

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

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Ulysses Returns

Guy Maddin's *Keyhole*

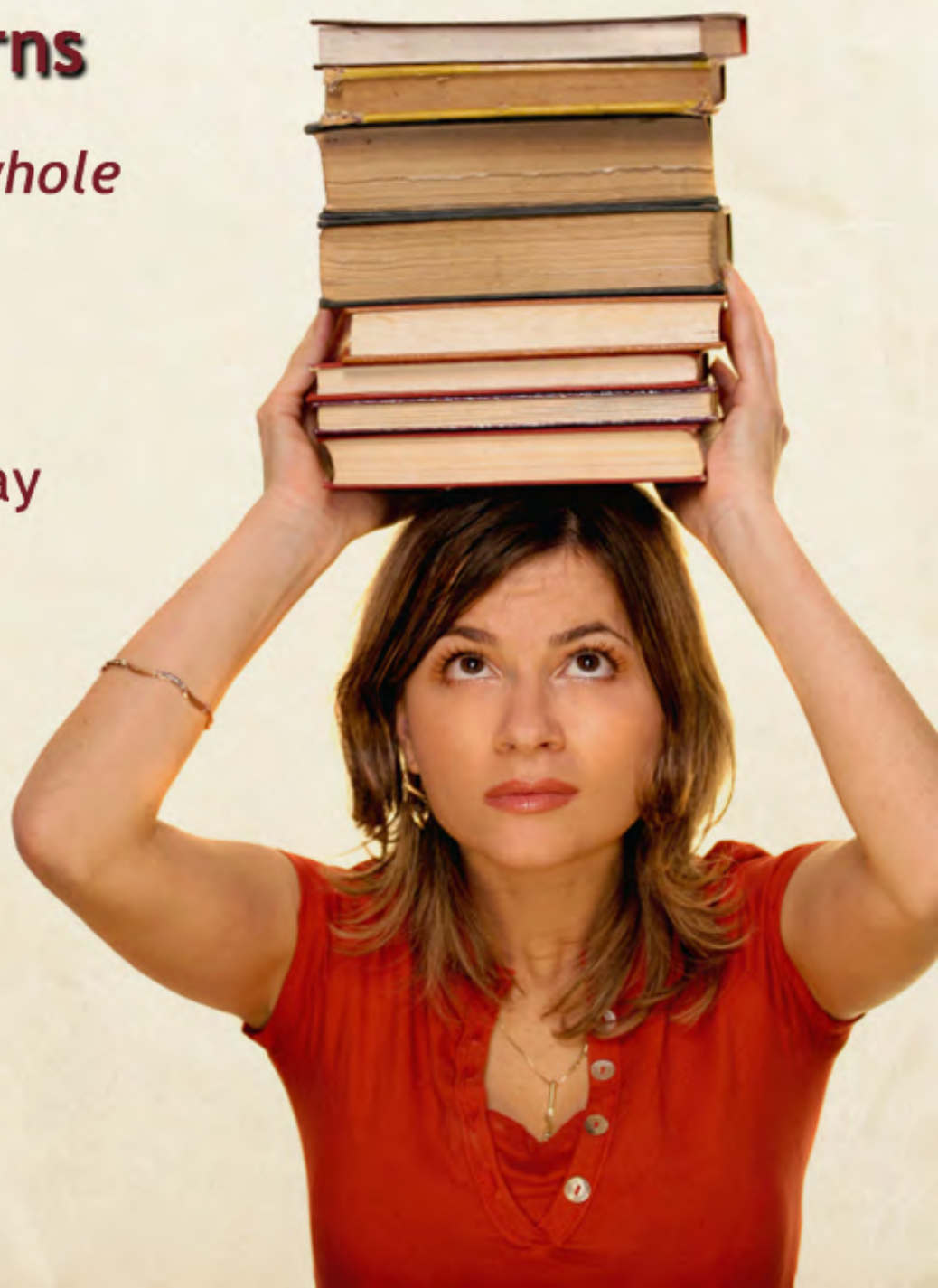
Open Book

Human Library Day

Faked?

Buying, selling

Plus:
From Where I Sit
The Mindful Bard
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.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



Consumer Conspiracy

Have you heard the latest conspiracy theory? I'm referring to the photos and videos that have recently surfaced online, the ones questioning whether the school shootings in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, legitimately occurred or were staged as part of some master plan (or otherwise engineered).

Are these people for real? we say. And it's easy to brush them off as "crazy crackpots," but when we do that we're glossing over what's become a very real problem: the relationship between the media and its consumers, and how we define it.

