 a year by 2005/2006. How many law students do you think will be able to open their practices and dedicate themselves to lower paying levels of law like environmental law with a debt like this?

The cost for one year in medicine at this same university is proposed to rise from \$6,992 to \$14,000 by 2005/2006. With student debt like that we might as well forget about medical students becoming general practitioners, they'll need to specialize in order to have their loans paid off quicker. Economists know that the more you charge for something the less people will want it. Are more people in Canada going to decline the years of debt associated with a post secondary education? What will this do to Canada?

Why does Canada even charge tuition? Other economically developed countries like Germany, France and Ireland as well as some economically underdeveloped countries do not charge tuition. They see providing post secondary education to people as a boost for their economies and as less of a drain on their social assistance levels.

Canada's economy relies on highly educated and skilled workers. As our workforce is becoming more in demand of skilled workers able to adapt to the increasing use of technical equipment, and our cost of tuition to obtain the necessary skills to fill these positions is going up and up forcing students to abstain from a post secondary education, our economy is left with a lot of empty positions and a lot of unemployed workers unable to fill them.

In the last 10 years the federal government has cut 7 billion from higher education and training. This, along with provincial funding cuts, is what forces universities to jack up tuition. Mind you though, there are some universities that are run by power hungry administrators, unconcerned with educating their current students, but rather on building up their universities to have them internationally recognized.

What can you do besides complaining as you watch tuition rise every year? Watch the Voice for upcoming tuition events at local universities across Canada. Write or email your local MLA, your provincial Learning Minister, your premier, your MP, even Jean Chrétien. Let them know that you are concerned about the lack of funding by both the provincial and federal governments toward education. Education will soon only be available to those who can afford it here in Canada. Are you prepared to let that happen?

*Below are a few websites that will give you more insight into the rapidly increasing cost of tuition and the rapidly declining level of interest governments have to fund it.*

- ❑ [www.tuitioncause.com](http://www.tuitioncause.com) - Council of Alberta University Students
- ❑ [www.freezehefees.ca](http://www.freezehefees.ca) - Council of Alberta University Students
- ❑ [www.cfsontario.ca](http://www.cfsontario.ca) - Canadian Federation of Students

## Contact information for Provincial and Federal Government offices related to education:

### Paul Martin

Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa K1A 0A2  
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[pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

### Alberta Learning Minister

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Phone: 780 427-2025  
Fax: 780 427-5582  
E-mail: [learning.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:learning.minister@gov.ab.ca)

### British Columbia Learning Minister

Christy Clark  
PO Box 9045 - STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2  
Phone 250-387-1977  
Fax 250-387-3200

### Manitoba Minister of Advanced Education and Training

Diane McGifford  
Phone 945-3720, 0418  
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[minaed@leg.gov.mb.ca](mailto:minaed@leg.gov.mb.ca)

### Newfoundland Learning Minister

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### Northwest Territories Learning Minister

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### Nova Scotia Learning Minister

Jamie Muir  
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Phone (General Information) 902-424-5168  
Fax (General Enquiries) 902-424-0511

### Nunavut Learning Minister

Manitok Thompson  
Tel: 867-975-5600  
Fax: 867-975-5605

### Ontario Learning Minister

Gerard Kennedy  
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Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2  
Telephone: (416) 325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514  
Fax: (416) 325-6348  
Email: [info@edu.gov.on.ca](mailto:info@edu.gov.on.ca)

### Prince Edward Island Learning Minister

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### Quebec Learning Minister

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Télécopie : (418) 646-7551  
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### Saskatchewan Learning Minister

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## OVER EXTENDED?

Karl Low

### *The proposed new AU course extension policy, and what it means to you.*



On March 12, 2003 [v11 i11], Athabasca University was about to decide on a new course extension policy that would require all extensions to be purchased 30 days prior to the course end date. Due to protests by AUSU, AU chose not to implement the new policy at that time, but the option has been left open. AU students need to understand how the course extension system works, and ensure that when possible extensions are purchased early. Otherwise, the policy may still be changed, and AU students may lose the ability to purchase last-minute course extensions forever.

The Athabasca University Academic Council will soon be voting on a motion to require students to give 30 days advance notice for an extension. Naturally, this notice will have to be accompanied by the cheque for the extension fee.

What this means for students is that if you thought you were able to finish your course on time and toward the end of your contract realized that you happened to be wrong for any reason, be it a family emergency or simply an increased workload at your regular job, you can be left with nothing at all to show for your course fees.

On the other hand, if a month before your contract end date you still happen to be unsure whether you'll need the extension or not, you'll have to pay for it, just in case, even if you find that you don't need it.

The reasoning that is being given for this is that most students only extend their courses in the last four days of the month, and this places a huge workload on the administrative staff trying to get all of the extensions processed and the tutors notified. This means that, tutors are finding themselves in what is called "overload", where they are handling more students than they are contracted to. Naturally, faculty and tutors are concerned about this, and worried that Athabasca University may be using the overload provisions to simply avoid contracting (and paying) the tutors for the number of students that they are actually expected to be handling at any one time (**ed: *The Voice* has been informed that tutors receive a quarterly pay correction for overload students - tutor's concerns about the overload situation are related to workload management, not lack of pay.**)

Of course, the reason most students extend their courses in the last few days of the month is that they are trying like hell to finish their course on time and not have to pay the extra \$127 that it costs to extend. Students often don't know if they'll need an extension until just before the end of the month – especially in those courses that do not have final exams.

This policy will actually go directly against Athabasca University's stated mission, which reads, "Athabasca University, Canada's Open University, is dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to, and success in, university-level studies and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide." When compared to any traditional university student population, a large ratio of Athabasca University's students are mothers. The flexibility AU offers is a boon to these women. The new policy aims to take some of that flexibility away.

Since AU has no policy about rescheduling an exam after your contract date, if something happens on your exam day, be it a child is sick, or even the weather simply makes it impossible to get in (and with as many regions as AU students are in, the weather is bound to be bad somewhere) then extensions can be a student's only option. While the folks at Athabasca University are often reasonable about this sort of thing, not having a formal policy means that students are not guaranteed the ability to reschedule exams beyond the end date even in emergency situations. Extensions serve as a (costly) safety net for these types of occasions.

No longer though. Should this motion go through, if an extension wasn't purchased early, the unfortunate are just plain out of luck. Thanks for the cheque, please try again.

AUSU, in cooperation with the CUPE (the union that represents the tutors and faculty) are working to address this issue. They have come up with a number of alternative plans that the university could use to enable them to deal with the difficulties extensions are causing while not taking away the ability for distance education students to deal with changing circumstances.

The best option, from AUSU's point of view, is for the administration of AU to recognize that extensions tend to be requested late in the month and rework their systems to deal with it internally. This would mean automating notices to tutors and ensuring that tutor blocks are not completely full on the tenth of the month (the last day in which new course registrations are possible) so that there is room for students that extend.

In addition, ideas that will also be presented to AU include creating a formal policy of allowing a student to pay a fee and then reschedule an exam past the normal contract date, and of providing students a discount if they extend their course before the tenth of the month in order to encourage spreading out the workload.

At the very least, students should not be made to schedule an extension before they would even have scheduled a final exam. Thirty days is a significant chunk of a six-month course. To assume that all students would know by then whether an extension will be required is unfair.

As students, we need to let AU administration know that this proposed change simply isn't acceptable. Call your tutors to let them know how you feel about AU taking away an important safety net, and ask them to talk to their supervisors about it. You can also call the registrar's office and express your feelings about this directly with the administration. If we do not speak up, they will assume that nothing is wrong.

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*A native Calgarian, Karl is perpetually nearing the completion of his Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Information Studies. He also works for the Computer Sciences Virtual Helpdesk for Athabasca University and plans to eventually go on to tutor and obtain his Master's Degree.*

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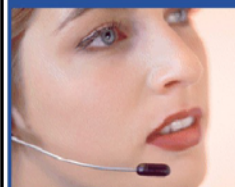


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Published on January 15, 2003 [v11 i03], *Feminotzi* explores the precarious middle ground inhabited by the modern, equality-seeking woman who is uninterested in the politically motivated micro-management of language, society and lifestyle which is advocated by some modern feminists.

I'm not a feminist (at least not in the more negative sense that word has taken on over time), but I do believe in as much equality as can be had between two such disparate species as men and women. What turns me off feminism as a system of belief and practice are the rabid, man-hating proponents who would go so far as to alter the spellings of words, simply because they carry the "man" stigma.

1. That is overkill.
2. Ladies, if you are that threatened by something so simple as the use of the word fireman, for example, perhaps it is you that has the problem.

In my opinion, this is an identity and sexuality issue that seems to have nothing to do with words (like fireman), and therefore can't be solved by changing those words. Indeed, I have believed for quite some time that such a hard line in regard to some matters of encouraging female equality has led to more problems than it has solved. I have met a number of men who are afraid to speak totally freely, because they think I'll emasculate them for using the man word, in any way, shape, or form.

Fear is not the way to solve a problem. Fear builds more stress. Fear builds more separation.

Changing people's attitudes to a healthier way of thinking, is not going to begin well by making people nervous. And it is attitudes you have to change, not words. When the attitudes change, those words that need altering will also change. Besides, it does not hurt someone to ask nicely that another person please use a different term of address. I've seen some ladies go after a man with an axe because he didn't use Just The Right Word. There is something to be said for saying please, you know.

Let's talk specific issues for a moment.

