

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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PLAR Portfolio

Life meets learning

American Samoa

Colonizing culture

AU Options

Creative non-fiction



Plus:

Dear Barb, From Where I Sit,

In Conversation With, and much more...

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



PLAR - PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION

Diane Gadoua



*Patricia Imbeau, Reception and Student Support,
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Life Meets Learning

As kids, it always seemed easy to answer that intriguing question: What do you want to be when you grow up? Eyes shining we reached for the stars, never doubting our career choice of fireman, ballerina, or superhero.

As adults, though, the path to finding (and following) our dreams can prove a lot more complicated, with a few courses here, a couple of career changes there. The question then is, what to do with that diverse wealth of experience once we choose a direction?

AU's Centre for Learning Accreditation may have the answer, and it's called PLAR—Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.

Dr. Dianne Conrad is the Director of AU's Centre for Learning Accreditation (CLA), where staff work

with students to help them organize their experiential learning and translate it into university-level credits.

AU's PLAR department operates within the CLA and, as Dianne explains, the university "introduced a PLAR process way back in 1997. Since then, the process has grown considerably, as has the size of our office. The Centre for Learning Accreditation currently has four positions: a Director, a student support specialist/receptionist, and two mentors. One of the mentoring positions also coordinates the assessment procedure."

Through PLAR, students learn to present their diverse experiences as a cohesive set of accomplishments, reviewing the knowledge they've gained through formal studies, informal studies, work and volunteer activities—even leisure and travel experiences.

Fran Holler, a mentorship coordinator, explains the PLAR process this way: "We work one-on-one with students helping them articulate their experiential learning that they've gained through life, through careers, volunteer [work], family, all those kinds of activities that have provided them learning opportunities that they can translate into university-level credits."

Students then build a portfolio "that meets the specific pre-set criteria," Fran adds, "and it's forwarded to assessors and . . . they measure that learning in relation to the program, and award credit for that."

Although every undergraduate degree and university certificate has PLAR credit opportunities, Dianne notes that PLAR offers many other important benefits.

"Receiving a bundle of credit as a result of portfolio assessment is PLAR's tangible outcome," she says. "On our website, we feature 'Ten Top Reasons for Doing PLAR.' And they include validating your past experiential learning in a meaningful way, developing/practicing organizational skills, developing the ability

to meaningfully reflect on past learning, improving your writing skills, receiving detailed feedback on your learning, learning to think critically about your own learning, compiling a comprehensive document that reflects your past accomplishments, and growing your sense of self-esteem and professional competence through the PLAR process.

"Of course," she adds, "you can also save a lot of money, and many programs accept up to 30 PLAR credits."

With over 100 assessors who work independently of each other to assess portfolios, and integration throughout many departments in the university, AU's CLA is a leader in the field.

"AU's system is very progressive, rigorous, and unique," says Dianne. "Doing PLAR at AU places the emphasis on your learning and what you know. It is not an 'audit' or a checklist approach. Our assessment protocol is also very thorough. Most PLAR portfolios are reviewed by a team of at least three content specialists, each working independently so as to ensure a fair assessment."

If the idea of a PLAR portfolio sounds intriguing, there are a few things to keep in mind.

In Canada, PLAR is "generally regarded as an undergraduate activity," Dianne explains. "Many graduate programs allow their students to waive some courses, given the student's particular strengths or background, but there are very few formalized PLAR opportunities in graduate programs." (Graduate students can contact the graduate program office for more information.)

"... I am most rewarded by learners' successes. The PLAR process permits us to work closely with our learners, and we get to know their stories, which are often stories of incredible struggle."

To make sure that students gain the most from the PLAR process, Fran Holler notes that a good place to start is "to research the program that fits their future educational [and] career goals and talk to a counsellor for that, talk to an advisor, so that they can get a picture of how their previous education, their experiential learning, and their future interests all can combine to build a path for them."

There are plenty of new developments on the PLAR horizon, too.

"PLAR has been experiencing tremendous growth at AU in the last few years," Dianne says. "The biggest news has been the introduction of dedicated mentors who will work with you from start to finish, or at the level that you need in order to help you through the process."

Another innovation has been the creation of a "learning contract to help learners structure their PLAR activities," Dianne notes. "And we are working on adopting an e-portfolio platform to allow learners who prefer working electronically to do that. We process a lot of paper, so it would be useful to bring an e-portfolio opportunity onboard."

For Dianne, one of the most exciting initiatives is the research project for which she has received two years of federal SSHRC funding. "The study proposes to look at knowledge-building opportunities in the PLAR process in a couple of different systems practiced around the world," she explains. "PLAR's knowledge-building potential is of real interest to me, as a university practitioner."

And when it comes to the rewards of PLAR, staff and students alike share in the success.

“As the Director of CLA, and speaking as a long-time adult educator, I am most rewarded by learners’ successes,” Dianne says. “The PLAR process permits us to work closely with our learners, and we get to know their stories, which are often stories of incredible struggle.

“Rightly or wrongly, we live in an increasingly credentialized world, and that is not going to change. Learners who are well accomplished in their careers or their fields—who have climbed the ladder without the benefit of a university degree—come to us needing to complete a degree in short order in order either to advance in their careers or sometimes just to keep the job they have already earned! Both AU’s policy of open admission and the PLAR process offer these learners a tremendous boost to their professional lives. Their stories inspire us.”

