

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 04 2011-01-28

### Unhappy Meals

Food for thought

### Poet Unleashed

The film that howled

### Say What You Mean

In defence of plainspeak

*Plus: From Where I Sit  
Course Exam  
Maghreb Voices  
and much more!*



# CONTENTS

## WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

*The Voice's* 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

Editorial: Fat Trick .....3

## Articles

Maghreb Voices: Night in Tunisia, Part III .....5

Course Exam: CMNS 333 .....7

## Columns

Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan .....8

Write Stuff: Plain Language .....9

From Where I Sit: Read On ..... 11

The Mindful Bard: *Howl* ..... 12

AUSU Update ..... 15

## News and Events

Notice: AUSU General Meeting .....4

Click of the Wrist ..... 10

International News Desk ..... 14

## From the Readers

Letters to the Editor .....2

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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.





## EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

## Fat Trick



Out of sight, out of mind, the old saying goes. And on paper, it makes sense: when your two-year-old spots a plate of cookies sitting on the counter, you simply relocate it. Soon enough, she's forgotten all about it and goes on her merry way.

Outside of the toddler world, the old adage doesn't apply quite so smoothly. But you wouldn't know it from the proliferation of head-in-the-sand approaches to one of the big problems facing the youngest generation: childhood obesity.

The WHO execs' plan to urge treat manufacturers to "restrict" the kid-friendly marketing of their products is just the latest in a series of similar tactics. It echoes the city of San Francisco's controversial move to ban toys in area McDonald's Happy Meals; telling reporters it was "food justice," the San Francisco board of supervisors plans to implement the legislation this December.

And it's not just governments getting involved. A few months ago, a consumer advocacy organization sued McDonald's in a class action, claiming that the fast food chain was preying on "vulnerable" children and "changing" the kids' perceptions of what they want.

Ahem. Of course, it's not the *parents'* fault that they bought their kids the junk food. It's the fault of McDonald's, and other junk food manufacturers, that childhood obesity's a growing problem. After all, who can say no? We just can't stop buying stuff for ourselves and our kids!

In many ways, it's a problem of self-control rather than corporate control. And that's why removing the advertising isn't going to really solve the obesity problem—or any other problem—because the issues go much deeper than a cool My Little Pony toy that lures kids toward a burger and fries.

Sure, advertising gets inside our heads and tries to sway us to its side. And blaming the purveyor of goods is the easy way to rid ourselves of guilt. But applying this approach to childhood obesity isn't just simplistic, it's dangerous. If we slap the gag on the big, bad fast food chain, are we teaching our kids anything about healthy decision-making?

The problem comes down to choice. In order to choose, you need information and options. But you also need to know *how* to choose, and fostering the inability to analyze choices is a bad move.

It means we'd be creating a generation of adults who would have difficulty critically considering their choices. We're already seeing low levels of critical thinking skills filtering up through the generations, and we're only just beginning to understand the effects on family and societal dynamics, financial matters, and political analyses.

The first step is basic health education—from day one. Both kids *and* parents need to understand healthy eating, and both have to know the strategies they'll need to make healthy choices, whether for themselves or their families. US First Lady Michelle Obama's headed in the right direction with her Let's Move campaign and emphasis on local gardening. And some schools have pioneered innovative programs to encourage kids to change their eating sensibilities—like this Montreal high school, which created its own Biggest Loser-style weight loss challenge.



But education needs to go beyond understanding the value of an active, healthy lifestyle. Kids—and, increasingly, adults—need to learn *how* to choose it. They need to discover how to think critically again.

Ironically, we look at past eras and congratulate ourselves on allowing more freedom, more opportunity, and more choice. Yet we're still playing ourselves into the hands of the powerful, with the new paternalism being the world of advertising.

Because in the end, whether it's iPhones or Big Macs, we're the ones making the choice to buy. On the flip side, consumers who are well-versed in critical thinking can be a death knell to the advertisers to whom the year-end balance reigns supreme. That's why educating parents and children about how to make choices is a crucial step toward combating childhood obesity—and a host of other societal ills. Emotional health, financial health, and environmental health are all dependent on our ability to critically sort through consumer choices. Analytical skills will give kids and grown-ups the tools they need to navigate the complex issues of need and want.

But while lifestyle education and critical thinking are two important components in the war on childhood (and adulthood) obesity, they won't completely solve the problem: there's the more complicated issue of food economics.