### **Better Half**

I don't like this expression. I realise, as I've said previously, that it's just an off-hand expression to most who use it. I still don't like it, because it carries the implication that within a relationship, one party is More Equal Than The Other; it carries the implication that one gender, one human, is somehow more valuable than another. It is, in a word, condescending.

This has very little to do with gender equality, and more to do with people equality. Neither party of a relationship is worth more to the relationship, or the world, than the other. While one person may carry more weight in some areas than the other, the balance will even out. If one party is willing to take on more than the other, and all parties involved are willing, that's fair. That's part of the relationship deal, anyhow.

All things being what they are, it is impossible to expect total equality in any way, between two people of any gender, preference, race, religion, or habit. It's impossible. Period.

What isn't impossible, is to expect fair and equal treatment.

## **Pretty Party**

We seem to take a dim view of men adorning themselves, while at the same time, we not only allow it in women but also expect it, and in many cases demand it. Not only that, but we seem to denigrate those trappings that have traditionally been seen as male-dominated (tattoos), or those traditionally seen as female that men now bear (earrings, though long ago it used to be a standard thing for men to have earrings of some sort).

Lest we forget: it is the males of most species who carry the trappings of beauty. Witness the male lion's mane, the male peacock's tail, and the males of many antlered animals.

I don't think it's too much to ask that we not only accept adornments in men, but also encourage them – or at least not condescend to them when they make the attempt.

## **The Punching of Girls**

Do I agree that physical violence is okey-dokey? Hell no. No one should be smacking anyone else around, for any reason whatever. Period.

But this is where my opinion on the matter tends to tick some people off: If a woman hits her man, I believe he's got every right to protect himself. If people want equality, they should accept it on all levels, and not be hypocritical about it. No, I certainly would not want someone to smack me upside the head, but if I hit someone, I should jolly well accept the possibility that I'm going to get just as good in return.

## **We're In The Army Now**

In many ancient cultures, and in modern ones (including some we - in our cultural ignorance - might think would not allow it) women served in whatever form of military there was. Women, in some cases, were the sole members of a fighting force. In some countries, mandatory military service does not just apply to males; it also applies to the women. That's fair.

Here's how I see it...

When a country goes to war to either protect themselves or defend their beliefs, the whole of that population is made up of both men and women. It - the homeland - is a woman's home just as much as it is the man's and I don't believe that it should just be the men who are sent off to die for their nation. If a nation has mandatory service (or Selective Service, as exists in the United States) for males, it should also include women. If it does not have mandatory service, it should still allow those females who are willing, to pick up a rifle and trot off to Whoknowswhereland, to fight for kith and kin. Some people will even tell you that they believe there is no more vicious fighter than a woman, particularly if she's a mother who has to defend the life of her child.

## **Give Give Give Me More More More**

A lot of women talk of how they wish their (male) mates would do more nice, romantic, or spontaneous, things for them. Of course we all want to feel special, but this little game works both ways, whether you want to believe it or not.



Ladies, there's nothing wrong with you doing something special or romantic for your (male) partner. Just because it isn't traditionally done, doesn't mean a man wouldn't want that special dinner, or a new book, or whatever it is he finds nifty. The onus cannot always be more on one partner than the other. This goes back to the equality issue. If you want fairness, you have to be fair. Sometimes there's a lot of credence to the saying that you have to give, in order to get.

Just to illustrate the point: My aunt once kidnapped my uncle after work on his last day before his vacation, and took him to Disneyworld. Isn't that neat? He thought it was, even after the girl at the Tiki Hut asked him (in her very southern accent) where he kept his sled dogs. (We're all Canadian up this way, don't forget; but you still have to go pretty far north to find sled dogs.)

What can I say to sum up? If you want fairness, be fair. If you want equality, treat others equally. Special treatment, in some areas, should come because you as a person deserve it, not because you're the little woman or the big man.

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*Lonita has been an AU student since early 2002, and is studying towards a Bachelor of General Studies in Arts & Science. She enjoys writing, creating websites, drinks far too much tea, and lives in hopes of one day owning a plaid Cthulhu doll. The most exciting thing she's done so far in her lifetime is driven an F2000 racecar, and she's still trying to figure out how to top that experience. Her personal website can be found at <http://www.lonita.net> and what you can't find out about her through that, you can ask her via email: [lonita\\_anne@yahoo.ca](mailto:lonita_anne@yahoo.ca)*

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## **NEW COUNSELLING RESOURCE: HOW TO WRITE A TERM PAPER**

**Originally published February 5, 2003 [v11 i06]**

Julia Nielsen of AU's Counselling Services Unit [CSU] has created a fantastic resource to help students prepare term papers, available at:

<http://www.athabascau.ca/html/services/counselling/writing>

The interactive slideshow website takes students step by step through the process of planning, researching, writing, editing and documenting a term paper. Also included are links to sites describing the most popular citation formats and other writing help resources.

The site itself is beautiful, easy to use, and very quick to load.

Whether you are new to writing term papers, or you have some practice already, the advice contained on this site can help you improve your essay writing style, and avoid many of the simple mistakes students often lose marks for. The format of the site also makes using it quite fun!

This resource is the latest of several, excellent CSU web projects, which include the new Math and English assessments [See *News From your University* in this issue.]. All of these interactive web sites require a Flash plug-in for your browser, and links are provided at the menu pages so that you can easily download it. The Flash player is a one time download, and allows you to use many other websites as well.

Other study related resources of the CSU can be found at:

<http://www.athabascau.ca/html/services/advise/conserv.html>.





## THE VOICE FICTION FEATURE

Sara Kinninmont

### Paradise (of the air-conditioned gated-condo-community variety)

*Paradise*, published on August 27, 2003 [v11 i35], is a biting vignette of a day in the life of the modern bourgeois summer time-share dweller. Known to Voice readers as a poet, Sara published only one short-story in *The Voice*, and it was selected by a Voice reader for inclusion in this year-end issue.

Dusk is falling and the gated condo community appears to be deserted. The beach is empty; her sands blemished and scarred from another day of fun in the sun. All that remains poolside is someone's dog-eared copy of the latest Nora Roberts best-seller. The smell of barbecue wafts in the air. The fathers are out on their lanais firing up their grills after a long day of ritualised male bonding, either poolside or on the golf course. They carefully watch the charcoal while swigging on tins of Budweiser, from a six-pack "the wife" picked up at the market in Kihei - the king of beers for self-dubbed kings of the grill. Typically, the men are shirtless despite their pelts of back hair and paunches that hang over the waistbands of their Bermuda shorts. The majority of them have moustaches à la Tom Selleck; this is Maui after all. Magnum would be proud, except that his many disciples fall far from the mark. None of them come close to exuding that same playboy charm, which in no way deters them from trying.

The wives are all wearing sarongs and too much makeup. Despite being in Hawaii, many of them show no signs of a tan for all of them are scared shitless of aging. Many even forgo facial expressions in an effort to avoid wrinkles. There is the odd sun goddess who spends all the daylight hours soaking up the rays with blatant disregard for the evil effects of the sun. In fact, she is often seen putting on tan amplifier; no sunscreen for this girl. She knows she looks better with a tan, and no one can convince her otherwise, not even her dermatologist. Needless to say, when it comes time to fly back to the mainland, she goes

home with skin that looks about ready to be reincarnated into a Louis Vuitton steamer trunk.

By dusk the kids are all planted in front of the TV watching Nickelodeon or MTV, chugging Cherry Cokes, and picking at their peeling skin, a result of the inevitable sunburns they got by ignoring their mothers' pleas to "please put on sunscreen." The combination of excessive amounts of sugar and lack of scheduled activities fuels misbehaviour and hyperactivity.

This typical dusk scenario is being acted out in condo 18. Mr. Smith is out on the lanai carefully watching various meaty hunks darken on the grill. He calls into the condo, "Hey Babe. Can you take the rest of my Buds out of the freezer and put 'em in the fridge?"

Mechanically putting the beer into the fridge, she looks at her zombie-like kids sprawled out on the floor in front of the television. "Not so close to the TV. How many times do I have to tell you? Are you drinking pop before dinner?"

"Dad said we could," they respond in unison.

Mrs. Smith brings her husband another beer. "Hon, did you tell Bobby and Susie they could have pop before dinner?" He grunts as he prods the steaks with the super-astro tongs he bought in Lahaina. "Hon, are you listening?"

"Uh huh."

"Did you tell Bobby and Susie they could have pop before dinner?"

"Come on, Babe. We're on vacation."

"Fine," she says, and lights up one of her Marlboro Lights. She takes a few deep drags and stares off into the distance. "Did I tell you Burt and Marla want to meet up with us at the Aston later for the hula show?"

She flicks her ash off the edge of the balcony, completely unconcerned about the hibiscus bushes below. "I keep forgetting this is their first time here. That kind of thing is still exciting for them. What do you think Hon? Do you want to go?"

"Sure."

"I guess it could be fun. Maybe if Marla has one too many Mai Tais she'll go up on stage when they call for volunteers. I'd give good money to see that. Especially if she wears that hideous tangerine wrap dress she tries to pass off as a Diane Von Furstenberg, when I know for a fact that she got it at Winners."

She sprawls herself onto the lounge chair on the far side of the lanai. "Do you think it's okay to leave the kids alone?"

"Babe, they'll be fine. You have to loosen up a bit. We're on vacation." He pours more of his "secret sauce," which consists solely of HP sauce and some chili powder, on his 24oz T-bone steak. "Burt played a round today. I'd love to know how the course is treating him. I'm just getting raped out there. I shot a ninety-seven yesterday."