To find out more about AU’s PLAR program, visit the [Centre for Learning Accreditation](#) website today.

AROUND AU



Exam Request Deadlines Changed

September brings changes for all students heading back to school—and this year, there’s an important change that AU students need to know about.

Effective September 1, the exam request policy will change, and that means new deadlines for arranging exams.

Requests for invigilated exams inside Canada and the US must now be made 20 calendar days before the exam write date. For students outside Canada and the US, requests must be made 30 calendar days in advance.

(The previous deadline, which ends August 31, was that exam requests within Canada and the US needed to be submitted at least 10 calendar days before the planned write date.)

Although the deadlines are longer, the updated policy also contains a new option for writing exams late. If students request an exam *after* the 20- or 30-day deadlines, they can now write their exams up to 30 days after the course end date. The late-request fee is \$50 and applies to all exams requested after the deadlines (even if the exam does get written before the course end date).

The 30-day allowance may prove to be a welcome alternative to a standard course extension, which is two months at a fee of \$165. You can find full details about AU’s current exam policies in the [Examinations and Grades](#) section of the online calendar.

If you’re an AU student and want to share your thoughts about the change, join the conversation titled “Changes to Exam Request Policy” in the General Student Chat section of AUSU’s [discussion forum](#).

WORDS

Kimberley Sanders

FINDING WHAT
YOU DIDN'T LOSE

*Expressing Your Truth and Creativity
Through Poem-Making*

■ JOHN FOX

John Fox, Part II

A certified poetry therapist, John Fox is a poet and author of Finding What You Didn't Lose: Expressing Your Truth and Creativity through Poem-Making and Poetic Medicine: The Healing Art of Poem-Making.

John conducts ongoing poetry groups in the San Francisco Bay Area and is an international leader in the movement of poetry therapy as an expressive art and medicine. In part 2 of a two-part interview, he shares some thoughts about his work.

You've written about how individuals can learn to catalyze conscience and creativity to make effective social change agents. How would students learn to view our world through the eyes of a poet?

The creative process, when it is really welcomed, draws upon and is impacted by so many things—the unconscious, lived experience, the senses, the moment, word play. I've always liked something Robert Bly said about writing poetry: "I think writing

poetry is a matter of agreeing that you have these two people inside: every day you set aside time to be with the subtle person, who has funny little ideas, who is probably in touch with retarded children, and who can say surprising things."

Perhaps a story will help students understand what Robert Bly means. My sister, Holly, was born with Down syndrome. She will say to me, "No, John, it's Up syndrome." So we know she has sense of humour! One day I asked her how she went about watercolour painting, which she does quite beautifully. Her first response was to say, "I just do it." Sounds pretty good!

I pressed her about that, "Tell me more." She replied, "I get into the flow." Then, she looked down to her right, for only a moment, lifted her head, looked straight into my eyes, and said, "Wait a minute. *I am the flow!*"

How can students use impulse writing to enhance their learning journey?

I think learning ought to be, at least in part, fun. I think this would enhance the "learning journey."

Watching children can help someone who wishes to cultivate the poet within in the midst of a learning environment. A child's fresh way of meeting experience is such a reminder of what we lose as adults. My book *Finding What You Didn't Lose* was written to help us recover that kind of spontaneity and to treasure our creative self.

How did we play as children? *We followed an impulse towards fun.* We imagined that the toolbox our father had was not just a toolbox, it was the toolbox that serviced cars during the Indianapolis 500 and we were the head mechanics. Or we imagined that the open field and creek near our home was the playground where a legion of imaginary creatures, a place where we could become whatever we wanted to be: space aliens, good guys, cave dwellers, bad guys, wild horses, Amelia Earhart and Mickey Mantle.

"If you realize that one of the toughest things there is to do in this world is be nobody-but-yourself, and you also see the value in taking on that challenge, it will help you see things in the way a poet does."

Poetic language offers us the opportunity to suspend a certain consensus level of reality in order to invoke and experience a reality that is more deeply in tune with our feelings and our sense of who we are. In this way, we help imaginative poems to arise. All too often we are given the message in school to quit playing around and "get with the program."

Sometimes, we wise up and transform "playing around" into creativity. This can have a lasting impact on the rest of our lives and should be part of lifelong learning.

Apparently Kahlil Gibran once said, "Poetry is a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary." The same could be said for the academic journey. How do you think the pursuit of poem-

making would best help the undergraduate, graduate, and/or doctoral student?

I think poetry helps us be more whole. That's useful in any endeavour, to raise awareness of that wholeness. Sometimes, also, what matters most to us can't be quantified or fully explained. There are parts of life that don't "write all the way across the page."

In my work with students in graduate programs (I teach regularly in about four of them) they find that poetry is a way to communicate with themselves, and at times, with others who can listen, in a way that both builds a sense of community and helps them to distil their experience.

This can be especially helpful when we feel overwhelmed. The poem is one place you can go where there is nothing to prove for certain and where you do not have to have the answer. Yet, it may actually be a way to get a glimpse into some insight that had been hidden beneath the surface.