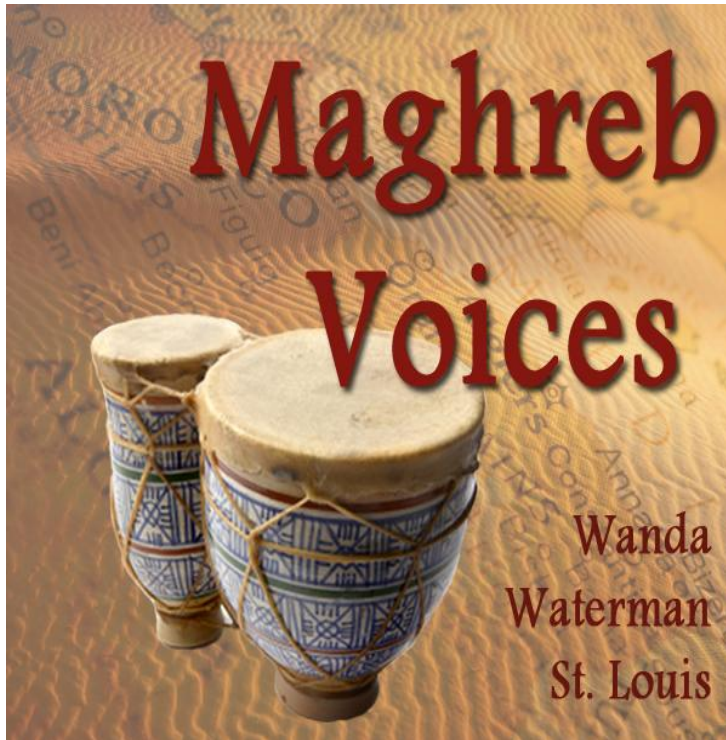
Simply put, healthy stuff frequently costs more than junk—and even though we're paying more for it down the line in terms of medical problems, sometimes it's a matter of surviving now rather than later. In next week's issue, we'll look at some of the implications of this additional hurdle facing national health.

### **NOTICE: AUSU GENERAL MEETING**

AUSU will hold its annual general meeting on Wednesday, February 2, 2011, at 2:30 pm MST (4:30 pm EST). The meeting will be held via teleconference; all currently active students may attend.

If you're interested in issues affecting AU students, you won't want to miss the teleconference. Plus, all student participants will receive a packet of AUSU swag—and one lucky student will receive one of our popular AUSU hoodies!

Students living outside Canada may also dial in to the teleconference, but please inform AUSU in advance if you'll be calling from an international location. For further information or to reserve a line, please contact AUSU at [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).



## Night in Tunisia: The Inevitable Eruption of a Long-standing Unrest, Part III

(Read [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) of this series.)

*“ . . . For all that is done and said.*

*We know their dream; enough*

*To know they dreamed and are dead;*

*And what if excess of love*

*Bewildered them till they died?*

*. . . Now and in time to be,*

*Wherever green is worn,*

*Are changed, changed utterly:*

*A terrible beauty is born.”*

William Butler Yeats, “Easter, 1916”

### The Old Autocracy Meets the New Grassroots Economy, and a Terrible Beauty Is Born

Mohamed Bouazizi, whose self-immolation launched the Jasmine Revolution, was an unemployed young Tunisian who supported his parents and siblings with a fruit and vegetable stand.

Youth unemployment is a significant problem in the Maghreb region today, as it is everywhere. In Western countries, youth have been adjusting to the cold, hard reality that the days of finishing your schooling and heading straight into a job in the very field you’d studied are well-nigh gone.

Savvy young people in Europe and North America are now cobbling together a living from enterprises like dumpster digging, eBay sales, house-sitting, organic gardening, part-time or casual labour, farm markets, and carefully promoted art-making.

Mohamed Bouazizi sold vegetables, as do my formerly yuppie neighbours, who are now content to export shortbread and raise rare breeds of chickens. But Mohamed lived in a country which didn’t allow his enterprise this level of dignity and glamour. Rather, in Tunisia, the authority had unbridled power to harass, humiliate, abuse, torture, imprison, and extort goods and money from its citizens.

In Mohamed’s suicide and the circumstances surrounding it, we can see plainly what happens at the juncture between totalitarianism and the grassroots conviction that basic freedom is both vital and achievable.