"Uh huh. Did you see Aileen at the putting green? Ugh, that woman has no class. She can barely play the game, which isn't surprising since I've heard she and the pro certainly aren't working on her technique, at least not pertaining to golf."

"Babe, you don't know that for a fact."

"I do know that if I was married to Stan, I'd be on the prowl for young virile men too."

Without thinking she begins to bite her thumbnail, totally unaware of the fact she is ruining her French manicure. "Funny how money and power will make almost any man

attractive. We, of course, know what he saw in her. Ex-Dallas Cowboys cheerleader turned pseudo-catalogue model? Yeah sure, fifteen years and twenty pounds ago. Anyway, she sat herself down next to me at the Jog 'n' Java this morning after I dropped the kids off at day camp. She talked my ear off. 'Tiffany this and Nicholas that.' Talk about living through your kids. All she does is brag about them. 'Well Tiff is going to New York on a special ballet field trip, and our Nicky is quickly becoming a football hero.' She has no reason to be so high and mighty about those kids. From what I hear, precious Tiffany hasn't eaten a square meal without running to the bathroom with her fingers down her throat in years, and Nicky is no sweetheart either. It's common knowledge that he knocked up his girlfriend over spring break last year when they were in Cancun. Stan even paid to have things taken care of, if you know what I mean."

"Stan never mentioned anything about it to me."

"And tarnish his golden boy's reputation. Come on, Hon. What would he say? 'My boy knocked up his latest girlfriend. Please pass the guacamole.' Not likely. If that boy doesn't get smart he's liable to do it again. I've seen the way he and that DeLucca girl have been sneaking around over the last week. You'd have to be blind not to. As soon as Stan and Aileen have teed off the first tee, she's on her way over to their condo. Most mornings when I walk by the curtains are closed. It's not like they're even trying to be discreet about it. God knows what's going on in there, but that doesn't stop everyone from trying to guess."

"Well, boys will be boys. Babe, do you want another wine cooler?"

"Actually Hon, bring me a light beer. I'm on diet, remember?"

Gazing off to the west, taking in the last of the sunset - the perfect sunset, like on those cheesy Hawaiian tourism brochures with captions reading, "Come experience paradise" - she thinks about the two teens fooling around.

If she was truthful, she couldn't blame the DeLucca girl. Although she'd never admit it out loud, even with half a dozen martinis in her, Nicky had certainly done some growing up in the last two years. She'd always had a weakness for football players. In fact, the adolescent sports hero had starred in a few of her fantasies in the past year. There'd been a few mornings last fall when, after dropping the kids at school, she'd returned home, made herself a Stoli martini and retired to her bedroom with her drink, her trusty Hitachi Magic Wand, and memories of that rock hard body on the beach the year before.

"Mom."

"Mom."

"What?" She sighs, exasperated. Her reverie broken. She turns, looking back into the living room.

"Mom, can we go shopping in Lahaina tomorrow?"

"And then can we go to Snorkel Bob's and pick up a mask and fins?"

"Please, Mom. Can we?"

"I'll discuss it with your father." Her husband drops a big bag of Doritos in front of the kids to pacify them. He comes out onto the lanai with a fresh Bud for himself and a light beer in an icy tumbler for her, closing the sliding door to block out the aggravating sound of the TV.

"Babe, did you notice that there's an oriental family staying in the Carter's condo?"

"I know. I was talking to Patsy at the pool bar this afternoon. She says that Pete lost a bundle in tech stocks. Poor fool. He never did take your advice and see our broker, and look where it got him? If only he'd listened to you, Hon."

She fumbles with her cigarettes lighting another one. "Of course, Pete and Janelle are saying they couldn't make it this year because her mom's sick, but Patsy assures me it's because Pete almost lost his shirt. Janelle won't let him sell the condo either. It was her

dad's, and she refuses to sell it no matter how dire their predicament. So they compromised and are renting it out."

She pauses and blows almost perfect smoke rings into the sweet night air. "Apparently, the stress of it all got to Janelle. It seems she's turned into quite the little lush. From what I hear, there was a messy incident at the country club back home. The bartender tried to cut her off and she caused a huge scene. I can only imagine. Anyway, Pete had to kiss some serious ass to get back in the manager's good books. So long story short, Janelle is at a 'spa' in Arizona 'unwinding'."

Snorting unflatteringly, she hands what's left of her smoke to her husband. He lets it hang from the corner of his mouth as he flips the steaks. "It doesn't take Dionne Warwick's psychic network to know that divorce is on the horizon for those two."

The sliding door opens. Bobby comes outside holding up a piece of skin the size of his hand like a prize. "Look, mom. I peeled this off my back," he says with a wicked grin.

"That's disgusting Bobby. Get that out of my face this instant." Pleased with his mom's reaction, he skips around holding it above his head proudly like a banner. She picks up the latest copy of Cosmo magazine, which she left on the table earlier, and starts flipping through it, blatantly ignoring her son's obnoxious behaviour. She tries to concentrate on an article entitled, *How to get rid of Cellulite: Once and for all*.

Realizing his mother won't rise to the bait, he goes in search of a new target. The shock value having worn off, the skin is chucked over the edge of the balcony to join the cigarette ash among the hibiscus. "What're you doin' dad?"

"I'm busy cooking dinner, Bobby. Why don't you go inside and play with your sister?"

"She's boring. All she wants to do is watch that stupid Justin Timberlake special on TV. He sucks."



Bobby spots a lone gecko trying to hide along the balcony railing. Stalking his prey, he tiptoes as quietly as possible in an effort to catch it. With uncharacteristic agility, he catches the poor creature. With a sly grin, he heads back over to his dad. "Dad, I don't think I want steak for dinner."

"Well, I've already started cooking you one, bud. So that's what you're havin'."

"I'd rather have this," he says with a devilish grin, and throws the poor gecko onto the grill, to its inevitable demise. He promptly runs back into the condo, shutting the sliding door behind him.

"That kid can be such a pain in the ass."

"What was that you said earlier, Hon? 'Boys will be boys.'" She looks up for a split second at her obviously frustrated husband, as he attempts to extract the charred gecko remains from under the grill.

"Dinner's almost ready. Will you see if the kids are ready to eat?"

"Sure. But don't get angry when they don't clean their plates. I wasn't the one who let them fill up on chips and pop before dinner."

Opening the sliding door, she is assaulted by arctic cold air. "Holy shit! Susie, how high do you have the a/c cranked? Turn it down and come set the table for dinner."

Her daughter remains motionless. "Susie, did you hear me? Susie?"

"She won't answer you mom."

"She will if she doesn't want to spend the rest of the vacation grounded."

"She's decided to change her name to Christina. She thinks she's Christina Aguilera."

"Well, daughter of mine. I don't care what your name is. You have until the count of three to get off your butt and set the table. One, two..." Susie gets up in a huff and stomps to the

kitchen. Bobby sits on the floor with a pleased smirk on his face. "Don't just sit there. Go help your sister. Go get the potato salad out of the fridge."

"But Mom..."

"No but moms. Just do it." Turning to her husband, "Whoever coined the phrase 'the joys of motherhood' must have been drunk."

With the table finally set, the Smiths sit down to dinner. Mr. Smith places the now well-done T-bone on his plate, a plain grilled chicken breast on his wife's plate, a hamburger on Susie's plate, and the charred remains of the gecko on Bobby's plate.

"Gross, dad. I'm not eating that."

"You said that's what you wanted for dinner."

"I was kidding."

"Too bad. It's that or nothing."

"I'm not eating it."

"Fine. Then go to your room."

"Mom," the boy whines.

"Bobby, listen to your father." The boy stomps off to his room.

Pleased that her gross little brother had been banished, Susie begins to devour her burger. "Mom..."

"Not with your mouth full. Do I have to tell you a thousand times?"

Swallowing, "Mom, can I go to Madison's house to watch a DVD later?"

"Not dressed like that you can't."

"What's wrong with it? This is what Christina wore in her last music video."

"You look like a slut. No daughter of mine is going out in public like that."

"Mom, that's so unfair. Dad..."

"Susie, you listen to your mother."

The Smiths watch their daughter storm from the table, and hear her bedroom door slam. Mrs. Smith sighs and takes a sip of beer. "Hon,

this chicken is delicious. Really tender."

"I'm glad you like it, Babe."

Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for fiction submission guidelines.

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## Centre of Science staff work to ease stress for lab students



It's July, and the lazy, hazy days of summer are still a long way off for staff at the Science Lab at Athabasca University's main campus. As is the summer routine, about 45 students will descend on the lab during the course of July to complete intensive lab courses in biology, microbiology, chemistry and ecology. That means back-to-back, eight-day workweeks for lab staff will be the norm for the next while.

"Our summer science sessions create a very busy and hectic period for our science lab staff," noted lab coordinator Robert Carmichael. "It does put pressure on us to present the best face of the university." However, he added, that pressure is nothing compared to the stress experienced by the students themselves.

"They're very, very apprehensive," he said. "It's quite intimidating. They see this quite thick (work) book. We say it can be done in three days and they can't quite see it."

Carmichael recalls one student who was overwhelmed by it all, and spent the better part of one precious course day in the infirmary. "She looked soooo pale, very, very ill. I'm sure it was the stress." In another instance, a student asked how the course she had just completed would be reflected on her transcript. After a brief investigation, it was discovered the student hadn't yet enrolled in the course.