What advice do you have for university students who are, perhaps, afraid to let loose their inner poet?

Give it a try!

What makes one a poet?

If you realize that one of the toughest things there is to do in this world is be nobody-but-yourself, and you also see the value in taking on that challenge, it will help you see things in the way a poet does. I urge people to regain or to maintain a pleasure in words, in language. In living a life with words, take time to savour them.

Perhaps one other thing that can help is to trust the fact that you are already creative. When I was in eighth grade, my mother told other guests at a gathering, "When John grows up, he's going to be a poet." Yes, it's very encouraging that a mother would affirm such a thing! However, and I don't think I intended any disrespect at the time, she tells me I turned to her and said, "I am a poet."

ERAS IN EDUCATION

Jason Sullivan



American Samoa: Colonial Education and the Introduction of "The Word"

Imagine yourself living on a beach. When you were young your parents and elders taught you to swim and fish. Then one day some missionaries arrived. They made you sit indoors at a desk and told you that they had turned your oral language into a written language. They did this because to know their one true God you had to be able to read their Bible. The starting point of the new education was knowledge of transcendental truth, rather than knowledge of survival in your earthly surroundings. It all seems very strange to you.

After all, the weather is beautiful and all the necessities of life are outdoors.

During the colonial era, education involved exporting the European way of life to far-flung regions of the world. The resulting interface of cultures affected everyone.

In American Samoa during the 1830s indigenous peoples received their first taste of European educational practices. Missionaries arrived in 1830 and had set up the first school by 1835. By the missionaries' own account they had to contend with "climate conditions, disturbances from flying insects and other passerbys, not to mention the lack of school materials." Interestingly, girls' schools were opened many years before boys' schools.

The missionaries associated learning with the "three Rs" (reading, writing, and arithmetic), which were literally foreign to exclusively oral Samoan culture. The Euro-Christian religion and world view was introduced. In the words of postmodern theorists Deleuze and Guattari, the new education utilized an "arborescent" perspective based on a unified single truth embodied in "the Word," otherwise known as written language. "The arborescent system pre-exists the individual, who is integrated into it at an allotted place."

In this way, the form of European education forced Samoans to fit into its teaching methods, rather than allowing the Samoan culture to have control over how it would be taught. By writing down the Samoan language, the missionaries had attempted to solidify a changeable, oral culture into an unchanging, timeless form.

Deleuze and Guattari also note that arborescence involves an attempt to enforce hierarchy and conformity: "when there is no unity in the thing there is at least unity and identity in the word." In Samoa the written word produced, rather than recorded, a culture that was previously expressed by individuals who came and went as generations grew old and were replaced. Had the missionaries not been so convinced of their one best way of educating young people, they might have syncretized (combined) their teaching methods with the vibrant cultural traditions of the Samoan people.

We always see other cultures from the perspective of our own. Benjamin Lee Whorf, a 20th century anthropologist, developed a theory stating that "the thoughts we construct are based upon the language that we speak and the words that we use."

For instance, in Japanese there is no word for water; water must be specified as either hot or cold. In the same way, Russian has two words for the colour blue. The basis of Whorf's hypothesis was the language of a Native American tribe called the Hopi whose mother tongue "has no words for past, present, and future" although they do have an awareness of time as a "continuum." In this way, a culture with a different conception of time will act in a different way in regards to schedules and timetables.

In American Samoa, as in other locations where European educational practices were introduced to indigenous peoples, oral language was written down and therefore altered forever.

Whorf based his hypothesis largely on contact with a single Hopi speaker who lived near him in New York. In fact, he only visited the Hopi in their American Southwest homeland a single time. The starting point of Whorf's theory, then, was his own culture's conception of time and a supposed opposite point of view: the lack of time. Likewise, the missionaries in American Samoa believed that their "cultured" version of truth was only understandable in terms of the written words of the Bible. Left out of the equation in both cases is the possibility that there are more than two opposing "truths." Deleuze and Guattari

called such a non-binary epistemology (way of seeing and knowing) a "multiplicity" which exists in contrast with (though not opposition to) the "transcendence of the idea."

Deleuze and Guattari's theory of multiplicities suggests that social reality is "a complex structure that does not reference a prior unity." Missionary schools were not teaching truth, they were teaching the Euro-Christian version of truth. In fact, all education can be seen as a "patchwork or ensemble without becoming a totality or whole."

To be educated is to be taught one point of view rather than *the* point of view. In Math textbooks the answers are in the back of the book yet the pupil must show her work in order to demonstrate an understanding of, and loyalty to, the process of arriving at the correct answer or interpretation of reality. In the Arts the student is expected to adhere to the prevailing interpretation of events. Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between ways of learning which they call "maps" (based on a reproduction of reality as it is found) and "tracings" (which are pre-fabricated and do not change to meet actual reality). Tracings always encounter resistance because they are by nature coercive and unfulfilling.

Deleuze and Guattari note that "in the case of the child, gestural, mimetic, ludic, and other semiotic systems regain their freedom and extricate themselves from the 'tracing,' that is, from the dominant competence of the teacher's language." Nature also does this! The insects and weather of the Samoan islands were a direct challenge to the world view and truth, or "tracing," of the missionaries, which was itself predicated on a colder, drier, and more insect-free geography.

