

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 27  
July 10, 2009

## From the Field

Digging in to Anthropology degree

## Eras in Education

Muses and modernity

## The Wrestler

At the base of Mount Olympus

*Plus:*

*Dear Barb, From Where I Sit,  
Sister Aurora, and much more...*



# CONTENTS

## WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

*The Voice* interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom-right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

## Features

From the Field: AU Student Digs in to Anthropology Degree... 3

## Articles

Eras in Education: Muses and Modernity ..... 6

In Conversation With: Ian McKay, Part I..... 8

## Columns

From Where I Sit ..... 10

Sister Aurora..... 11

Dear Barb ..... 12

The Mindful Bard..... 13

AUSU This Month ..... 15

## News and Events

Click of the Wrist ..... 5

*Voice* Vacation ..... 9

International News Desk ..... 18

## From the Readers

Letters to the Editor ..... 2

**The Voice  
Magazine**

[www.voicemagazine.org](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

1213, 10011 109th  
Street NW  
Edmonton, AB  
T5J 3S8

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email

[voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org)

**Publisher**

AU Students' Union

**Editor-In-Chief**

Tamra Ross

**Managing Editor**

Sandra Livingston

**Regular Contributors**

Hazel Anaka

John Buhler

Christina M. Frey

Barbara Godin

Bill Pollett

Wanda Waterman St.

Louis

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



## FROM THE FIELD

Sandra Livingston

**AU Student Digs In to Anthropology Degree**

Ask an AU student what the best thing about distance learning is, and one of the answers you'll hear most often is "flexibility," especially the flexibility to create their own learning environment.

That's something that AU student Barb Rielly knows all about—she's just spent six weeks learning Cultural Resource Management (CRM) at a field school, an experience that found her digging test pits and field-walking a Paleo-Indian site.

A student in AU's four-year Anthropology BA, Barb says the adventure started when a friend of hers "got to go on a field school a while back. Last August I was sitting there wishing I could go on such a wondrous trip, getting frustrated and feeling left out until it occurred to me to Google 'field school'.

"There are lots of them out there! I decided to go with a Canadian university for ease of credit transfer . . . so I got some applications out there (one cancelled out on me) and in

the end Trent came through and here I am, learning how to do Cultural Resource Management."

It sounds simple, but the hard work started long before the first excavation. "There were tons of forms filled out," Barb explains, "money spent, and fingernails chewed to the quick. I cleared off my schedule, took a leave from my job (AUSU), and left my home university texts on the shelf for the duration."

A typical day at the field school involves meeting at the archaeology center at eight in the morning. "We are divided up into groups depending on what we will be doing that week," Barb says. One week, for example, she was assigned to do surveying, "which includes field walking (looking for surface artifacts), and doing test pits (digging small square holes to see if there is anything manmade inside)."

Another week found her "doing mapping and the week before [was] excavation," she continues. "It changes because the field school is about learning a cross-section of necessary skills. We take short midmorning breaks, an hour at lunch, a midday break, and we finish at four p.m."

It didn't take long for her workboots to become one of the first things she reached for every day, and the experience was definitely hands-on, including "jumping on shovels and digging 30 cm by 30 cm holes down to subsoil."

"I also helped with some squares that showed coursing (stone foundation for a building)," Barb adds. "After a while, as the holes got deeper, if someone said they found something cool the heads would pop up like that old viral video 'Badger Badger Badger'."

Other finds included “Onondaga chert flakes and chunks, Collingwood chert flakes, a largish bird talon, and what may be the broken-off butt end of a ground stone tool. Of course, the field super found the ground stone axe and the projectile point,” she adds.

At the end of a long day in the field, modern comforts were never far away. “Because this is a field school located in a city, most of us head back to our lodgings for the evening (or home for local students) and sometimes we get together for meals,” Barb says.

Besides artifacts, one of the most important discoveries she made was that “no matter how careful you think you have been it is really easy to miss stuff, even pretty big things, because you can lose sight of the bigger picture.”



A major benefit of the field school experience is that it enabled Barb to meet a lot of people who are either in (or will be in) her chosen discipline. She also believes the field school will be an asset if she decides to pursue a master’s degree, as well as when it comes to a career—one of her final assignments is to “write a report such as ones that are submitted to the Ontario government after a stage 3.”

“I know it is directly applicable for getting work,” she says, “even as just a ‘shovelbum.’”

For other AU students who might be considering field school, Barb offers this advice: “Get a passport; there are a lot of cool overseas field schools and that way you can be ready should the possibility arise. Apply to several schools, as not all field schools get enough students to be run. Be prepared for a lot of paperwork,

lots of emails, and frustration as the various hurdles crop up. Field school is expensive so save lots of money.”