"We get a lot of people here who have never been in a town smaller than 20,000," added science technician Elaine Goth-Birkigt, noting many students don't quite know what to expect. "And often those are people from (Canada)." One student brought with his family with him. They rode a taxi to Athabasca from Edmonton International Airport, and were surprised to find Athabasca doesn't have a shopping mall.

Birkigt reflects that the intensity of courses at AU mirrors the intensity students will encounter afterward, and a number of individuals who studied science at AU have gone on to become doctors, nurses, chiropractors.

According to Carmichael, students burn off stress in different ways. Some whoop it up at local establishments. Others leave the lab every day, completely spent mentally, emotionally and physically. "(So far) students are much more serious this year," he said. "They went back to their hotels and worked hard, and studied and slept."

AU staff members do what they can to help alleviate student tension. Making accommodation recommendations, providing transportation to and from motels, and offering social opportunities for students to relax and unwind is just part of the process. "(Summer session) does provide new opportunities to meet interesting people from all over the world," Carmichael said. "We appreciate that so these few things we do don't seem too difficult."

And, he added, "There's a sense of satisfaction from seeing students come in scared and see the smiles of satisfaction as they leave having completed courses. "



Students from a recent chemistry class

# INVISIBLE WOMEN

Stacey Steele



Published on September 10, 2003 [v11 i37], *Invisible Women* targets an uncomfortable contradiction in Canada's progressive reputation on the treatment of minorities, and violence against women. Falling between the cracks, ineligible for the special services reserved for immigrants, aboriginal women in Canada are frequently the victims of violent and sexual crimes, and yet little attention is paid to this alarming problem. Their stories are haunting...

In Canada we are educated about racism. There are laws protecting minorities and Canada is a role-model in international human rights issues. We are a multicultural and sensitive society who believe in equal rights for all, fairness and understanding, right?

Can you tell me who Eva Tasup, Calinda Waterhen, and Shelly Napope are? How about Yvonne Johnson? Helen Betty Osbourne? I'm sure not many can. How about squaw, chief, brave, Pocahontas, redskin or Indian? I'm sure almost all of you can tell me what those names mean.

The discrimination against North America's First Nations people is rampant. You can see it in the justice system and all levels of government, through the abuses brought on by residential schools (the last one closed in 1996), through media and entertainment (either by culture co-opting or stereotyping), sports teams (would Atlanta rename themselves as the "Crackers"?), and mainstream North American misconceptions. But perhaps the lowest rung on the ladder of society is the Native woman.

In the fall of 2001, in the quiet farming community of Tisdale, Saskatchewan, a twelve year old girl was gang raped by three men in their mid twenties. In May of 2003, one of the men, Dean Edmundson was found guilty of sexual assault after three days of jury deliberations. He was not taken into custody and was free until sentencing in June. His lawyer, Hugh Harradance, expressed disappointment over the verdict. On June 27, 2003 the other two accused, Jeffrey Kindrat and Jeffrey Brown were found not guilty. Defence lawyers described the girl as a sexual aggressor who consented to the encounter and suggested she didn't tell the truth in court (Globe and Mail). Shocking isn't it? Outside of Saskatchewan, this story garnered very little publicity. In fact my local paper only gave it a few inches near the last page. The little girl was Native and her attackers were Caucasian. Although the obvious question is in everyone's minds I will say it anyway: would the outcome have been different if the victims' and attackers' races were reversed?

There are some questions to ask about this trial. Why were there no aboriginal jurors? In fact the jury was comprised mainly of white males. Why was the girl's history of abuse brought into evidence? And most appalling why would the jury accept Jeffrey Kindrat and Jeffrey Brown's explanation that they gave her beer and then had consensual sex with her, although the child stated that they offered her a ride in a truck, plied her with alcohol and then raped her? The systematic stereotyping and victimization of native women was crystal clear in this case.

What about in February, 2001 when two aboriginal sisters (Corrine McKeown and Dorreen Leclair) were stabbed to death in their own home. Very sad, but it happens I suppose. But does it still just happen when 911 is called five times over a period of eight hours?

The following details come from a CBC News report (October 29, 2002) that detail the events from that evening:

*The first call: The first time the women phone 911, the call is disconnected. When the operator phones back, one of the women says someone had been shot. Police are dispatched to the address, but Dunlop [the attacker] gives a fake name and McKeown makes no complaint.*

*The second call: The women are instructed to phone the police directly.*

*The third call: The women report McKeown has been stabbed by a man violating a restraining order. The operator tells them to solve the problem themselves, and says they are partly to blame.*

*The fourth call: It's harder to understand the sisters, although one can be heard saying "please help me." The operator promises to send police, but no car is dispatched*

*The fifth and final call: When a 911 operator answers, faint sounds from one or both of the sisters are drowned out by barking dogs. The operator hangs up and dials the house. William Dunlop answers the phone and tries to convince the operator everything is fine. It is now believed that both women are dying, or dead, while he talks. The operator sends a car to the house, but the sisters succumb to their stab wounds before police arrive.*

The sisters lived in Winnipeg's north end, an area with a large aboriginal population. Some critics argue that this would not have happened if the calls were made from a more affluent neighborhood. It is also interesting to note that McKeown had a restraining order against Dunlop (an ex-boyfriend) that was supposed to be backed up with zero tolerance protection.

Who are Eva Tasup, Calinda Waterhen, Mary Jane Serloin and Shelley Napope? They are the victims of John Martin Crawford. In 1981, in Lethbridge, Alberta, he killed Mary Jane Serloin when he was 19. Her murder was vicious, with bite marks scarring her body. Crawford was charged with manslaughter and was given a sentence of ten years. In 1996 he was convicted of the rape and murders of Eva Tasup, Calinda Waterhen, and Shelley Napope and sentenced to life in prison. He had murdered four women and is the suspect in many other missing women/murder cases. At the time of his conviction, in the ranks of Canadian serial killers, only Clifford Olsen outranked him in the number of lives taken.

Calinda Waterhen, Mary Jane Serloin and Shelley Napope all had families who loved them. In fact, their families had reported them missing to the police and received no answers until the women's naked bodies were found outside Saskatoon. So why would the second ranked serial killer in Canada get no attention from the media? Outside of Saskatchewan, the story garnered very little attention, and eventually became forgotten in that province too. Warren Goulding's book *Just Another Indian- A Serial Killer and Canada's Indifference* tells the story and offers insight into why the media and public at large has paid little attention to these murders. As for the book's title, Mary Jane Serloin's sister commented to Goulding that "It seems any time a Native is murdered it isn't a major case. It's just another dead Indian."

Yvonne Johnson is the only Native woman in Canada to be convicted of first degree murder. She was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for twenty-five years. In giving her that sentence the justice system has her ranked with Paul Bernardo, Larry Fisher, and the aforementioned Clifford Olsen. Yvonne Johnson was charged in 1989 with her part in the beating death of Charles Swark, an alleged pedophile, in Wetaskiwin, Alberta. Along with her sentencing in 1991, her common law husband, Dwayne Wenger, received a sentence of ten years and another man, Ernest Jensen, the same sentence of ten years for their involvement in the beating.

Why is it that John Martin Crawford, just eight years earlier received a manslaughter charge and was sentenced to ten years for the brutal rape and murder of Mary Jane Serloin while Yvonne Johnson will be in prison until she is 52 years old (if granted parole), long after her children have grown up? A man died, that is the main tragedy, but another overlooked tragedy is that Johnson received a grossly unequal sentence compared to her co-accused. Her book, *Stolen Life- The Journey of a Cree Woman*, written along with Governor General Award winning author Rudy Wiebe, highlights the life of a woman whose stature in society was prearranged even before she was born.



Nineteen year old Helen Betty Osbourne was abducted and brutally raped in 1971, near The Pas, Manitoba. The RCMP officers assigned to the case had concluded that four men were responsible, Dwayne Archie Johnston, James Robert Paul Houghton, Lee Scott Colgan and Norman Bernard Manger, though it wasn't until 1987 that Dwayne Johnston was charged with her death. The other three men went free. It took sixteen years to bring some sort of justice for the Osbourne family. The story of the investigation and the town that covered up her death was made into a movie in 1991 called *Conspiracy of Silence*, in one of the rare instances any media has paid proper attention to the victimization of First Nations women.

So are we an enlightened, accepting society? If media outlets gauge their stories on the public's appetite, then why aren't they reporting on these gross injustices? It could be that the media and society at large are no better than hate groups such as the KKK. We hear what we want to hear, and ignore the voices that are striving to be heard. In not giving these stories and issues the coverage they deserve media outlets are breeding ignorance and fostering violence.

## References

**CBC News (October 29, 2002).** *Winnipeg 911 Murders.* Online at:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/indepth/firstnations/winnipeg911.html>

**Globe and Mail (June 27, 2003).** *Two acquitted on charges of sexually assaulting pre-teen.* Online at:  
<http://www.globeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20030627.wrape0627/BNStory/National/>

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## CHANGES TO THE UNDERGRAD GRADING POLICY AT AU!

Originally published February 5, 2003 [v11 i06]. See Debbie Jabbour's *A New Grading System* in this issue for a detailed explanation of how the new system affects AU students, and instructions on how to calculate your GPA.

This is to advise you of an important change in the undergraduate Grading Policy at Athabasca University.

Athabasca University has approved a new Alpha/4.0 grading scale for undergraduate studies effective January 1, 2003. The grades that students achieve will be stated, on transcripts and in student records, as alpha grades on a scale from A to F. Grade averages will be expressed as Grade Point Averages using the 4.0 grading scale.

These changes in grading scale are part of a province-wide initiative in Alberta.