In American Samoa, as in other locations where European educational practices were introduced to indigenous peoples, oral language was written down and therefore altered forever. This colonizing effect profoundly changed the way young people learned about the world around them. It made things seem more absolute and certain, consisting of dualisms such as good and evil, heaven and hell, written and spoken.

In an oral culture, it is the speakers who teach and learn, whereas in a written culture such as our own it is the word on the page that professes to hold the key to truth. By "recording" a spoken language, the missionaries in American Samoa irrevocably altered the course of Samoan culture. It is perhaps a bit ironic that today Samoan politicians worry that illiteracy rates are too high. The dominant colonial culture has succeeded in having its educational forms adopted and authorized.

AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



Creative Non-Fiction

AU's newest English class is ENGL 384: Writing Creative Non-fiction. The AU [calendar](#) explains that this course "is a senior-level course that offers students the opportunity to write creative non-fiction and receive feedback on their writing." Creative non-fiction is "also called literary non-fiction or literary journalism," and is a type of writing that applies "the principles of storytelling usually associated with fiction" to works of non-fiction. Through ENGL 384, "students will learn these principles of

storytelling as they produce their own work."

Rachel Thompson is an AU student currently enrolled in ENGL 384, and she loves creative writing. "As a teenager," she says, "I would write story after story using my friends as characters, and distribute them to everyone to read." Lately, however, she has not had free time to devote to creative writing. When she saw that AU was offering a course in creative non-fiction, it caught Thompson's attention as "a great way to get back into" doing what she once loved.

And "so far, so good!" Thompson appreciates that "the assignments are varied," as well as that her tutor "is great and offers excellent feedback" on her writing.

Thompson's tutor for ENGL 384 is Vivian Zenari, who also authored the course. Zenari explains that in some ways the idea of creative non-fiction repackages other writing genres, especially investigative journalism and the personal essay. Nonetheless, the term "creative non-fiction" contains the notion that writing techniques used in fiction can fruitfully be applied to non-fiction. In this way, creative non-fiction acknowledges the narrative impulses behind fiction and certain types of non-fiction. Unlike journalism, creative non-fiction does not veer away from the figure of the author as an organizing principle behind its content—much creative non-fiction contains autobiographical aspects, whether overt or subtle. Creative non-fiction therefore appeals to writers and readers who wish to emphasize the human presence in non-fiction.

And human presence is also a key feature of ENGL 384, in the form of both tutor feedback and peer editing.

"The course stands and falls on the interaction between the tutors and the students," Zenari says. "That situation, to my mind, is a strength, since writing instruction requires an intense feedback process that other distance education courses don't require." Feedback from other students occurs during asynchronous Moodle workshops. "In this way students get feedback from someone other than the instructor, and if students choose to, students can be in touch with other people who are engaged in the same feedback process."

"The peer editing of work may seem offputting, but that aspect of the course gives students the chance to get feedback from more than one person," says Zenari. And while peer editing can seem intimidating, students must remember that "when giving negative feedback, no one is trying to be mean; rather, the

readers are trying to be helpful and offer pragmatic advice; they are offering their reactions to something they have written (which is all people can really do).” And the process helps not only the writer but also those reading their work, as “the peer editing allows students to read some good stuff.”

One aspect of the course that can be a mixed blessing is its seeming simplicity and straightforward nature. All students love concise instructions, but they can sometimes be a temptation to neglect readings. Thompson feels that “anyone with a decent understanding of English and a bit of a creative mind could easily get away with only doing the assignments and not reading any of the assigned readings.” This approach clearly may not result in optimal results in the course, however. Zenari warns that students considering registering for the course should not only be prepared to complete the assigned tasks, but also “be aware that the course assumes that students have a good (above average) knowledge of basic writing skills.”

So far, students like Thompson think that the course is “great,” and Zenari describes it as “a delight” to teach: “many of the pieces [submitted by students] are outstanding and I feel privileged to have the opportunity to read them.”

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Gregory Pepper and His Problems, Part II

Gregory Pepper is a Guelph-based visual artist as well as a writer and singer of deliciously gloomy experimental songs. He is now on tour to promote his latest CD, With Trumpets Flaring (reviewed this issue in The Mindful Bard).

This is the second part of his interview with Wanda Waterman St. Louis.

How did you manage such a prolific song output for one so young?

I average a song per week, which isn’t really that much if you think about it. A little more than 50 songs per year X 10 years of writing songs = a bit over 500 tunes. It doesn’t mean they’re all great, but at least I’m being productive. If I just sit around and don’t make art I get really anxious and self-loathing, so I find it’s best to keep busy.

Is Guelph a stimulating town for a guy like you?

I lived in Montreal for five years, which was my first “big city” experience. I remember moving into my apartment that first night and hearing house music bleeding out of the neighbouring nightclub at 3:00 a.m. I felt pure, nauseous panic, although, grudgingly, I eventually adapted and embraced the city.

Small-town living is much more comfortable for me. I’d prefer to live in the country, hidden behind thick vines and rows of trees, but I can’t yet afford a car, so that would make booze runs far too laborious.