In Tunisia, the dream of a democratic egalitarian society is very close to realization. Human rights and civil liberties are now given top priority in discussions of the emerging order, and freedom of speech, word, and association are recognized as being as essential as efforts to narrow economic inequities.

Now for the sobering facts. Remember Orwell’s *Animal Farm*? We know how easy it is for revolutionaries to

morph into clones of the overthrown. We know that tyranny is not yet snuffed out. We know that Tunisia is a country infected with the after-effects of French colonialism and all the internalization of greed, corruption, and classism that this history implies.

There is also a chance that internal conflicts may sabotage democratization. Although Tunisia may not have marked ethnic divisions, the political divisions are multiple. It remains to be seen whether this pluralism will enrich or fragment the new order.

There is also the possibility that some will seek vengeance. (The recent obsequious gestures of the police toward the very populace it only recently clubbed and fired upon serve as evidence of this danger.) Many died unjustly, in the bloom of youth, and although it's a great consolation that social change emerged, no amount of social progress can ever fully compensate for the loss of a child, a sibling, or a close friend. And violence and bloodshed can sometimes prove to be as addictive as crystal meth.

***"[T]he world is now waking up to the reality that Islam is not the enemy . . . [s]ecularization can be as good an excuse for repression as religion."***

In spite of all the hazards, though, we can still point to some thrilling certainties. For one thing, leaders in Western countries can no longer justify supporting dictatorships as a fortification against Islamic extremism.

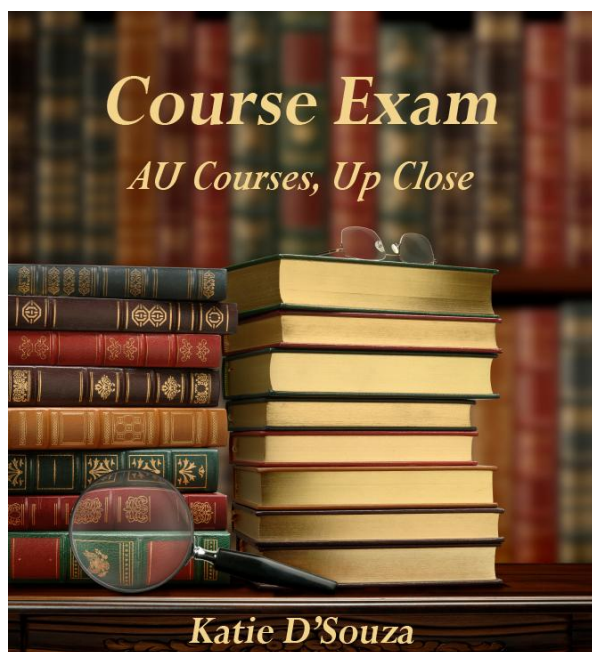
This fear of Muslim zealotry is in itself outdated; the world is now waking up to the reality that Islam is not the enemy. The Jasmine Revolution is notable for having taken place in an Arab country yet *not* being about religion. This could be because Tunisia is a comparatively secular nation, but it could also be because the struggle itself was clearly neither a conflict between religious factions nor a reaction to religious oppression. In fact, a Tunisian politician once remarked that it was okay to compromise democratic freedoms for the sake of secularization. Secularization can be as good an excuse for oppression as religion.

Though Tunisia is now at a precarious place in its history, no one is more aware of this than the Tunisians themselves, who have remained steadfastly vigilant over their hard-won freedom. After the departure of Ben Ali, citizens rallied quickly to raise loud objections when they discovered that members of Ben Ali's Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) would form part of the interim government. They also objected when the politically two-faced France indicated that it might enter the picture to help create stability in the country.

Which leads us to one more happy thought. Within its borders, Tunisia has plenty of people who are perfectly capable of taking the reins in a new government. Before, the substantial number of educated, unemployed youth was part of the problem; they had education and no jobs. Now they all have a job, and it looks like they may just be ready to help build a new country.







## CMNS 333

### Research Methods in Communication Studies

Maybe it's the love of lifelong learning. Or maybe it's a fascination with the new ideas out there. Or it could even be a flashback to the excitement I always felt when opening a new AU course start-up package. Whatever the reason, I'm feeling that way all over again as I read about all the brand-new, you-could-be-the-first-student-enrolled courses Athabasca University now has available.