Undergraduate courses that began before January 2003 will be graded using the percentage grading scale.

For a complete statement of this Athabasca University policy please go to:  
<http://www.athabascau.ca/policy/registry/gradingpolicy2002.htm>

**If you have questions please contact me.**

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# CHRÉTIEN ACTION FIGURE!

Laura Seymour



The ultimate Christmas action toy? Perhaps not, but a conversation piece to be sure! Published on January 8, 2003 [v11 i02], *Chrétien Action Figure* might have been the result of a night terror brought on by holiday over-indulgence, or maybe it was simply a Christmas wish for an Canadian leader with a modicum of personality. Either way, it's hilarious...

We need to make a protest. We need to do something about this! We can't sit by and let this happen! "What", you ask? Why, so many world leaders have an action figure and Canada is, laughably, without one. We must get on the bandwagon and be counted in! What will our American neighbours think if we don't?

Recently on KTLA (Los Angeles TV) a story aired about the new George W. Bush action figure. The reporter stopped a few people on the streets and asked what they thought about this doll. He held up a doll

that wore a suit. Then he pulled the string and out came excerpts of some of George W. Bush's speeches. People listened to him bumble over a word or two and laughed at his mistaken pronunciation. What fun! Some of the passers-by said they thought the doll was cute, while a few others said that it was in bad taste (Heavens! Can you imagine the doll that would have been created if Al Gore had been President?). Well anyhow... the hubby then turned to me, eyes wide and asked, "gee shucks, why don't the Canadian people have such a neato doll?" (Okay, you got me! He didn't really say this!)

The Real Canadian Leader Doll would have to have certain attributes to be believable. First, when it speaks French it would have to speak with a natural looking mouth. Then, when it spoke English, one side of its mouth would have to shrink up to the side. Hmmm, that may need hydraulics. We may have to increase the price to cover that! Then he'd have to have some exciting speeches for the children to listen to. I'm still working on that part but here are a few contenders:

*"Yes. You may land the planes in Canada. You're welcome President Bush."*

*"I welcome Her Majesty The Queen to Canada."*

*"I disagree with the !#&@ honorable member!"*

Okay, maybe these aren't as exciting as telling the world that we are at war with terrorists, but that's about what we have to go with, folks.

We have to be careful as we assess this doll's market potential. After all we are talking about a money venture.

If you want a doll that will bring on money, how about Osama Bin Laden. That doll is a major cash cow! Of course we're not talking downtown Calgary for sales. Osama's doll comes with a neato beard and a long white burnoose to wear. Kids delight in the realistic guards and jeep that come with it. That doll is selling off the shelves in the Middle East.

So too is the President Saddam Hussein doll. After all why wouldn't it? It has a peachy keen moustache and a couple of outfits to wear – one of them has a thingamee to sling across his chest for bullets, just like Rambo used! Iranian children just adore cuddling with it as they nod off to sleep and dream of war with the world and being leaders of a country who can fool people with a favourite game of Hide The Nukes.

So, I think we need to start working on our action figure. When children in Canada cuddle up with their official Prime Minister doll, they will have to dream of being in office more than once, wearing a nice suit daily, ummmm... help me out here!

Maybe the extras with the doll can include an optional change of suit? Hey! Maybe this action figure has a limousine! YEAH! Kids like props. Maybe if we get a reworked Malibu Barbie car? Of course, we'll have to hear, "Sold separately!" blaring out from the TV ads.

Now we need to be realistic on price. I don't have access to the prices for the Saddam Hussein or the Bin Laden dolls so I think we need to do a bit more research. Anyone have any price suggestions? Now, now, let's be nice. After all he's bilingual and ummm...wears a suit.

Maybe CBC will do a TV series about this special Canadian moment "A Gift to Laugh At" ? Or would this be another Canada Post moment?

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## **The first Master of Nursing degree program to be delivered fully online in Canada receives approval from Alberta Learning**

**Athabasca, May 9, 2003** – The Centre for Nursing and Health Studies at Athabasca University announces government approval of the first Canadian Master of Nursing (MN) program to be delivered completely online. Although other universities have offered partially online programs, Athabasca University is the first to offer a fully online format of study that does not require an on-site residency. This gives graduate students "anytime, anywhere" accessibility to complete a course-based or project-based Master of Nursing program.

Dr. Margaret Edwards, Professor and Coordinator of Graduate Programs for Athabasca University's Centre for Nursing and Health Studies explained, "While there has been much discussion in the media regarding the shortage of front-line nurses, there is also a shortage of Master's-prepared nurses who can provide nursing leadership and teach in basic nursing education programs."

The Athabasca University MN program was developed to meet or exceed professional standards for nursing excellence. Dr. Jeanne Besner, President, Alberta Association of Registered Nurses said, "This program is a revolutionary step in graduate nursing education and demonstrates the international leadership of Alberta's nursing educators." Dr. Besner added, "It offers nursing students another option to pursue the knowledge needed to enhance the services they offer to the public and their profession."

Athabasca University has earned a respected international reputation as "Canada's Open University" with over 30 years of delivering distance and online undergraduate and graduate programs to students throughout Canada and around the world. This "open university" concept maximizes flexibility for online course delivery regardless of place of residence, work schedules, family commitments or transportation constraints. This MN program now allows nurses to complete their Master's degree without having to leave their jobs or home, unlike other programs that include mandatory site-based components of study. Current students in the Master of Nursing degree program hail from all provinces and territories in Canada and internationally from Saudi Arabia, Australia, Bermuda, Germany, United Arab Emirates, United States and Germany.

Dr. Francine Girard, Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer, Calgary Health Region, congratulated Athabasca University for the new program and said, "This program will provide diverse opportunities for nurses to advance their nursing knowledge."

The Master of Nursing program offers two streams of study: Advanced Nursing Practice and Generalist. The Advanced Nursing Practice stream prepares Nurse Practitioners to provide greater public access to primary health care services. Students in the Generalist stream are able to tailor their program to meet their personal and professional interests.

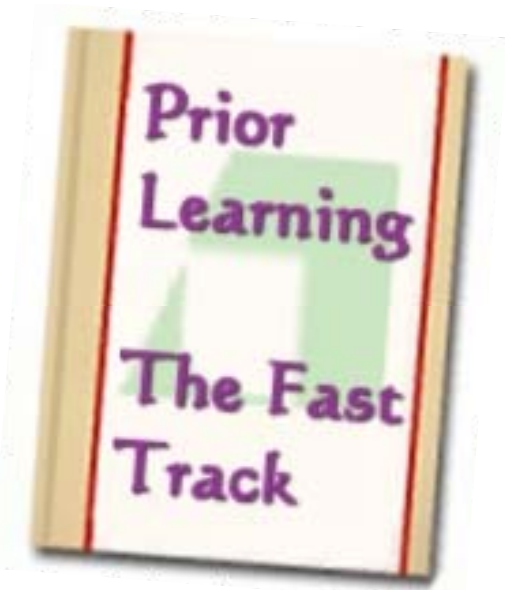
Registration information and course descriptions are available online at [www.athabascau.ca/cnhs](http://www.athabascau.ca/cnhs) or contact the Centre for Nursing and Health Studies at 1-800-788-9041 local 6381.

**Contact: Dr. Margaret Edwards, Professor and Coordinator, Graduate Programs, Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, Athabasca University, 1 Athabasca Avenue, Athabasca, AB T9S 3A3, Phone Number 1-888-500-3055, [marge@athabascau.ca](mailto:marge@athabascau.ca)**

## WORTH A SECOND LOOK

Teresa Neuman

### Prior Learning Assessment And Recognition A Lifetime Of Learning.



Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition recognizes the experience and skills of mature students who bring a diversity of learning experiences to their university education. In some cases, prior learning and job skills may be granted university credits, and for a skilled person, a university degree may only be a few courses away. On April 23, 2003 [v11 i17], Teresa Neuman completed a PLAR assessment, and wrote about her experience. Also see the end of this article for an update from Teresa...

Life experiences provide many learning opportunities, and the skills from this learning are applicable to work or education. Workers are returning to school to gain standing for professional advancement. Athabasca University students can access the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process to receive credit towards Athabasca University degrees and diplomas, reducing the time it takes to earn their degree. This optional process provides students the opportunity to identify past learning and present it for recognition

towards formal education. In the adult education field, this process is considered to be an idea whose time has come (Young qtd. in Sansregret, 9).

When I enrolled at Athabasca University in the Bachelor of Professional Arts (Communications Studies) Undergraduate Degree program, my academic advisor suggested that once I had completed the challenge for credit process and had my previous diploma evaluated, I could submit a PLAR portfolio towards 30 further program credits. If I chose to use the PLAR assessment process, I could obtain my degree in as little as 10 courses. It seemed unbelievable, until I started investigating the theory and processes behind PLAR.

PLAR is a method of evaluating prior learning. Susan Kemper observes that learning can occur in the classroom, on the job, and through personal experiences and activities (Kemper qtd. in Sansregret, 7). In the book, *Prior Learning Assessment: The Portfolio*, adult educator Marthe Sansregret presents a clearer definition of the PLAR process. "Prior learning assessment is defined as the process by which an individual identifies learning acquired at different times in his life in various places and by different methods in order to eventually receive official accreditation by a reputable learning institution" (Sansregret, 13). Usually, PLAR refers to learning outside of the academic institution, but it can include prior post-secondary learning that has not been evaluated for credit for any other diploma or official accreditation. PLAR is not awarded based on years of work, taking workshops, or for writing and publishing. It is a method of assessing how life experiences link to the courses in a person's chosen area of study. Sansregret observes that PLAR can apply to anyone, of any age, or social, religious, and economic background who wishes to review their life experiences to plan their future and possibly receive academic credits (5).