Writing songs

At times it comes quickly and effortlessly, while other occasions are truly drawn out ordeals, resulting in multiple demos and re-arrangements. Ideally, I'll sit down at the piano and churn out a hit, though sometimes I have to drink a few cans and pin down a melody on the old Dictaphone. Then, from a handful of raw reference tapes, I'll piece together a final song and apply some offhand, irreverent lyrics. Voila!

Do you hold to any political ideology or religious belief?

Nah, not really. I mean, Harper is an embarrassment and all, but I'm not going to publicly state it in an interview with the prestigious *Voice* student paper.

What music have you been listening to this week, besides your own?

I certainly wouldn't listen to my own, since months and months of overdubbing have turned it all into painful static. I just got a copy of the new Islands album *Vapours*, which is really succinct, well-produced electro-pop. And the Clues record that just came out is really good too, though more on the prog/experimental tip.

I generally prefer my musicians dead, so Sam Cooke, John Lennon, and Freddie Mercury all the way, man.

What's next for you?

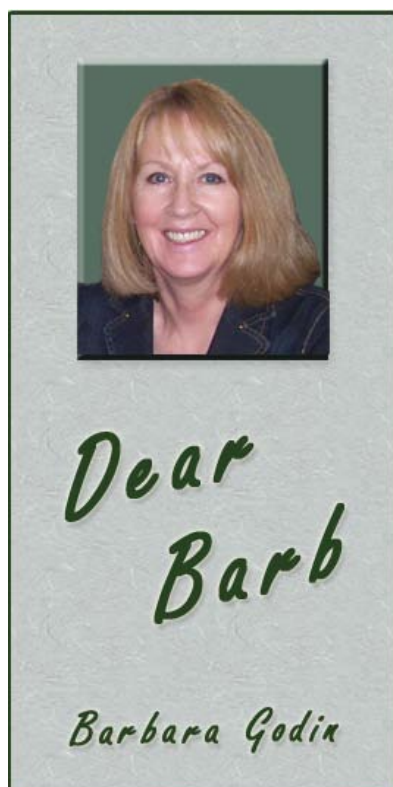
Two new records due to drop before the end of this year: *The Great Depression* with Factor and Ceschi (both affiliated with Fake Four Inc.) and another hip-pop full-length (with a producer named MadadaM) called *Big Huge Truck*.

Otherwise it's just the usual cycle of nausea and euphoria.

Did you have anything to add?

Nope. Fourteen questions is my daily limit. I have a doctor's note.





Helping Hands Can Ensure Parents' Independence

Dear Barb:

I enjoy reading your column but I never thought I would ever have to write to you. My older sister and I have never gotten along. We are very different and have never shared any common interests. Now we are having a problem agreeing on what is best for my parents. My parents are getting older and having a hard time managing their affairs. I think it is time to put them into a place where they can be taken care of. My sister wants to keep them in their own home, with her and I caring for them. This is what my parents want as well. I am feeling ganged up on, but I want to do the right thing. I need help!

Tracey

Hi, Tracey. I'm not sure there is a right or wrong in this case.

I can see you are a very caring daughter and want to do what is best. You believe your parents will be better taken care of in a facility where their needs are adequately addressed. However, your parents' wishes have to be taken into consideration. From what you are saying it seems your parents have been able to manage in their own home with limited help up to this point. Perhaps with some outside assistance they could continue to stay in their own home.

I imagine you and your sister are busy with your own families and caring for your parents would require time that possibly you can't really afford, which is completely understandable. As our population ages many people find themselves in your situation, aptly named "the sandwich generation." The "sandwich generation" are individuals, such as yourself, who are caught between caring for aging parents and their own children and grandchildren. As a result of this demand, an increasing number of organizations are becoming available to provide assistance to families such as yours.

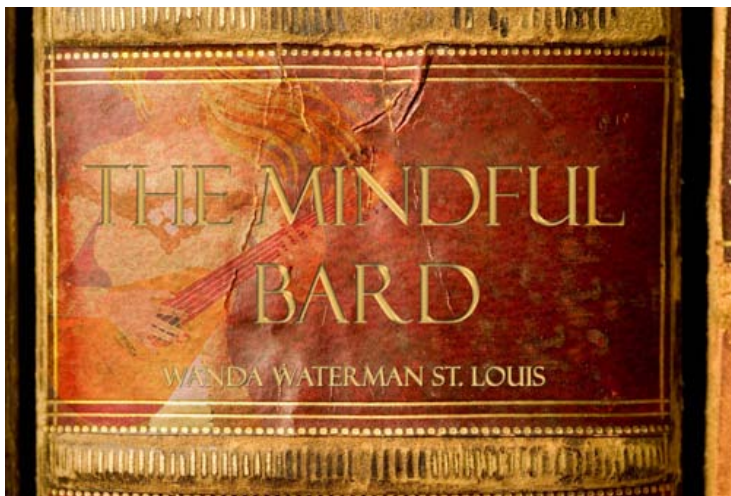
Most communities have professionals that will direct you and your sister to the proper agencies. For example, Meals on Wheels is a service that supplies precooked meals to clients. Meals can be prepared to accommodate special diets and the cost is reasonable.

Another resource is Personal Support Workers, who are specially trained to come into the home to help clients with showers and personal care. For more extensive medical needs, the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) also come into the home to assist with medications and dressings, as well as monitoring ongoing medical conditions. If your parents no longer drive, arrangements can be made through these agencies for transportation to appointments, shopping, etc.