It's true: during 2010, AU was hard at work creating a variety of exciting and challenging new courses. The most recent offering is CMNS 333: Research Methods in Communication Studies, which just became available this month.

CMNS 333: Research Methods in Communication Studies explores the way we collect, analyze, and evaluate data in communications research. The entire course is online-accessible (with the exception of the course text, which is distributed in hard copy for easy access and studying).

The course is divided into nine units. The first unit is an introductory one, familiarizing students with the concept of research methods and their necessity for scientific accuracy. "These research methods provide researchers with a powerful way to get at the truth about such areas of social and professional concern as the effects of print and electronic media, advertising, public relations, and the Internet," says acting course coordinator Jayne Gackenbach.

Once students are comfortable with these methods, they learn about ethical responsibilities in research. Ethics is a particularly important concern when obtaining informed consent in studies involving human beings. An example, Gackenbach says, is "audience effects research."

Next, students explore the domains of quantitative and qualitative research, and what situations best employ each method. Quantitative research "provides descriptive, numerical statistics that are relatively easy to collect, calculate, analyze, and report," explains Gackenbach, indicating that it's often used for budget and profit research. However, she continues, quantitative research has its limitations; it lacks the "primary elements of communication" that people follow. Qualitative research fills this void, but it is "not easily tested for . . . validity," as is quantitative research.

Over the next few units, students learn the framework of research itself: critical thinking skills and the ability to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different research methods in order to gain the most applicable model for the study in question. Students become comfortable with "focus groups, text analysis, case studies and field observations," according to the course materials.

CMNS 333 students also investigate content analysis and survey research methods, using quantitative and mixed research methods, respectively, as the primary research strategies. Additionally, students are introduced to other research methods. Longitudinal research involves monitoring "data over a period of time," says Gackenbach, and experimental methods are those in which "a researcher manipulates one variable to see how it affects another."



The remaining three units in CMNS 333 are related to research applications. Students explore different media (including print, electronic, and advertisement) through which research can be propagated, and delving into the far-reaching effects of each one. Additionally, they learn about the financing end of research: the necessity of funding to both initiate and complete projects, and ways to gain such funds.

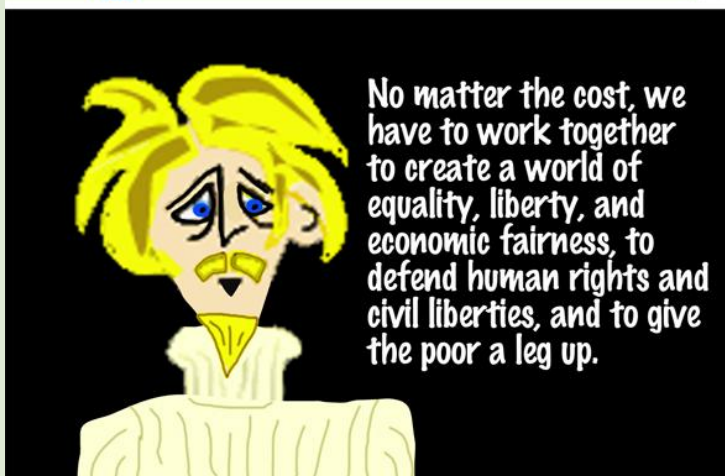
Evaluation in CMNS 333 is based on several factors. Students will complete eight short assignments, each worth five per cent of the final grade. These assignments vary from creative work like writing short essays and designing new studies to mathematical work like working with statistics. CMNS 333 students will also be evaluated through two tests (worth five per cent each), given to students by the tutors "at key points" during the course, says Gackenbach. Finally, students will write a research proposal (worth 20 per cent) focusing on research design, and a final exam at the end of the course (30 per cent of the final grade)