In Barb’s experience, taking part in a field school is more valuable during the later stages of a degree.

“Definitely towards the end,” she advises. “Much of the stuff I am doing I have read about and written exam questions on. Being familiar with techniques, tools, and theories comes in really handy.”

There are plenty of field school opportunities to suit a variety of degrees, but Barb is definitely sold on her chosen area.

“Archaeology is the study of past peoples through the study of their cultural remains,” she says. “Anthropology is the study of people. People do things for a reason, whether it’s clearing a field, building a pyramid, making gold and jade jewellery, or piling stones at the side of their fields. I like to try to figure out where people do things, why they did them, and study what they left behind.”

*Are you an AU student who’s participated in a field school? If so, and you’d like your experience featured in The Voice, just email [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org).*

## CLICK OF THE WRIST – Inheritance

When Luis da Camara of Portugal made out his will, he didn’t have any family to leave his estate to. But that didn’t stop him: he chose 70 strangers from the local phone book and put them in his will. Here’s a look at some of the other interesting ways people have spread the wealth.

### Flying High

This week, a British man who had inherited over \$72,00 dollars went on a spending spree—handing out wads of his newfound cash to strangers at a Spanish airport (alcohol reportedly fuelled his generosity).

### Luis da Camara

Along with Mr. Da Camara’s interesting way to choose his heirs, this article reveals several other unusual bequests, including one by the author Robert Louis Stevenson, who tried to leave his birthday to a friend.

### Modest Millionaire

2007 seemed to be a very good year for generous bequests—including one to complete strangers who received millions from “modest millionaire” John White. While Mr. White handed out \$2 million to hospitals and schools (one of which had never heard of him), family members only received \$40,000. The best thing? They didn’t begrudge the lucky recipients one bit.

### One Big Tip

For seven years, waitress Melina Salazar smiled through even the most cantankerous demands of customer Walter “Buck” Swords—even when he cursed at her and ordered food so hot it burned his mouth. All that smiling paid off, though. When Swords passed away, the patient waitress came into \$50,000 and a car.

## ERAS IN EDUCATION

Jason Sullivan



## Muses and Modernity

Education has existed for as long as people have been raised by their elders. The idea of formal schooling goes back thousands of years, yet school as a mandatory part of growing up is a recent phenomenon. For instance, many of us know of or can remember a relative who attended few or no classes because they were needed on the family farm.

Today the idea of “going to school” carries with it a certain weight, a sense of predictability and homogenization. Still, for a lot of people school was

(and may still be) a miserable, oppressive experience. This led the social theorist Michel Foucault to rhetorically ask “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prison?”

Society has changed since Foucault’s work titled *Discipline and Punish* was published in the mid 1970s, yet questions around education remain. Have students always found it to be an arid, institutional experience? Where does distance education fit in?

Being Athabasca University students gives us a unique opportunity to actively control our interaction with the subjects that we study. Perhaps the AU experience is, in some ways, closer to other historical educational periods, times when pupil and teacher each had ample opportunity to express their individuality. By using the sociological imagination (seeing individual experience within the social whole) we can take a look at education in different historical periods—and just maybe find some answers.

In ancient Greece a woman named Sappho was known far and wide for an all-female school of the arts on the Island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea. Sappho’s poetry and persona led her to be thought of very highly by various figures of her time. Plato, for instance, called her the “tenth Muse,” a high honour indeed considering Muses were immortal, angelic creatures.

Today Sappho is remembered for her poetry, replete with love and yearning for the students she taught. By modern standards, a teacher in love with her pupils is considered inappropriate to say the least. Yet in ancient Greece, where nonsexual, platonic love was prized as the highest form of solidarity, Sappho’s elegant expressions of desire for her pupils arose as naturally as the turquoise surf of the Mediterranean.

On the other hand, Sappho’s poems of yearning passion sharply contrast with stolid Socrates, who “urges the control and domination of the same desire that Sappho’s poetry celebrates.” Just as 2500 years later Foucault was questioning the passionless and oppressive nature of modern education, Sappho, by expressing her love for her pupils, embodied another way of learning, one where the subject itself became not only something that was to know but also something that was to be loved.

It is a matter of historical dispute whether Sappho had physical relations with any of her students. Today such desires make us nervous because they imply predatory tendencies. Recently an English schoolteacher named Leonora Rustamova published a book with references to her students and sexuality. She was

subsequently suspended, despite protest from her pupils who endearingly called her “Miss Rusty.” The purpose of her book was to encourage students to read by writing about them and thus making them the subject rather than the object of the learning process. Instead of dusty William Shakespeare or distant Joseph Conrad, Rustamova’s writing seemed natural and immediate.