Athabasca University recommends assembling a PLAR once some learning outcomes of the student's program are achieved. Having successfully completed some classes in my program and having challenged as many classes for credit as I could, I knew that I had reached the point where it was time to assemble my PLAR portfolio.

Students considering PLAR should read Athabasca University's web site where a comprehensive FAQ and overview of PLAR are provided. Athabasca University recommends that students purchase a copy of Sansregret's book *Prior Learning Assessment: The Portfolio*, prior to starting the PLAR process. It is not a



requirement that this book be purchased; a portfolio could just as easily be assembled without it. Further, students can access a portfolio development class, *Psychology 205 – Prior Learning Assessment and Portfolio Development*. I opted not to take the class, but I did purchase the book. It was helpful in assembling the PLAR portfolio and I probably would have missed some details had I proceeded without it.

The initial steps of the PLAR process caused me to reflect on my life's work, what I had learned, who I was, and how my attitudes from these experiences became defined. I had to determine how my life's experiences were applicable to my course of study. I ripped apart boxes to find pay stubs, transcripts, and proof of sports and leisure activities spanning over twenty years. I had to determine how these materials applied to who I am now. As a starting point, I created a detailed biography of my life and defined my educational goals. I then assembled my portfolio and wrote the essay for assessment required by my program. This process took three months to complete. The PLAR process might take less time for other students; it is worth taking time to complete the portfolio to your own level of satisfaction.

Outside of the academic environment, employers and unions are starting to examine PLAR. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB) views PLAR as a method of providing employers a means to maximize the potential of current and future employees. (SLFDB website) The Board, which is an advocate of building a learning culture in Saskatchewan, (SLFDB website) believes that the benefits of PLAR can apply to both small and large business. As part of its mandate, the Board provides leadership in areas of training and socio-economic development in the areas of Career Education, Promotion of Training Partnerships for Aboriginal People, Workplace Literacy, and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. The Board includes increased profitability, higher employee satisfaction, and efficient employee training as potential benefits from the PLAR process. With time and money in short supply for employers, the PLAR process could help employers respond to current and future skill shortages and access the non-traditional labour pool (SLFDB website).

PLAR is still under study in Saskatchewan, but the benefits of PLAR in the workplace are becoming clear. Resources and financial support must be available in Saskatchewan before PLAR can be fully implemented. More information on PLAR and the final report for pilot projects in Saskatchewan are available at the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board web site at <http://www.sfldb.com>.

Assembling the PLAR portfolio has been an interesting exercise and I await the comments of the evaluators. I condensed a lifetime of learning into a binder for evaluation for credit. The PLAR process identified the skills that I bring to my work and studies and showed that I continue to learn both in and out of the classroom. To me, that is what education is about.

**UPDATE:** The PLAR Assessment Committee awarded 7 out of a possible 10 credits towards my degree. The committee recommended classes that filled gaps in my course plan and suggested that I join a professional association like the International Association of Business Communicators. I have incorporated these suggestions into my studies. When I started my PLAR project, I wasn't sure what outcome to expect. I gained credit towards my degree, but more importantly, I learned that my past experience provides skills that are transferable to any work environment.

***Teresa Neuman***

**Reference:**

Prior Learning Assessment: The Portfolio. Marthe Sansregret. Hurtubise HMH Ltd. (Montreal): 1993. ISBN 2-89045-972-1

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*Teresa is enrolled in the Bachelor of Professional Arts Program, Communications Studies, at Athabasca University and is enjoying returning to school after 18 years. Teresa enjoys writing, union activism and gardening, and lives and works in Regina, Saskatchewan, with her partner Kevin and son Adam.*

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# A PORTRAIT OF AUTISM

Amanda Lyn Baldwin



Amanda Lyn Baldwin works with autistic children, and has gained a perspective that few of us ever will have. Beyond the noises, ticks and uncommunicativeness, autistic children live in another world that is a mystery to all but them. Published on March 26, 2003 [v11 i13], *A Portrait of Autism* provides a glimpse inside that world...

Also see [Autism Treatment Revealed](#), published in *The Voice*, April 2, 2003 [v11 i14].

*From down the hall I hear a noise that sounds like a half grunt, half moan; almost like the revving of a 1981 Ford truck. Upon sight, the destruction of this child radiates throughout the room. Everything is scattered around every corner; from the blue gel filled teething toy, to the soiled diaper beside the bathroom door. The smell of the room is twenty times more putrid than the sight. The child has managed to strip his clothing, a red and white pair of cotton pants and a matching cotton shirt, from his body and he now sits soaking wet in the middle of his plastic-sheeted single bed.*

*Two deep-set blue eyes gaze at me as if asking for help. "Take away these horrible feelings!" he cries to me. But it is all in my head; he cannot speak. He crawls to the floor and getting on all fours tucks his tiny legs underneath his body. His head comes down, as if to rest on his hands, only he begins ferociously banging his forehead against his clasped hands. He is banging so hard that the whole of his body is vibrating each time contact is made. I make no attempt to stop him, since he is not in immediate danger, and after all, anger (if that's what this is) is a healthy form of expression. When the tantrum is finished two hands come up and cover his eyes and the groan, that awful groan, begins once more.*

*My eyes come to rest on the self-destruction evidenced by the scrapes and bruises on his forearm. The bite marks on his hand have turned into dark purple and blue splotches surrounded in a rash that has obviously been brutally scratched. His legs are much the same way, but one foot is turned out which causes his walk to have a slight limp, almost a bump, as if his knee did not bend at all.*

*I take him in my arms, and try to calm him but it is no use. It is no use because he does not hear me. His diaper is changed and once again he allows me to dress him, this time in a pair of sweatpants that resembles the colour of a bowl of pea soup and a fleece sweater that is as green as the rainforest with a bright yellow stripe, which adds a ray of sunshine to the bleak world in which this child exists. I take his feet, tickling them a little, and cover them with two gray socks, but they are removed when I return with his brush. His golden hair is thick. Strands of it are coated in ketchup from this morning's eggs.*

*I take one hand, the left one, and lead him into the kitchen where I seat him in his special chair. In the kitchen is a hot bowl of tomato soup, one of his favorites. After fastening the little silver snap on his bib, I hand him a small spoon and he begins the ritual that has become his mealtime. Spoon after spoon continuously go into the mouth, most of which are half emptied from the ferocious speed. The amount of food in his mouth becomes too much and the thick orange liquid begins to spill out; but the spoon doesn't stop.*

*When the spoon is finally returned to me, the soup is all over the bib, face, and hair of this infantile child. However, a grin finally extends from one ear to the other and two eyes are open wide in satisfaction. The hands, which are also dripping in tomatoey goodness, begin to bang on the table in demand for more of the tummy-warming treat.*

*When we are finished it's back to the bedroom, which has been cleaned and now smells like bleach (mixed with the child's excrement), and into the bathroom to remove a whole bowl of soup from the child's hands, face, and hair. For every inch toward the child the faded blue facecloth gets, the child moves twice as far backward. It's a challenge, but eventually the bruising and redness of the face are visible beneath his overgrown mass of hair.*

*My task being done, I leave this boy to his own devices, of which he decides to sprawl out on the floor and chew on the gel teething toy. This boy is 13 years old. He has a cognitive age of less than 12 months. This boy is autistic.*

Autism is a neurological dysfunction that usually appears within the first 3 years of a child's life. The exact features of the dysfunction as well as any definitive cure are unknown. The prevalence of this disorder is approximately 1 in 500 people (STA). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – Fourth Edition (DSM-IV), the primary diagnostic tool of mental disorders, uses the following characteristics to diagnose autism (STA):

- Impaired ability to engage in social interaction
- Impaired communication (including general language) skills
- Specific behavioral patterns (i.e. Preoccupation, resistance to change, adherence to non-functional routines and stereotyped and repetitive behaviors such as head banging)

As well as the possible presence of the following (STA):

- Special abilities
- Unusual fears/anxieties
- Short attention span/impulsivity
- Self-injurious behaviors
- Abnormalities of mood
- Odd responses to sensory input
- Uneven profile of skill development
- Abnormal patterns of eating/drinking/sleeping

The most successful method for treating autism and the related disorders is through a structured and integrative behavioral therapy plan. "Through effective intervention, autistic individuals can be assisted to fulfill their unique potential and lead happier and more productive lives" (STA).

#### Reference:

(STA) Society for Treatment of Autism. *What is Autism?* 3/19/03. Available at: <http://www.sta-ab.com/what.htm>.



## MIDDLE STATES ACCREDITATION

Contributed by *The Insider*

Originally published April 2, 2003 [v11 i14] and April 9, 2003 [v11 i15], this two-part article details the ongoing AU project of preparing for accreditation in the United States. The work continues on a comprehensive document to be presented to the accreditation board in 2004...



Spearheading AU's Middle States accreditation efforts are Nancy Parker (liaison officer), Sandy Sales (committee recording secretary), and Ken Collier (committee chair).

*Athabasca University is proceeding with its efforts to achieve full accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, an accomplishment that will help facilitate AU's expansion into the US market. Ken Collier, chair of the steering committee, provides an update.*

### WHY ACCREDITATION?

Athabasca University recently achieved "candidate" status with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on the path toward accreditation in the USA. A representative committee and 11 task forces are working toward that goal. AU staff work on organizing the needed documents and resources. "But why are we doing this?" some have asked.