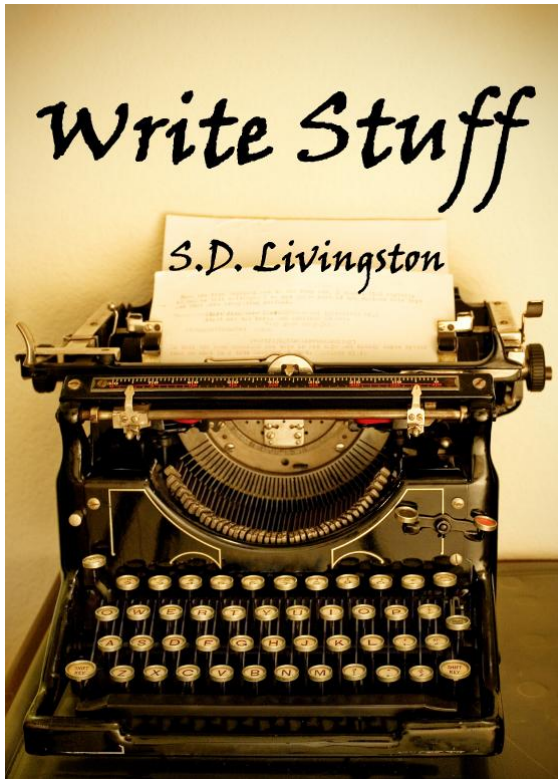
The course is worth 3 credits, and has CMNS 308 (or equivalent) as its pre-requisite. It's also cross-listed with CMNS 410.

For more information on CMNS 333, visit the course [website](#) or the [Centre for State and Legal Studies](#).

## CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis





## Plain Language

“Click here to accept the terms and conditions.” How many times have you seen those words, then clicked the box to sign up for an email account or other online service? And how often have you bothered to investigate the links next to that box, the ones that say “Privacy Policy” or “Terms of Service”? The irony is that, as we rush to speed up our lives with apps and services, the contracts we sign are so dense and complicated that we rarely bother to read them. The solution? Plain language—and it’s about time we started to demand more of it.

Strangely, it seems like the more we try to simplify our lives, the more complex things become. It used to be that going to a movie meant buying a ticket, grabbing some popcorn, and enjoying the show. You didn’t need to sign a contract or give out any personal info (not even your postal code). Today, chances are that no matter how you get your entertainment, you’ve signed on to a labyrinthine contract you’ve never read—whether it’s for your video store membership, the credit card

you use at the theatre, or the online account for downloading movies and video games.

Cell phones, reward cards, you name it. If someone’s promising to make your life easier, you can bet there’s an indecipherable contract in there somewhere. So what’s wrong with simply saying what they mean—and why aren’t more companies doing it?

Believe it or not, the push for plain language has been around for a while now. The Plain Language Association International ([PLAIN](#)) was formed in Canada in 1993. The US has a Center for Plain Language, and there’s even a [PlainLanguage.gov website](#). Then there’s the Plain Swedish Group in (of course) Sweden. My favourite, though, has to be Scribes, The American Society of Legal Writers. Among other things, they aim to “spread the growing scorn for legal writing that is archaic, turgid, obscure, and needlessly dull.” If they put that on a T-shirt, I’d buy it.

But in spite of efforts by governments and other organizations, most consumer contracts are still so hopelessly indecipherable that the average person has given up all but the most cursory glance at the first couple of paragraphs.

Using plain language doesn’t mean leaving out key information or treating consumers like idiots. But it does mean getting rid of doublespeak and putting important legal info in plain terms, whether you’re signing up for a new smart phone or joining a social network. And it *is* possible.

This [Bloomberg Businessweek article](#) is from 2009, so some of the examples might not be current, but at the time it was published ING Direct, an Internet-based bank, had whittled a home-loan agreement down to two pages. And thanks to a drive in the 1970s for clearer contracts, in 1975 “Citibank reduced its standard consumer loan agreement from 3,000 words to 600.”

With enough consumers spreading the word and refusing to sign up for services with convoluted privacy and user agreements, you can bet that companies would react to a drop in their bottom lines. In fact, I might just go join one of those social networks right now. But don't hold your breath—it's probably going to take me a while to read through the terms of service first.

## CLICK OF THE WRIST: Diet of Worms

Today marks the anniversary of the beginning of the Diet of Worms in 1521. Despite the intriguing name, it's really quite prosaic: "Worms" is a city in what's now Germany, "Diet" refers to a meeting of the heads of the Imperial States of the Holy Roman Empire, and the 16<sup>th</sup>-century assembly itself discussed the heavy historical and spiritual matters related to Martin Luther. Yet despite the historical significance, it'll be always be most memorable to history students because of its odd and slightly disturbing name. However, even if the name were literal, it wouldn't be the first bizarre diet; many have sprung up over the years. Here are a few of the strangest.