Sappho had written poems to be accompanied on the lyre, the better to interest her young pupils in becoming better poets and musicians. Rustamova wrote of how the smile of one of her students felt like “such a blessing” in order to encourage them to embrace literacy. Yet by exposing her feelings about her students, Rustamova had crossed an invisible line, one that fences education into a non-emotional and non-expressive framework.

*As distance education students we are in the delightful position of engaging directly with our course material . . . We may fall in or out of love with the subject matter yet we always learn it on our own terms.*

A sociologist named Norbert Elias wrote his most important work, *The Civilizing Process*, about how the “shame frontier” is pushed back such that “walls are being erected between people.” One of his most cited examples is how books of etiquette ceased to implore readers to not pick their noses at the dinner table, presumably because such a practice was now widely considered inappropriate and therefore not worth a mention. In his section on Elias in *Modern Sociological Theory*, George Ritzer discusses how people’s “instinct is slowly but progressively suppressed.”

In an educational context this means that many thoughts, opinions, and feelings are not dealt with in school. This alienation of feeling from education serves to “suppress the positive pleasure component” that ought to make learning a joyful, creative process. Instead, school becomes boring for many students. Just as in grade school we all learned to sit conscientiously at our desks, in later years we are expected to restrain ourselves from becoming too emotionally involved or too critical of our educational surroundings.

In Elias’s study, he found that the mediaeval aristocracy were the arbiters of fashion and taste. Likewise, in today’s society, teachers play a major role as “specialists in the elaboration and moulding of social conduct.” From an intellectual perspective this means that some ideas and feelings are more acceptable than others. That Sappho’s love for her students could be akin to a modern teacher’s feelings for her pupils becomes a disturbing thought because we have come to believe that there must always be a barrier between teacher and student and, far more importantly, between student and subject matter.

As distance education students we are in the delightful position of engaging directly with our course material. Our tutor, though important, plays a much lesser role than a traditional instructor. We may fall in or out of love with the subject matter yet we always learn it on our own terms. In this way, distance education provides something outside of normal schooling: the opportunity to learn without “being taught” and to absorb information in a non-coercive manner.

The way students have learned throughout history reveals a variety of learning methods. It seems to me that there is no better place to investigate different historical and cultural contexts of education than as a distance education student. As a character in the Ralph Ellison novel *The Invisible Man* states, “sometimes a man has to plunge outside history” in order to see or experience things differently. I think it is reasonable to say that AU students have all plunged outside education as it is normally imagined. With this separation we forge unique and valuable perspectives.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

## Ian McKay, Part I

*Ian McKay is the author of Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920 (see Voice review [here](#)), the winner of 2009's Sir John A. MacDonald Prize.*

*McKay, who teaches history at Queen's University, recently took the time to answer Wanda Waterman St. Louis's questions about the book.*

## Why the History of Canadian Socialism?



I have been interested in working-class and radical history since the 1970s. Before 2000, I always worked on a local scale, particularly on subjects relating to Nova Scotia coal miners. This began to change in the 1990s, when I started studying the life and work of Nova Scotia writer and Montreal activist Colin McKay (no relation to me), who—rather to my shock and disgust—was using evolutionary theory, particularly that of Herbert Spencer, to explain the world around him.

I became quite interested in trying to figure out how and why a turn-of-the-century radical would have taken up with the likes of Spencer, was associated in my mind with reactionary social theory. The result was a heavy collection of McKay's writings, *For a Working-Class Culture in Canada*, which the Canadian Committee on Labour History brought out in 1996. Researching this exposed me to a lot of the socialist writing that was influencing people at the time.

Four years later, *Labour/Le Travail*, Canada's labour history journal, asked me to write a piece for its millennium issue on the history of Canadian socialism, and that got me thinking about the movement's broader patterns of development, reflections ultimately reflected in *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Between the Lines, 2005). By that point I was completely committed to the big project of doing a general history of the Canadian left. *Reasoning Otherwise* is the first volume of a projected trilogy—I am presently hard at work on volume 2, which is tentatively called *Revolution's Iron Gates*, which I fervently hope to deliver within four years.

## Literary Wellsprings

Marx and Gramsci have written the works that have most directly inspired me. I am particularly drawn to Marx's historical analyses and to Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, although I must say all of Gramsci's writings have something to offer.