In 1999, the Strategic University Plan update process committed AU to enter the US higher education market. Research and consultation led to the conclusion that US accreditation would be needed. American and visiting students to the USA are reluctant to enroll at unaccredited institutions. Credit transfer and general academic recognition hinge around accreditation.

Diploma mills and fly-by-night operators cloud the American education climate. Potential students are suspicious of universities with whom they are not familiar. Though the Canadian scene is less concerned with accreditation, an additional benefit of US accreditation will be that AU will also be better recognized in Canada and internationally, where concerns about diploma mills may be less prominent than in the US, but nevertheless a reality.

Accreditation goes a long way toward easing these fears. Dr. John Bear, who visited AU a few years ago (and whose best-selling *Bear's Guides to non-traditional degrees, degrees by mail and modem, etc.* mention AU favourably) makes the case for accreditation at: [http://www.degree.net/guides/accreditation\\_guide.html](http://www.degree.net/guides/accreditation_guide.html)

Though there is no formal accrediting body in Canada, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC, publisher of *University Affairs*) is exploring a full accreditation role, though its realization is both uncertain and many years off. AU, as a full AUCC member, could bring both experience and DE distinctiveness to this function, should it occur.

### WHY MIDDLE STATES?

The AU Executive group and the International Projects office explored US accreditors. Six American regional bodies do this work. They have similar, yet slightly varying, missions and criteria. Some have more experience with distance education and open learning than others. At the time of application, only two regional accreditation bodies accepted applications from institutions that were not incorporated in the US, and as AU wants to serve this market without creating a new infrastructure (as did the USOU) this reduced the alternatives significantly.



Middle States was chosen because it showed some understanding and active interest in Athabasca University's approach - both to distance education and to the accreditation process.

## **THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

Much can be learned about a university's own functioning through accreditation. This is not just an act of supplication to a distant - foreign - body. If that was all the accreditation bid amounted to, neither AU nor Middle States would be interested.

Rather, AU gets to see itself through somewhat dispassionate eyes. It also sees itself through its own utterances - how it states its own mission and goals, how it carries out its educational roles, how it explains itself to others, what practical deed it commits, and ultimately, what the implications of all those activities are. The accreditation process invites stakeholders to show their relationship to AU. Students, tenured academics, tutors, subject matter experts, administrative and maintenance staff and interested observers get to measure AU against recognized criteria. Middle States gets more experience with a distance education university. Middle States already knows other institutions with considerable DE approaches. The [Middle States web site directory](#) lists the variety of institutions they accredit.

They also have an interests in AU as a Canadian university to be accredited in the USA (they already have a few) and as a solely DE provider. AU's unique features, while eminently accreditable, also provide input to their processes that will surely meet many more DE institutions in the future. AU gains membership in this accrediting body and can influence its policies and directions through active engagement with other US and global higher education organizations.

## **GOING GLOBAL**

The accreditation theme does not stop with the US. AU already has projects and considerable experience in overseas education projects. Japan and China are two recent examples of countries where AU has or had contracts. The very existence of distance education, electronic communications and the capacities of the web allow the educational enterprise to leap over national boundaries. It was just a matter of time until education quality, standards, security and trustworthiness, administrative and practice questions moved beyond regional or national regulatory bodies.

Nonetheless, existing accreditors will have large influence on global education and DE rules, as well as the mechanisms to enforce them.

AU is already in the global arena, alongside very large players from Europe, the US and Australia. Southeast Asian DE bodies are also growing fast because their national populations' educational needs cannot be met by either current or forecasted higher education building in the foreseeable future. Offshore (including Canadian) DE capacity may very well play a big role in meeting this pressure.

Recent global education conferences took up this theme. One conference in particular, the OECD/US Forum on Trade in Educational Services (1), included key sessions on quality and standards, accreditation, credit transfers and other agenda items of importance to the AU internationalization projects (2).

Athabasca University [Middle States Accreditation Initiative](#) situates us firmly in the terrain of higher education and distance education on a global plane. The quickly unfolding context within which AU operates is known from the literature and sites mentioned above. The Middle States Accreditation Initiative is but a first step in becoming a recognized part of that context.

(1) Duepree, John L., Maisia E. Johnson and Marjorie Peace Lenn (Eds.) (2002). OECD/US Forum on Trade In Educational Services: Conference Proceedings, Washington: The Center for Quality Assurance in International Education.

(2) See, from another conference, [Dirk Van Damme](#).

## AU Bids Farewell To Alan Davis

Originally published August 6, 2003 [v11 i32]



*"It was such a laugh to stand up there and show another side of the university, and another side of myself, and to see people really enjoy it." - Alan Davis*

According to Alan Davis, he knew two things for certain that bitterly cold day about eight years ago when he interviewed for the position of Vice-President, Academic at Athabasca University. At the time, he was working as the Director of University Programs at Open Learning Agency in Vancouver, and had, more or less, applied for the job on a lark.

"I think all the signs were that, one, AU wouldn't offer me the job, and two, if they did, I wouldn't take it," he said.

Obviously, he was wrong on both counts. For his own part, it didn't take Davis long to realize Athabasca was where he needed to be.

"By the time I got back and thought about it a little bit," he noted, "I realized what the opportunity was. There was no question, in my experiences in distance ed., that AU has always been the top of the pile. It's a class act. If you're going to work in distance ed. in Canada, AU is the place to be. I knew there was a good opportunity for me in terms of career and growth, and I haven't been wrong. It's been good."

Davis and Athabasca University bid each other a fond farewell, officially, on July 25. As he departs to take up the Vice-President, Academic position at Niagara College in St. Catharines, Ontario, Davis and AU both look back on a period of his career that can only be called exceptional. According to AU president Dominique Abrioux, Athabasca University already misses Davis' energy, and commitment to innovation and to the University's mandate.

"Alan has always focused on improving student access to Athabasca University's services, and that has been such an important element in bringing the university to where it is today," Abrioux said. "My tenure has been defined by the amazing people who work every day to make Athabasca University extraordinary, and Alan has always been the finest example of that."

### **Appreciates AU's spirit for innovation ...**

Davis has always appreciated Athabasca University's willingness to try new things.

"Athabasca epitomizes everything the system should be trying to do to help people, no matter where they live, what their background is, no matter what their other commitment [sic] are. I think fundamentally, bottom line is we live up to our mission," he said.

"I very much believe in the open concept, the focus on serving students," he continued. "It's a very clear focus. It's about the students. Everybody's committed toward the goals of serving students and removing barriers. There's a lot of freedom here to find innovative ways to achieve that goal."

"It's not only a place that's open for students," he continued, "it's also open for staff to do all kinds of interesting things and innovate, try things out, but generally toward the same goal of trying to improve what we do for students."

During his term at AU, Davis says he's enjoyed his interaction with faculty, and the opportunity to support their research, their creativity, and to link that to the teaching. He is proud of the part he was able to play in the implementation of Prior Learning Assessment, articulation, and the launching of collaborations between

Athabasca University and universities and colleges all over the country. He's also proud of the courses and programs that have been developed during his tenure, such as the one-of-a-kind Master of Counselling program, and the highly unique Master of Arts-Integrated Studies program.

"That's been very exciting," Davis said. "It's been a period of growth and diversification of our programs at the graduate level and the undergraduate level and I've really enjoyed doing that.

"The first two years were just a buzz," he added. "There was loads to do and everything sort of worked out. The place started growing very fast. That's when we developed the whole Canada's Open University agenda and decided to seriously go national. We developed the linkage with Télé-Université, so we were a bilingual system, and that whole image emerged as AU as a national provider, in that first two years."

While Davis notes he'll miss the AU brand of "freedom to innovate," he also says he looks forward to facing the types of constraints and challenges that come with a "brick and mortar" institution.

"With all the freedom to innovate, it is kind of crazy here," he noted, chuckling. "It can be exhilarating, but it's also tiring. I think in Ontario there's going to be a different balance of that. The constraints help you not to get too far out on the limb. There's always a balance, it's just a balance that the balance is going to be slightly different there between what I can do and what I want to do, and what the guidelines are."

### **On the less serious side ...**

Davis, a former chemistry professor, will also miss the social opportunities afforded at Athabasca University, such as the annual golf tournament and the Christmas events. He is well known for his theatrical contributions to Athabasca University and the community of Athabasca, having become a regular in the chemistry science shows for kids staged by AU professor Dietmar Kennepohl, as well as the local readings of the Christmas Carol, and Monty Python tributes.

"It was such a laugh to stand up there and show another side of the university, and another side of myself, and to see people really enjoy it," he said of the Monty Python tribute events offered by AU staff in Athabasca and at conferences. "A lot of people really probably only remember me for that – which is just fine."



Many of Athabasca University's alumni will remember Davis as "the guy in the funny hat who read the bios" at Convocation. Students, staff and guests have all commented on Davis' professionalism and skill as he recited thousands of biographies about the Athabasca University graduates who crossed the stage to receive their parchments each June.

Although, he's passing on any official roles, Davis says he's not quite ready to give up Athabasca University Convocation.

"I'm going to keep suggesting to people I keep coming back for Convocation because there are people graduating over the next few years I'd really like to be here to see," he said. "I'm planning to try and get back to Convocation every so often, because it's just a great event to come to.

"I'll dress up," he added. "People seem to be amused by that. But I'll probably just sit at the back."