### Eating Worms

This time, *actual worms*. It's believed that in the early 1900s, tapeworms in a capsule were peddled to those seeking a quick route to weight loss. While many of the sellers may have been quacks, some people do willingly infect themselves with tapeworms in order to lose weight, and there's a booming business selling giant intestinal worms in Hong Kong. The science behind it: the tapeworm will consume some of the food you eat. Just reading about it is an appetite suppressant in itself!

### The Bug Diet

Looking for a high-protein source that's low in fat, easy to digest, and more environmentally sustainable than meat? Here's a hint: you might have just hit one with your fly swatter. Researchers at Wageningen University in the Netherlands are investigating the logistics of changing from a Big Mac to a "Bug Mac" in order to ensure adequate food supplies for the future.

### The Cotton Ball Diet

The premise of this diet is simple: you fill up on cotton balls. As in, the kind from the drugstore. Sometimes they're soaked in gelatin in order to ease digestion. Unbelievably, this diet is actually used, including, allegedly, by some modern celebrities.

### Time for a Drink

Forget the liquid diets and their weak offerings of grapefruit juice and carrot smoothies. The original liquid diet, used by William the Conqueror before the year 1100, involved drinking nothing but . . . alcohol. Problem: alcohol is high in calories. It also impairs judgment. William died shortly after beginning his diet, when he fell off his horse.





## Read On



Any regular reader of this column or anyone who knows me even slightly understands that I love reading. You also know that I don't have nearly enough time to read everything that's on my nightstand or lining my bookcases. But I try.

There's just something wonderfully tactile about (carefully) cracking open a new book. Some, with great illustrations or embossing or heavy, linen covers, are really works of art. They reek of promise: the potential to inform or entertain or move the reader, and I love that.

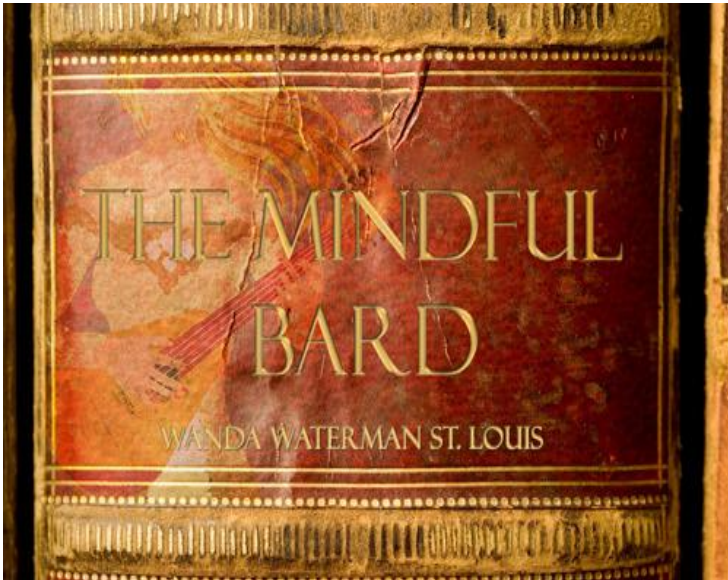
But even musty, old books are appealing, especially if I know the provenance. I still have a battered, yellowed 1945 paperback edition of Stephen Leacock's *Literary Lapses*, with a cover price of 25 cents. It was given to me by my mentor, Dorothy Bond, when I was a young caseworker at CNIB in the mid-1970s. That book and the note she slipped inside it take me back decades. How could I part with it? Or how could I release the small, hardcover edition of Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* that I bought at a neighbour's garage sale many years ago? Alec's name and the date—September 1938—are written in fountain pen on the front page. His daughter's name is underneath it, written in pencil.

Today, I'm likely to check mayoclinic.com when I need reliable information on symptoms, causes, and cures for what ails me. But that doesn't mean I'd ever let go of the 1944 edition of *Modern Medical Counselor*. The endpapers have a grey marble-like design that almost looks anatomical, with its curvy shapes and veining. There are only 15 colour illustrations in this book of nearly 1,000 pages. I remember my mom using it to look up remedies. This is a keeper.

I'm also keeping my beat-up high school textbook *Conversational Ukrainian*, by Yar Slavutych, even though I was the sixth kid to buy it and it's being held together with brittle tape. Why? In the vain hope that I will someday regain some capacity to read, write, or speak my native language with some fluency.