Geoff Eley's *Forging Democracy* and Robert Stuart's *Marxism at Work* both offered exciting models of the kind of left history I am trying to write—that is, not trying to haul up past radicals before the court of present-day opinion and try them for their misdemeanours, and not trying to develop sentimental cults of departed heroes, but something that is both analytical and sympathetic at the same time and which pays close attention to the interplay between the languages of politics and socio-economic structures.

Like many Marxist historians of my generation, I was deeply affected by E.P. Thompson, E.J. Hobsbawm, Rolande Trempe, Raphael Samuel, and Royden Harrison, and I share with Antonio Gramsci a conviction that mastering past patterns of left history is a crucial step to creating a more effective and dynamic left. The new editions of the *Prison Notebooks* offer extremely important new insights for historians.

*I think good historical work demands extensive and intensive work in the primary sources—the newspapers, diaries, letters, taped interviews, photographs and all the other treasures that are there in the archives.*

### Roots of Unrest

I grew up in Cornwall, Ontario, and Sarnia, Ontario, both industrial cities, renowned in the province for their sketchy environmental records. Like many children of the '60s I was radicalized by the War in Vietnam and found it scandalous that Dow Chemical, one of Sarnia's biggest employers, was profiting from the making of napalm.

As a summer job, I also worked at the Sarnia newspaper and saw first-hand how corporations can directly shape the "news," in some cases by having their press releases published virtually unchanged as "news" for the consumption of the public. I have been a Marxist since my teens, and expect to remain one until I die.

### Methods

I think good historical work demands extensive and intensive work in the primary sources—the newspapers, diaries, letters, taped interviews, photographs and all the other treasures that are there in the archives. Not only does this enrich the base of evidence on which we draw, but I personally find that while working on these sources, my mind is encouraged to find surprising connections between them. Once the primary research has reached a certain point, it is time to start writing, and to do so with a minimum of outside distractions and then to return again and again to the sources when new questions come up. The best strategy for me is a back-and-forth between the primary sources and the text I am writing.

### Voice Vacation



It's time for summer vacation! *The Voice* will be taking one week off, from July 13 to July 17.

We're going to recharge, re-energize, and be back with more great stuff (including, of course, all your regular favourites) on Friday, July 24.

Even though we'll be enjoying a little downtime, we won't be able to help sneaking a peek at our email, so keep sending in your comments and letters.

See you on July 24!



*From  
Where  
I Sit*  
Hazel Anaka

## Office Redo

For two or three days I've been revamping my office. It started Monday night with the moving of small stuff into the living room, hallway, or bedroom. With Benjamin Moore's Aura line of paint I knew I could theoretically have two coats cut in and rolled on in a few short hours. Because I played hooky for several hours on Tuesday afternoon, we needed to relocate everything on the bed so we could crawl in to sleep.

By 1:00 p.m. Wednesday the painting was done. Inukshuk (color CC-460) is decidedly different; lighter and safer than the Chinese red that has been on the walls for the past few years. I wanted a fresh new look and hope this is it. With white crown moulding, trim, bookcases, and built-ins the high contrast is gone and consequently some of the edge. Once the wall decor and decorative pieces are in place it should feel more homey and finished.

I've long been fascinated by the art/science of feng shui and try to incorporate the principles in my home design whenever and however I can. For instance, my custom desktop faces the doorway and is perpendicular to the large east-facing window. It is inauspicious to ever have your back to the door or a window. In the first instance it potentially allows an enemy to sneak up on you; in the second a strong solid wall behind you puts you in a position of power. I don't know what to do about the "poison arrows" that come off open bookcases.

Central to feng shui teaching is the need to remove clutter and I've got several books to prove it. (Does anyone but me see the irony in that?) At any rate, I'm using this redo to purge papers, hide the utilitarian stuff behind closed doors, and just generally see if I can do with less. At the same time I'm alphabetizing and organizing the fiction, art, gardening, and home decor books in the hall bookcases. I'm also making a master list of titles I already own to avoid the duplication that occurs when my memory fails me. The non-fiction, self-help, and reference ones will stay in my office.

I have a huge library of classic personal development cassette tapes that made many miles with me in older cars with tape players. It is priceless material (Tony Robbins, Denis Waitley, Brian Tracy, Jim Rohn, and others) that I'm reluctant to give away, yet can't afford to replace with new technology. For now they've gone into storage downstairs.

My sincere hope is that this revamp, reorganization, and rededication of what remains brings renewed interest and enthusiasm to me and the projects I undertake in this space. My goal is to find the right balance between having the things I love surrounding me and having enough space to allow clarity of thought, ease of locating things, and room for more abundance and blessings to enter. I hope that's not too much to ask for, from where I sit.