If there is one thing Davis won't miss, however, it is all the driving that has come with his position. At least twice a week for the last seven and a half years, Davis has driven back and forth between Edmonton and Athabasca to get to the airport, to attend a meeting, to mediate, or to perform some basic but essential task.

"The University's been very helpful with me to try to enable that," he said, "but it's a big chunk of your time if you go back and forth in a day or two days. Basically four hours is gone. And it's tiring and it's wearing and it's dangerous, and you haven't even done any work yet. I think if there's one thing I'm not going to miss it's getting out onto Highway 2 so often.

"It's hard being so dispersed," he added. "I think it's going to be a major challenge for AU to figure out how it's going to effectively operate with people going back and forth. It's a drain on people, it's a drain on resources, it's a drain on the environment."

He's done what he can to make the best of it, though.

"Sometimes it's productive. It's good thinking time. If you're giving somebody a ride, it's a good time to reconnect with them. Sometimes you can get on the cell phone and catch up on calls. Sometimes I'm literally counting the kilometers and looking at my watch."

Says it's time for a change ...

Davis has come to appreciate the Town of Athabasca's relatively harsh climate, and rugged beauty, and says his experience here has helped him feel like a "real Canadian at last." He will miss the people who have made him feel so at home, here; those who gave him furniture when he first moved, those who invited him to dinner, those who stopped to help when his car broke down by the side of the road. He holds warm memories of the fine AU staff members who have passed on in recent years, individuals such as Lori Oddson, Sue Rowlandson, and very recently, Dave DasGupta.

However, Davis says, it's still time to move on.

"I've been here seven and a half years," he explained. "My term comes up in a few years. It was a combination of thinking about where I'd like to be and what I'd like to do and what my future holds. It was while I was thinking about this that the job came up at Niagara College. It was a convergence of opportunity coming up and the thinking in my own mind of what I was going to do at the end of my time here.

"It wouldn't be good for me (to stay), or for Athabasca. I would have ten years in the same role, and I think AU is due for a change. I think they will do very well in their search for their VPA.

"I'd like to think I was the right person for the institution at the right time," Davis continued, noting he's aware of his own weaknesses, but he's also aware of his strengths.

"I'm not trained in education, the theories, the practices of education and distance education. But I know what I know, and I try to use due process to figure out the rest. I understand how to get the right information and talk to the right people to get the right information. I've been pretty open and friendly. I haven't been too dogmatic or open handed. And I think I've tried to ... (formalize) a lot of stuff that wasn't that well documented or in place before and I think people have appreciated that because I think it leads to transparency in decision-making."

He's looking forward to all the "surprises" he knows he'll find in Ontario, and he's confident he'll find good things too in Ontario's wine region - despite its proximity to Toronto's gritty brown skies.

"The people there seem to be extremely nice," Davis said. "They're very committed to the institution. Many of them started in Toronto and moved out and loved the place and will stay the rest of their lives. There's a real sense that people go to Niagara region and never leave because they just find it's the place they've always wanted to be. You hear that enough times to suggest that maybe that will be true for me, but I have no idea."



**Originally published February 19, 2003 [v11 i08]**

Building upon the success of last year's pilot of the introductory course of the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies program, the University of the Arctic (UArctic) has begun both web-based and classroom delivery of Contemporary Issues in the Circumpolar World. A recap from the UArctic news release provides details: Twenty-five students at eight sites around the circumpolar North are now enrolled in the online version of the course. Additionally, a second group of 15 students is taking the course in a traditional classroom setting at the University of Northern British Columbia, in Prince George. A second course in the Contemporary Issues unit will be piloted online later in this academic year.

The curriculum of these courses provides an opportunity for students to get a solid understanding of the most important challenges – and opportunities – facing the region today. The focus is on contemporary issues of sustainability, such as personal and community well-being, health and health care, political development, tourism, sustainable wildlife management, land claims, and indigenous rights. The modules in the courses also address key environmental issues, cultural diversity, women and gender relations, and economic diversification.

These courses bring together students from all across the circumpolar region, who share can share different perspectives on issues they face in common. Bringing together such diverse and distant institutions paves the way for new linkages between northern communities across the globe and future international collaboration on Arctic issues.

Athabasca University is providing online access to students in the course through UArctic's Arctic Learning Environment (ALE) portal. Funding for the online pilot, which will develop the delivery model for all later BCS courses, is being provided by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The government of Canada has supported the development of the curriculum of the core courses of the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies.

The eight institutions participating in the pilot are University of Greenland, Nuuk, Greenland; Bodø Regional University, Bodø, Norway; Yukon College, Whitehorse; Aurora College, Fort Smith; Yakutsk State University, Yakutsk, Russia; University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska; the University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George; and the University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland.

The Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies is a comprehensive curriculum program that provides a solid understanding of northern issues with a circumpolar perspective, an integrative approach that includes social and natural sciences, and local knowledge, and at the same time reaches a broad base of students.

The University of the Arctic aims to promote cultural diversity, language plurality, and gender equality while highlighting the partnership between the region's indigenous peoples and other northerners. UArctic is also focusing on the sharing of knowledge and history, as well as provide for quality discussion on contemporary issues related to the circumpolar North.

For information: [www.uarctic.org](http://www.uarctic.org)

# AUSU Job Posting

## Chief Returning Officer



The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) represents AU students and their interests. The Union strives for a fair and accessible election process for members to the Students' Council. To this end, AUSU is seeking a student to fulfill the role of Chief Returning Officer (CRO) for the 2004 AUSU General Elections.

### **Position Duties and Responsibilities**

The CRO's responsibilities, as outlined in AUSU policy, include arranging to receive, collect, and maintain ballots in a secure location, overseeing the counting of ballots with two (2) Scrutineers on March 21, 2004, notifying candidates of the results, and conducting the appeal process as required.

The CRO reports to the Executive Director of AUSU and AUSU Students' Council.

### **Selection Criteria**

- Applicants must be currently registered as an AU student.
- Applicants must be bondable.
- Applicants must have strong organizational and logistical abilities.
- Applicants must be able to analyze and apply policy to ensure a fair election process.
- Candidates in the 2004 AUSU General Election are ineligible for this competition.
- Candidates must be able to operate out of the AUSU head office located in Edmonton, AB.

### **Remuneration**

\$500 stipend

### **Application Deadline**

Saturday, January 17, 2004.

### **Apply to:**

AUSU, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor North Tower, 10030 – 107 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5J 3E4

Phone: (780) 497-3413 or toll free 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413

E-mail: [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org)



**WRITE FOR THE VOICE!**

Contact The Voice editor at [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for details on writing for The Voice. Provide a sample selection of writing and preferred genre.



## **CUTC 2004 (Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference)**

**January 22 - 24, 2004 - Delta Toronto East Hotel**

The Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference (CUTC) is about technology, innovative ideas, and the people who turn these ideas into reality. The Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference was started in 2000 by a few visionary students from the University of Waterloo, and is now in its fifth year and continues to be organized exclusively by university students from across Canada.

The last four conferences sold out, each bringing together approximately 500 students from 20 universities across Canada from every aspect of technology. The three-day conference features hands-on workshops and seminars featuring leading speakers from industry and academia. Filled with events such as ThinkTank, TechExpo, CareerExpo, TechPanel, TechShops and TechTours, all of this is made possible by the generous support of our past sponsors, including Bell Canada, Redknee, Microsoft Canada and IBM Canada Ltd.

We are excited to announce that Glenn Edens, Vice President of Research and Director of Sun Labs, will be a keynote speaker for CUTC 2004. Other speakers include David Kirk, Chief Scientist and VP of Architecture at NVIDIA, who will give a glimpse of future graphics technologies and explore the factors that make inventors out of engineers, and Ray Mowling, past president of Monsanto and currently the Executive Director for the Council for Biotechnology Information, who will be speaking about genetically modified foods.

For more information, visit our website at <http://www.cutc.ca> or contact [info@cutc.ca](mailto:info@cutc.ca).

### **Contributed By AU's *The Insider***

- **ISIMD 2004** - Jan. 5 - 7, 2004 - Istanbul, Turkey - "2nd International Symposium of Interactive Media Design." Details: <http://isimd2004.yeditepe.edu.tr/>
- **LEARNTEC 2004** - Feb. 10 - 13 - Karlsruhe, Germany - 12th European Conference and Specialist Trade Fair for Educational and Informational Technology. Details: <http://www.learntec.de>
- **ICDE 2004** - Feb. 18 - 21 - Hong Kong - 21st ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education. Details: <http://www.ouhk.edu.hk/hk2004/>

### **OTHER CONFERENCES**

- **WITHINSIGHT 2004** - January 21-24, 2004 - Ottawa, Ontario. Details: "A four day forum for the discussion and exploration of prominent Canadian issues based on an interactive format of communication with current Canadian leaders. Open to post-secondary students from all across Canada and from all disciplines. Applications are due by November 3rd." [http://www.withinsight.ca/en\\_site/index.html](http://www.withinsight.ca/en_site/index.html)

**Know of a conference that is not on this list? Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) with the details and we'll list it in Conference Connections.**

# classifieds

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more information.

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## RED DEER COFFEE GROUPS

Red Deer Athabasca University students meet at the Chapter's Starbucks on the last Thursday of every month. From 8 pm to 9 pm, the goal is to share ideas that will help us all be successful AU students and collectively resolve our specific issues. The next meeting will be on January 29th, 2004 due to Christmas holidays. Contact Ryan, [lowrystcol@hotmail.com](mailto:lowrystcol@hotmail.com).

## THE VOICE

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**THE VOICE ONLINE: [WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE](http://WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE)**

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