So why am I subjecting you to this inventory of oldies? I am torn. I feel disloyal or disingenuous or confused over how easily I adapted to my Sony Reader. I bought one book (*The Voice's* own S.D. Livingston's latest *Project Renaissance*) and loaded up a bunch of free titles before our Mexican holiday. Because I'm not a total convert yet, I also packed three paperbacks and read one of them. The Reader was lightweight, portable, and surprisingly easy to read, even with progressive lenses. I got the case with the attached light as a Christmas gift, but didn't need to use it for extra light. The case seems to offer some solid protection, though at \$55 it seems a bit like price gouging.

In fact, I'm so taken with the new technology that I am considering digital publishing for my first novel. If and when it happens, you'll be the first to know. In the meantime, read on, from where I sit.



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

DVD: Howl

**Starring:** James Franco, Jon Hamm, Treat Williams, Mary-Louise Parker, Bob Balaban, David Strathairn, Alessandro Nivola, and Jeff Daniels.

**Directors/Screenwriters:** Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman.

**Keeping One Finger on the Primal Pulse in the Age of Moloch**

*“. . . angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night,*

*who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz . . .*

Allen Ginsberg, “Howl” (the poem)

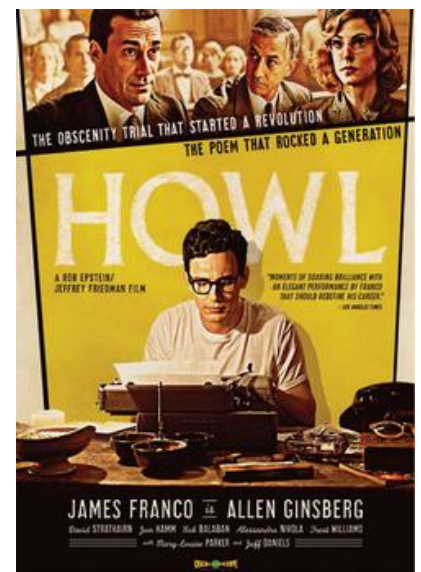
Years ago, in some glossy magazine, I saw a photo spread about apartments of eminent New Yorkers. I was grudgingly admiring the good taste and luxuriance of the *pieds-à-terre* of famous actors, designers, and socialites, when suddenly there was a photo of poet Allen Ginsberg’s apartment, with nothing but steel shelves, an old couch, and stacks of books. Suddenly the posh apartments looked absurd, the abodes of vacuous poseurs.

Ginsberg was all about being authentic. In the film—in which the portrayal of Ginsberg is amazingly close to the truth—he makes a poignant defence of authenticity, of not striving for “good” literature so much as striving to write from your own being.

Authenticity is also one salient aspect of the Mindful Bard philosophy. It’s futile to strive for superiority when the only real good you can ever do with your art is to bring up the treasures of your own individual consciousness as a response to suffering. Ginsberg arrived at authenticity in a number of ways, and his knowledge was hard-won.

For one thing, coming to terms with his homosexuality forced him to examine himself, to recognize the significance of personal identity, and to develop a firm personal stance in the face of the storms and tempests of public opinion.

It wasn’t just at the famous obscenity trial in 1957 that Ginsberg’s literary talent was questioned. On a first reading, his lines often appear to be rambling, pointless, and self-indulgent, and his style spawned a thousand pale imitations that eventually became fodder for spoofs of beatnik poetry from Captain Beefheart to *The Munsters*. Was his poetry really any good?



Sometimes you want to say, as did Mark Volman about Frank Zappa, “He’s not a genius! I know the difference between a genius and someone who’s had too much coffee to drink!”

I only know that the race is not to the swift—it’s not necessarily the best poet who achieves cultural ascendancy; rather, sometimes it’s the most passionate and insightful poet, the poet who, even in the age of Moloch, keeps one finger relentlessly fixed on the primal pulse.

Another significant factor in the development of his ideal of authenticity was the fact that Ginsberg wasn’t published right away. In fact, he had assumed he could *not* be published, which gave him a degree of creative liberty not afforded laureates. He also confessed to wanting to grab the attention of buddy Jack Kerouac, who only perked up at poems that were in essence raw expressions of real feeling. Ginsberg soon realized—publishing standards and repressive laws be damned—that this was in fact what readers really wanted.