# Sister Aurora

*There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .*

*Everything stops when I dance!  
Is it too much to ask to just Live  
in this HEAVEN?! I can! I will!  
Just let me try! I have to DANCE!  
Dance, dance, dance, and  
never stop dancing . . .*



*Just three more months.  
I'll be out of this backwater  
and life can begin in  
earnest. Good-bye to  
rules and curfews and  
hello to night classes  
in existentialism with  
lusty nihilists.*

*Well, here's our spot, gang.  
Attention! Assume the position!*



*Dear  
Barb*

*Barbara Godin*

## Sister Has a Right to Know

*Dear Barb:*

*I don't know what to do! My sister, who is two years older than me, has always been my best friend. We hang out together, double date and have consoled each other when no one else could. We are in our early twenties now and Karen has been involved in a relationship for the last couple of months. Since I did not have a boyfriend I have been spending a lot of time with Karen and her boyfriend. The three of us have become very close and get along great, maybe too great!*

*Last week we were all supposed to go out to a dance club. Unfortunately Karen became ill and was not able to go. She insisted the two of us go without her. I was reluctant, but thought it would be okay since we were all good friends. The evening began okay, but as we were dancing I could feel something happening between Randy and myself. We began dancing closer and he kissed me. I hate to admit it, but I enjoyed it at the time. However, after the fact I feel awful. I feel like I have betrayed my sister.*

*I'm not sure if I should tell her what happened. Randy and I have discussed it and both agree it was a "moment in time" that will never happen again. I really need some help with what I should do.*

*Melissa*

Hi, Melissa, thanks for your question. How do you know this will not happen again? I'm sure you didn't intend it to happen the first time. What if a similar situation occurs, and you and Randy go out—would you feel completely confident to be alone with him? Probably not. Once a line is crossed, it is always easier to cross it the next time.

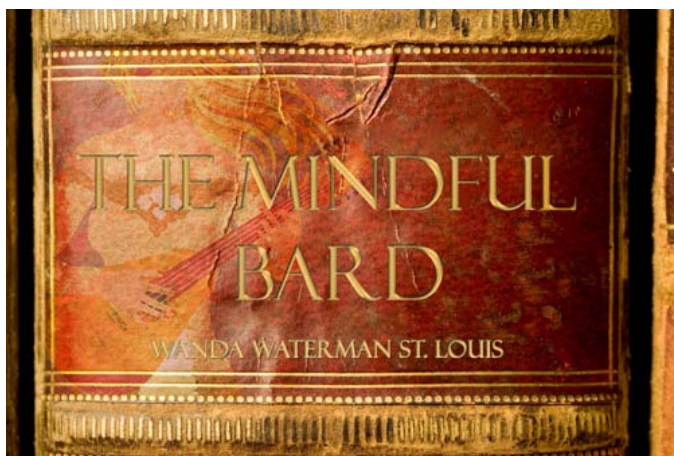
My suggestion is for you and Randy to tell your sister the truth. She will be upset and angry at both of you, but if your relationship is strong she should be able to forgive you. Whether she chooses to continue the relationship with Randy will be a personal choice.

If you decide not to tell your sister, you will always have this in the back of your mind. If she chooses to marry this man you may have doubts about his fidelity, but will not be able to warn your sister without telling her the truth. Also, if you do not tell your sister what happened and you decide not to spend as much time with her and her boyfriend, she may wonder why you are not hanging out with them. Consequently this may affect your relationship with your sister.

Ultimately the choice is yours, but as the old saying goes "the truth shall set you free."

Best of luck, Melissa.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org). Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.*



## Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

DVD: *The Wrestler*

Theatrical Release: December 2008

DVD Release: April 2009

Starring: Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei, Evan Rachel Wood, Ernest "The Cat" Miller

Director: Darren Aronofsky

### The Colossal Trash Heap at the Base of Mount Olympus

*"I'm the one who was supposed to take care of everything. I'm the one who was supposed to make everything okay for everybody. It just didn't work out like that . . . Now I'm an old, broken-down piece of meat. And I'm alone."*