There are many more services; however, they may vary depending on the area that you live in. Some of these services are covered under government or personal health coverage and some are not. A good place to start would be your family doctor. He or she will have all the information to assist you.

Eventually there may come a time when you will have to consider moving your parents out of their home, but for now you can probably keep them at home where they are most happy. Hope this information helps. Best of luck, Tracey.

Email your questions to 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

CD: Gregory Pepper and His Problems, With Trumpets Flaring

Label: Fake Four Inc.

Release date: 2009

Despairing Surfers Dancing the Funky Chicken under a Mirror Ball

"Jumping off a building—what a scary way to die."

Starving in the desert—such a boring way to die.

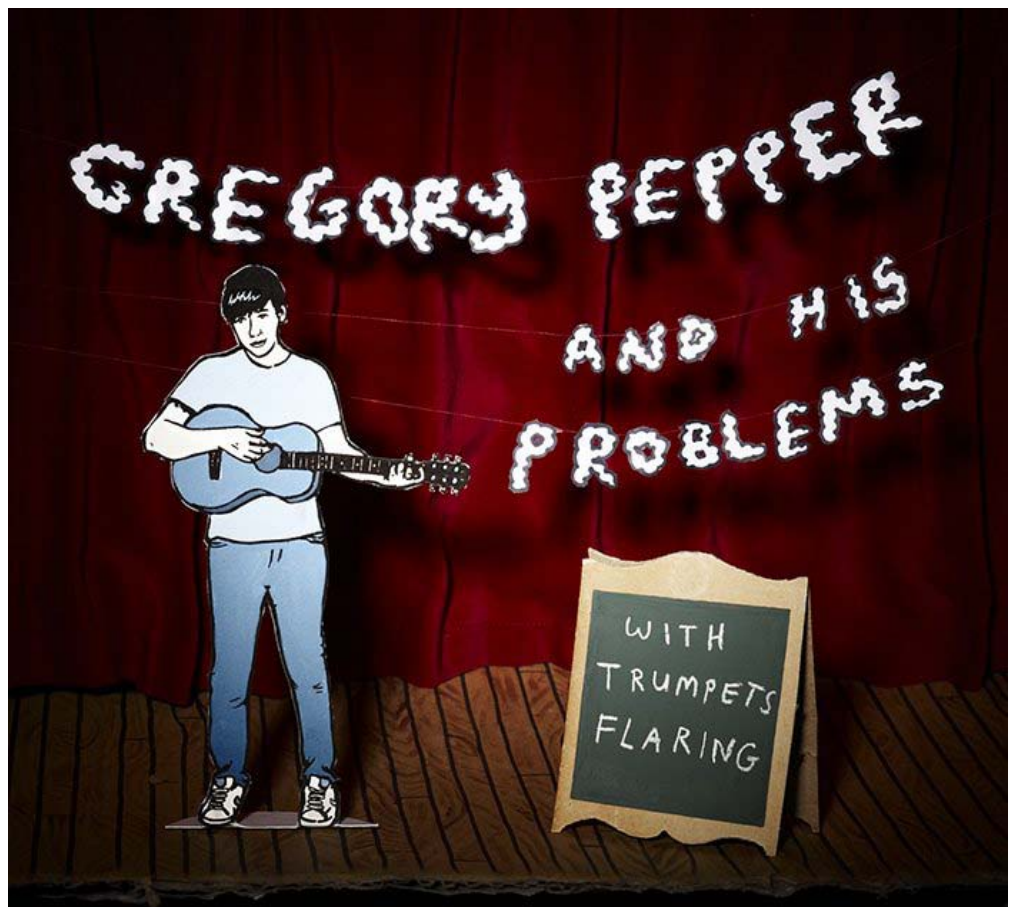
*You can do it in November or the middle of July,
But it's still called suicide if you try."*

Gregory Pepper, "If You Try"

Musically eclectic without sounding vainglorious or contrived, Gregory Pepper puts the run to any preconceptions that experimental music is unlistenable. These tunes are actually *catchy*. You'll find yourself humming them happily while clipping your toenails.

Pepper puts out a song a week and every one, if this album is any indication, sounds fresh and original. There are nuances of Gilbert and Sullivan, Kurt Weill, British Invasion, Surfer Rock, doo-wop, disco, and probably a few more genres that I've missed.

Inside the CD cover there's a paper doll cut-out of Gregory himself with an invitation to copy it onto cardstock, cut it out, colour it, place it within a diorama and email Gregory a photo. As soon as I get done doing my Gregory Pepper



ballroom diorama (complete with crepe-paper bananas) I'll be dressing my doll in head-to-toe Bermuda plaid and a narrow tie.

The album is a network of contradictions, Waitsian in its strange combination of raunchiness and pathos, experimental but grounded in conventional musical styles.

The juxtaposition of "If You Try" and "Gregory Pepper Coronation" provides a shining example of the extremes of self-esteem often encountered within the artistic/creative personality . . .

A number of tracks, notably "It Must Be True," sound like The Beach Boys, and Pepper has often cited Brian Wilson as a musical model.