As for this film, it was a tall order to recreate the tenor of late ’50s bohemian America. But it succeeds in maintaining enough similitude to boomer memory and Robert Frank’s black and white photos and footage to create a nostalgic but relevant depiction of this seminal event in American cultural history.

Though the film loses points for using big band jazz and New Age music (as opposed to the more historically accurate Hawkins, Davis, and Coltrane) the smoke, the clothes, the mannerisms, and the overcrowded coffeehouses are richly redolent of those tortured but engaging times.

Black and white film and dated interiors are what you’d expect with this subject, but something unexpected and quite wonderful about this film is the highly symbolic animated segments illustrating the imagery in the poem *Howl*, a rhapsody of magical sound and images highly suggestive of the poet’s gruelling cultural role.

To its credit, the film isn’t just about coming out of the closet, although sexual marginalization clearly parallels the poet’s role in the capitalist age.

This film can stand proudly in the company of the handful of films based on poems (including *Beowulf*, *Braveheart*, *Helen of Troy*, and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*), and the time is ripe for a film that gives such a brilliant reinterpretation of *Howl*. Now that the blatant homosexuality and the raging critique of ’50s America seem less appalling, it’s easier to see the poem’s enduring relevance to the postmodern world.



*James Franco as Allen Ginsberg.  
Photo courtesy of Oscilloscope Laboratories.*

*Howl* manifests nine of The Mindful Bard’s criteria for films well worth watching: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else’s political agenda; 3) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 4) it is about attainment of the true self; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 7) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 8) it makes me want to be a better artist; and 9) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: What's Your Number?

Admit it: you keep an alternate email for those try-me-free sites that you know are going to fill your inbox with spam. But what about giving out your phone number? Forget telemarketers; simple privacy is a bigger issue than possible annoyance. It's of particular concern for those navigating the dating scene.

But there's a new solution. As the CBC [reports](#), new Toronto-based company Tigits "offers temporary telephone numbers" in an effort "to make telephone numbers more private" and "personal experiences like dating a whole lot more secure."

The president of Tigits dreamed up the idea "after suffering through a few dating nightmares," including one in which he told reporters he "wasn't comfortable giving out [his] number."

The service provides users with an "anonymous second phone number linked to their wireless or home phone." The number provides anonymity for both incoming and outgoing calls, and can be changed quickly if necessary. For further privacy, users have the option to use a voice prompt to screen callers.

Other companies are taking interest. Communications giant TELUS International president Jeffrey Puritt told reporters that Tigits "has the potential to quickly become a mainstream offering."

In the future, Tigits looks to provide the ability to send and receive text messages through the temporary numbers.

### Around the World: Give Me A Lift

Urban legends of dumb criminals abound. Those who leave their contact information with their victim. Those whose deliberately ridiculous behaviour gets them nabbed for DUIs. Those who rob crowded gun shops. But not all the stories are questionable. Recently, a pair of German thieves made their own place in dumb criminal history.

As Canoe.ca [reports](#), the "would-be thieves called in their own crime to police . . . after they could not escape from a broken-down elevator."

The thieves, who had entered an office building and were attempting to rob a destination on a "higher floor," decided to take the elevator. Unfortunately, the elevator "became stuck," and the two were trapped.

After one of the thieves "injured his hand attempting to pry open the door," they used the elevator's emergency phone to call for help, telling the emergency operators that they "wanted to break in" but had "gotten stuck."

The thieves were arrested shortly after their rescue.

## AUSU UPDATE



### Convocation 2010

AUSU wishes to congratulate this year's graduates, whether attending Convocation in person or by distance. We wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits. You are an inspiration to all AU students!

### AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

### Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

### New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

### Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should

check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

## AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors - specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

## SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

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.



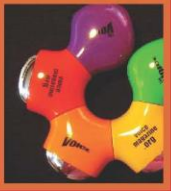



For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

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.

**AUSU**  
Representing AU  
Undergrads

# Student Gear

2009 merchandise

Clothing  
Technology  
Fun Items  
Home Decor

**Fostering the Student Community**

AUSU and Voice gear is intended to support your studies and help you feel like part of the AU student community. Suggestions for new items are welcome. Contact our office with any questions.



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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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