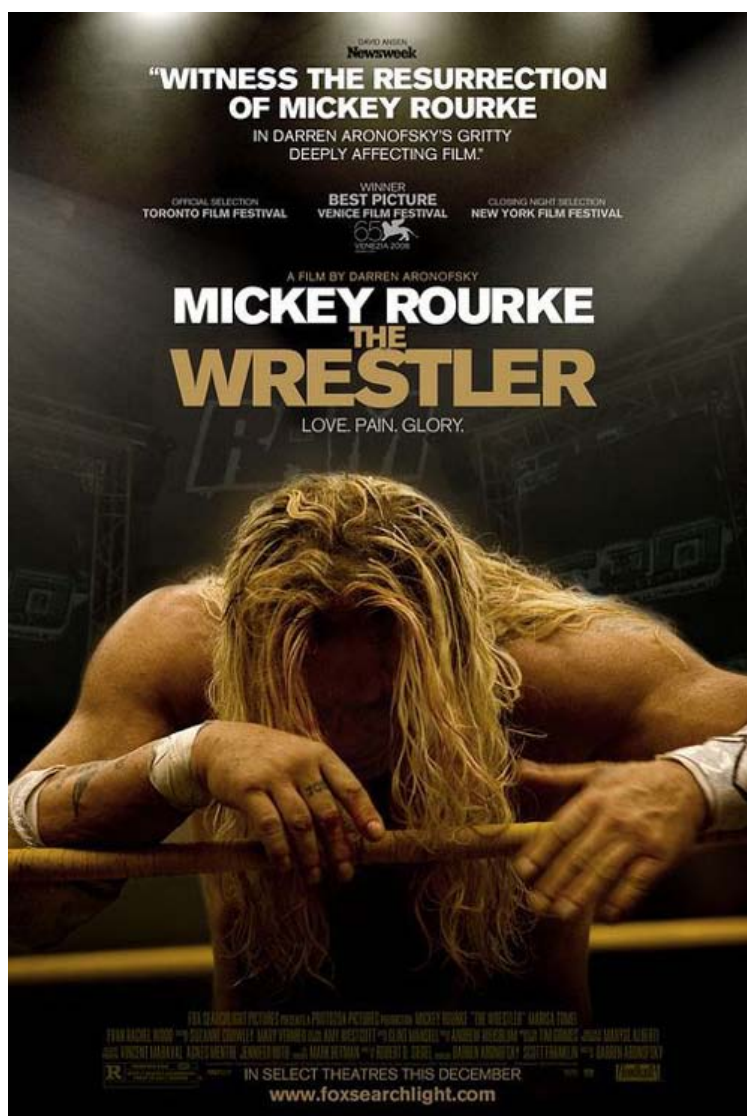
Randy the Ram in *The Wrestler*

A heart attack ends Randy the Ram's long wrestling career. Desperate for money he begs for more drudge work at the supermarket where the fascist boss repeatedly humiliates him.

As Randy is walking through the concrete halls of the building, his long blond ponytail crammed into a plastic shower cap, we hear the slow crescendo of the cheers echoing in his head, the cheers he used to hear on his way to pounding the lights out of some other brawny brute. He pauses for a moment at the screen before bursting through the plastic strips and into the deli section. The cheers abruptly die.

Contrary to his own expectations, Randy starts liking his job. He hams it up with the customers and actually does the job well. But on one particularly taxing day a customer recognizes him. Denying vehemently that he is in fact Randy the Ram, he is overwhelmed with anger and shame and suddenly quits. Come hell or high water, he's getting back into wrestling.

If you dislike watching wrestling on television you'll admire the totally appropriate antsy-jerksy up-close camera work in this movie. Many of the scenes take place against the most garish



backdrops imaginable—a Day-Glo green cement wall, for example, or a tri-colour trailer, fitting frames for Rourke’s phenomenal dark mood rays.

***And what does a god do  
who’s abdicated all that  
matters—love, family,  
friends—in his quest for  
worship, only to be driven  
by fame to the brink of  
death?***

Because this is a hero’s tale we must see Randy’s life as either a triumph or a tragedy. If it’s a triumph, then Randy is a romantic hero and death is his co-victor. If it’s a tragedy, then Randy is an existential hero and his story is the story of, as Edith Hamilton put it in *The Greek Way*, the suffering of a great soul: “. . .through the suffering of a great soul given to us so simply and so powerfully, we know in it all human anguish and the mystery of pain.”

Randy as a father finds himself confronted with a problem common to women and to unskilled working men, which is that society demands and expects him to parent well even while refusing to provide any of the resources necessary to enable him to do so. He’s a bad parent, and it’s his fault.

In order to make a living the only way he knows how, he has to be away from home a lot, which damages his relationship with his daughter. So he gives up and runs away from his own perceived failure. This means that when he’s up against the wall he has no one to turn to with whom he’s built a relationship. Wrestling granted him good buds, but the necessity of hiding his weakness from them precludes them as a source of solace.

Part of the human dilemma is the longing to be great, to be admired, to be washed in waves of love by seas of adoring worshipers. We shouldn’t harshly judge those who carry this longing on their sleeves; generally, they have been driven to it by frequent assaults on their egos while they were too young to defend themselves. Besides, this need, as often as it’s called neurotic, has blessed our culture ad infinitum. (If you can’t accept that the wrestling cult has blessed our culture, you can at least agree that a number of *films* on wrestling have been highly illuminating.)