Pepper's singing is so smooth and heartfelt, his musical styles so nostalgic, that a ludicrous irony often emerges. "If You Try," for example, is a ghoulishly morbid song about suicide, sung in a doo-wop style, and well worth savouring repeatedly.

"Gregory Pepper Coronation" is a delightful auto-tribute, as gratifying and tongue-in-cheek as Nikki Giovanni's poem "Ego Tripping." Bonanza meets Caligula in this glorious anthem to Self.

The juxtaposition of "If You Try" and "Gregory Pepper Coronation" provides a shining example of the extremes of self-esteem often encountered within the artistic/creative personality; you either

consider yourself better than the masses or somehow beneath them, alternating between narcissistic euphoria and self-loathing lows.

With Trumpets Flaring manifests five of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 3) it is about attainment of the true self; 4) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 5) it stimulates my mind.

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

DID YOU KNOW?

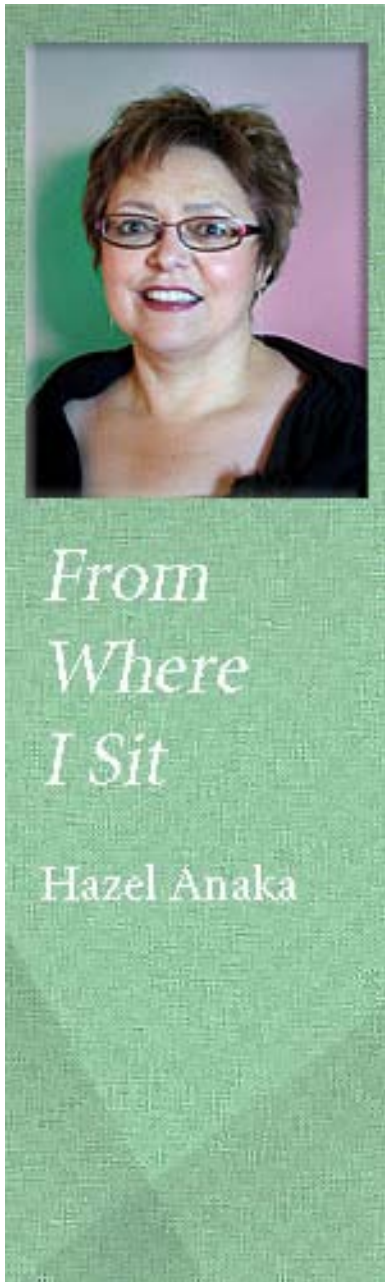


Science Labs

Most AU students are familiar with the university's excellent library services, but unless you're a Science student you may not be aware of another great resource that's available: the science labs.

AU "provides facilities in which to complete all compulsory labs in-person in Athabasca," and some lab sessions can be organized so students can complete all their lab course components at the same time. Other lab locations are available too, so be sure to check out the website for all the

info you'll need to start your experiment!



Baby Face

In the waning hours of August 19 our first grandchild, a boy, was born at an Edmonton hospital. After a day-long effort by our daughter-in-law Carrie, Grady Scott entered the world. A healthy seven pounds, seven ounces and 21 and a half inches long. All the clichés spring to mind: miracle of life, bundle of joy, a blessing, looks just like his dad. And damned if every single one isn't true.

We're just the grandparents but I think our lives have changed forever as well. Dropping everything and driving the hour to see Grady seems the most natural thing in the world and at least part of me wonders if productivity will ever return to pre-grandkid levels. Right now it seems the most natural thing in the world is sitting for hours with a baby draped across my chest, watching him sleep with not a care in the world. We've turned into smiling fools.

And of course it's as though a throng of paparazzi have descended, blinding the poor kid with shot after shot trying to capture every move he makes, every priceless expression. Memory cards are filling up and he's only four days old! Even his crying face is so cute that people reach first for their cameras and only after that to stop his crying. "Baby face, you've got the cutest little baby face," goes the 1926 song recorded by countless artists.

Looking back at Greg's baby photos stored in those terrible magnetic sheet albums makes me marvel at the changes in technology. I also see that we were in the hospital for five days. In 1977 a photographer came around and took baby portraits that were then sold to parents. In that photo Greg and Grady look identical. In 2009 everyone, including the dad, has a digital camera to capture images as they happen. Grady was born at 11:33 p.m. and the first Blackberry images of him began circulating at 2:30 a.m.

What about the olden days of buying film, hoping your batteries were fresh, shooting 12 or 24 pictures before taking them to a photo lab for week-long processing? Then you could put a couple of possibly blurry or poorly lit pictures into an envelope and mail it to friends or relatives. How did we

survive?

In the nearly 32 years since Greg was born many things have changed but I suspect many more have stayed exactly the same. I reminded the parents yesterday that they would now be spending a minimum of 18 years, and more likely the rest of their lives, making sure this child was safe and healthy. It's a huge burden that most parents accept willingly and perform admirably and I have no doubt our little Grady is in good hands.

Lead-free paint, infant car seats, baby monitors, banning walkers and other unsafe toys all make life easier and safer for these precious souls. We brought Greg home from the hospital in something called a travel bed, essentially an oversized grocery basket with plastic padding.

Roy, Hilary, and I are available to help in any way we can. In the meantime we're soaking up the experience and capturing it with our cameras. After all, he's got the cutest little baby face, from where I sit.

Sister Aurora

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



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.

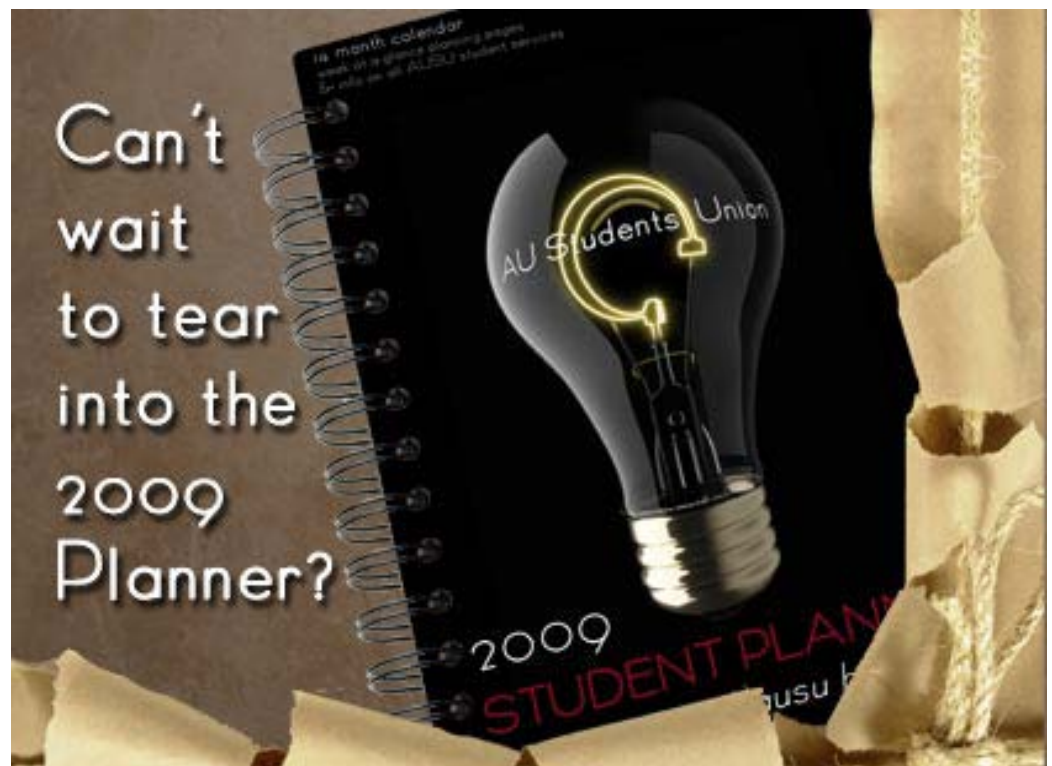
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member 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: Ageing workforce will boost economy

With nearly 370,000 Canadian jobs lost since last October, some analysts are calling for a slow economic recovery. Others, however, are predicting a surplus of jobs in the next decade—mostly due to the ageing population. In fact, some industries are already feeling the lack of a skilled workforce as record numbers of Baby Boomers get set to retire.

As the *National Post* reports, some 30 per cent of recent job cuts “have been in the construction sector.” However, the Construction Sector Council estimates that 317,000 skilled workers will be needed between now and 2017. More than half of those workers, roughly 168,000, will be needed to replace retiring Baby Boomers.

The mining sector anticipates a shortage of skilled workers as well, with approximately 70,000 workers needed by 2014 as nearly half of the sector’s workers will retire by then.

Losses in equities and real estate may force some older workers to stay on the job a little longer than planned, but it will be a

temporary delay in the workplace shortage.

Roger Sauvé, president of People Patterns Consulting, told reporters, “If we have a normal type of recovery, in about three to four years the demographic situation will lead to massive shortages.” The situation is expected to “intensify over the next 15 to 20 years.”

In spite of the warnings, a 2008 survey by the Conference Board of Canada indicates that a mere 6 per cent of employers are preparing for the shortage by “making efforts to hold on to mature workers.”

In Foreign News: Japanese city issued warning over dolphin slaughter

The Australian town of Broome has issued a warning to its sister city of Taiji, Japan: end the slaughter of dolphins or the relationship is over. Broome, on Australia’s west coast, has been twinned with Taiji for 28 years. The friendly ties between the two cities reach back almost 100 years, since the days when Taiji residents helped get the Aussie town’s pearl industry started.

The yearly dolphin slaughter has become a contentious issue, though, and Broome’s local council voted unanimously to put its sister city on warning, according to *The Japan Times*. Graeme Campbell, Broome council head, told reporters that “the council respectfully advises . . . Taiji that it will be unable to fulfill its pledge as a sister town of Taiji while the practice of harvesting dolphins exists.”

Other groups have been critical of Taiji’s dolphin slaughters as well, including anti-whaling organizations, and the Broome council notes that they have been subject to “social and economic sanctions” because of the close relationship with Taiji.

Taiji’s dolphin catch is sold to restaurants and aquariums. Part of Broome council’s resolve is to help Taiji develop other economic opportunities to replace those lost if the dolphin slaughter ends.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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