The world of wrestling is full of gut-wrenching pain, streams of illicit drugs, terrible health risks, and financial distress (no, wrestling does not pay well). But in the world of wrestling you’ll find camaraderie, mutual respect, a thrill ride, and a few moments of glory. When he leaves this world Randy must face the fact that he’s just a working-class schlub who can’t, much as he tries, keep his hands off anything that might ease his suffering. On the one hand the glorious but ultimately sham realm of pretend, on the other a solid but horrifying actuality.

And what does a god do who’s abdicated all that matters—love, family, friends—in his quest for worship, only to be driven by fame to the brink of death? He turns his back on his former divinity. He schleps down to the base of Mount Olympus and wades through the refuse of ordinary life—that is, the crap that the world has designated for one such as him.

But the crap overwhelms him. He’s too fragile for it, if only because his years of notoriety have inflated his ego and rendered it brittle. And maybe it’s not the crap itself but the awful truth that the crap is what society has chosen for guys like him. So what does he do? He flips the bird to the petty, cruel, banal society that bears down on his soul, and he climbs back up to the mountaintop knowing it’ll kill him.

*The Wrestler* manifests five of The Mindful Bard’s criteria for movies well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts existing injustices; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; and 5) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence.

## AUSU THIS MONTH



### Annual AGM Held

As you probably already know from the AGM Report put out by the *Voice*, AUSU held its annual general meeting on March 23, 2009.

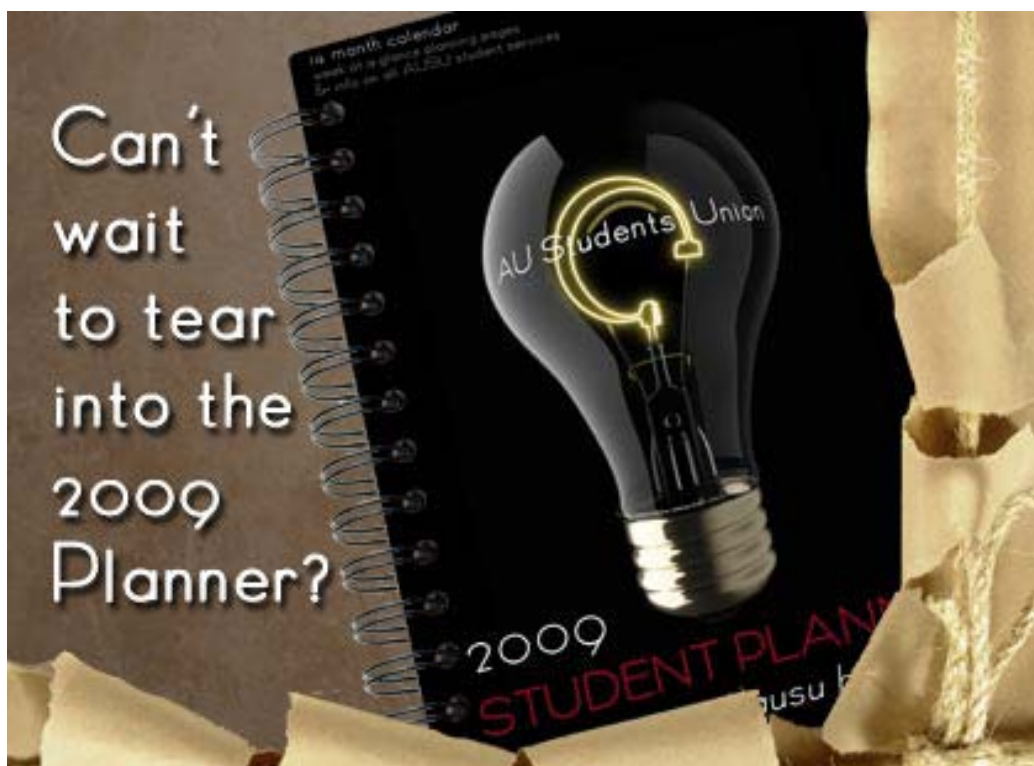
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member even during a term that doesn't have any AUSU courses scheduled.

Also, our fees were changed from being \$8, \$16, or \$24 per course depending on the number of credits, to being a flat \$3 per credit, an increase of a dollar per course for most students. With this extra money, AUSU should be able to begin moving forward with a lot of desired programs that have been held up due to our staffing not being as big as our ambitions.

Also at the AGM, some good discussion was held with respect to email accounts, an issue we know a lot of you are concerned about, and we'll keep working with the university to see if a reasonable solution can be found among all of the priority issues AU needs to deal with.

### Media Committee Started

Council has approved the terms of reference for the new media committee. This group, including your *Voice* editor, will be working hard to deliver new multimedia content to you on a regular basis. Our hope is to bring forward a more engaging, interactive AUSU, one that can help you get everything you want out of your education.



### AU Fees Increasing

On March 27, the AUGC approved the new fees that will come into effect in September 2009. The bottom line is you'll be paying an additional \$29 per 3-credit course, including the increase to the AUSU fees. This includes an \$18 increase to base tuition and a \$10 increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU has noted

concerns with the university continuing to increase fees by the maximum allowable by Alberta legislation, but has agreed that lower quality service is not a viable alternative.

More concerning is the increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU will continue to press for details on how this fee relates to the prices the university has to pay for your textbooks and online materials.

## au.world Closes

AUSU has noted the closing of the au.world publication with sadness, and has brought this to the governing council of AU. In its place, AU has begun a new magazine called *AU Open* which, rather than being strictly student focussed, contains a mix of stories for alumni, investors, and students. We have strong hopes that AU will increase the focus of this new magazine to be at least as relevant to current students as the old au.world was.

## 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

Members are snapping up our 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planner. Now in full colour, it has more course tracking pages, brief guides to the citation styles you'll need for your essays at AU, and of course, all the important AU dates and addresses that you need to know. You can order your own copy by going to <http://www.ausu.org/handbook/index.php>



## SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo.

Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

## Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go.

With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it.

The *Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.

In addition, we have recently purchased some steel water bottles. With all the concerns about BPA in clear plastic, the decision was made to go stainless steel. Cheaper and more environmentally friendly than purchasing plastic bottles of water, fill up your AUSU bottle to keep thirst away no matter where you're travelling.

## AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

## Employment Site is Here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student.

Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Gay-pride funding costs Tourism Minister key program

A decision to assign federal funding to Toronto's gay pride week has resulted in Tourism Minister Diane Ablonczy losing control of key responsibilities. Prior to the funding decision, Ablonczy had been in charge of the Marquee Tourism Events Program. The program is "an initiative to provide \$100-million of funding over two years to the country's major festivals and tourist attractions," according to the *National Post*.

Along with Toronto Pride Week, other events Ablonczy approved funding for include the Calgary Stampede (\$2 million), the Shaw Festival (\$2 million), and Le Festival d'ete de Quebec (\$3 million).

In comparison, Toronto Pride Week received \$400,000, funds that were used to "improve access for disabled visitors and hire performers for the week's activities."

Although Ablonczy will retain her title as minister of state for small business and tourism, the Marquee Tourism file was pulled "within days" of the funding announcement. Industry Minister Tony Clement now has control of the program, and according to his director of communications, Ablonczy's office was only meant to help out "with the first phase of the program."

At least one Conservative MP saw things differently. Brad Trost, a Saskatoon MP, said the move was a direct result of Ablonczy's decision to fund Pride Week. "The pro-life and the pro-family community should know . . . that the tourism funding money that went to the gay pride parade in Toronto was not government policy," he said in an article. "Canadian taxpayers, even non-social conservative ones, don't want their tax dollars to go to events that are polarizing, or events that are more political than touristic in nature."

### In Foreign News: UK considers 'no fee' university degrees

As part of a proposed plan, students in England could be eligible for a no-fee degree, although the program would bar them from applying for student loans or bursaries. The scheme is targeted at students "living at home with their parents, allowing them to avoid debt," as the *BBC* reports. The proposal would waive tuition fees, which average £3,225 per year.

Some university leaders welcome the move, but others, including The National Union of Students, have concerns about the quality of such an education. One issue is that the plan would limit poorer students to only a few universities. In practical terms, the cost to families would be similar to having a child in high school, with parents covering living expenses but no one incurring tuition debt.

James Greenhalgh, Member of the UK Youth Parliament, told reporters the plan could be beneficial to those planning to live at home anyway, but noted that "it is frightening to think how many students would end up choosing a local university, regardless of whether it is the right option for them, because they want to avoid paying tuition fees."

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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

## THE VOICE

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1213, 10011 109th Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8 -- Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

**Publisher** Athabasca University Students' Union  
**Editor-In-Chief** Tamra Ross  
**Managing Editor** Sandra Livingston

**Regular Columnists** Hazel Anaka, John Buhler, Christina M. Frey, Barbara Godin,  
Bill Pollett, Wanda Waterman St. Louis

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[www.voicemagazine.org](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

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Contact *The Voice* at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org)

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