It's no secret that media in general have morphed into a hybrid of entertainment and sales. The entertainment and engagement factors drive advertisers, increase ratings, and ultimately up the bottom line of the media giants, so the notion of media "manipulating" us really isn't much of a stretch. In fact, like all sales departments, the media desks need to create a particular "spin," for lack of a better word, to engender the desired set of attitudes from viewers and readers (and therefore, more advertising dollars).

We even refer to ourselves as media consumers—though frequently we miss the whole point of the phrase, the implication that we're buying (or not) what the media is selling us. Don't like this particular product? Then take your business to a different place. Sometimes we want to stay in our comfort zone and see people's actions in the light of our preconceived notions. Other times we allow our insecurities to be played upon, and we respond a little more personally to media hype than we might have done were it not calculated to create a reaction.

The media—particularly now, with all the avenues opened up thanks to social media, the web, and instant information via smart phone—is a more powerful force than ever. And yet we still think we're in control, considering ourselves interpreters when we really just react with our hearts instead of our heads.

Is this good or bad? Like all things, it can be either, depending upon the players; but the key is to be aware.

There will always be far-out conspiracy theories (moon landing, anyone?), but as we dismiss these claims as paranoia, it would do us well to maintain a little skepticism of the media we consume. If nothing else, we need to question our own response to what we see and hear. Are we reacting emotionally or rationally? Why might the media be hoping for a particular response from us? How do they benefit when we tune in to their show or click through their site? What are they trying to sell?

Because make no mistake, like any business, the television, film, radio, social media, and print we come in contact with are all trying to sell us something. Whether it's a secret plot or a bid for our advertising dollars, one thing is certain: We need to critically evaluate our consumption choices and reclaim the world of media for our own.

GREGOR'S BED

Wanda Waterman



Image courtesy of monterey media.

Recent Discoveries from the Realm of the Experimental and the Avant-Garde

Film: *Keyhole* (2011)

Director: Guy Maddin

Cast: Jason Patric, Isabella Rossellini, Udo Keir, David Wontner, Kevin McDonald

*"She was so naked. No one's ever been so naked.**I've kind of lost it. Where are we?**We're in a locked room."*from *Keyhole*

Ulysses is in the House (But Is That Really a Good Thing?)

This happens to me a lot when watching avant-garde films: My jaw drops and I say, *This is amazing! It's a groundbreaking piece of cinematic art!*

And then: *I can't stand to watch it!*

Yes, this is one of those. It's a retelling of part (the arrival home) of *The Odyssey*—one of the pillars of Western civilization—in all its archetypal brutality. The myth is just as salient in the postmodern West as it was in classical Greece, but in this instance it exposes the breakdown of civilization rather than its triumph.

Keyhole is like one of those dreams in which you're desperately trying to get somewhere but wake up without having obtained your goal, having instead encountered myriad shocks, traumas, delays, and frustrations along the way. It's a black and white fantasia in a 1940s setting, the grand old house that is a maze of weird happenings, the action consisting of all manner of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Ulysses is home, but his family does not experience him as fully present to them. Instead of suitors, the house is crowded with his henchmen, a bunch of criminal ne'er-do-wells just like him. He has killed two people and buried them in the backyard in holes rapidly filling with torrential rain.



Jason Patric in Guy Maddin's *Keyhole*.
Image courtesy of monterey media.

What is impressive are the techniques Maddin uses to synthesize the dream state. For one, for the first three quarters of the film there's a sharp disconnect between the actors' facial expressions and what they're saying. For another, none of their words say anything clearly. They mouth a string of clichés and senseless introspective autobiography, musings in which meaning takes a back seat. Watching it presents a formidable mission to the rational, conscious mind.

Adding to the dream sensation are the mannerisms of the actors; every movement and facial expression is highly awkward and stylized, as if these were children play-acting, and the jittery, too-close camera heightens the primitive dramatic mystique.

The easily titillated might look to this for its many naughty bits, but the sex is awful in its absence of boundaries, and the naked bodies for the most part are not beautiful—and neither are they meant to be.

Maddin was much more coherent in *My Winnipeg* (the film won Maddin the title of “Canada’s David Lynch”), a fantastical documentary that nonetheless used clear language to explain a whacked-out view of this very white-bread Canadian city.

At the risk of interpreting something uninterpretable, the only salient signification of this film is its shameless representation of our age’s anxiety about fathers and fatherhood. In a deep sense, Western civilization feels let down by its individual fathers, spoon-fed *Playboy* values until they can no longer see beyond their own primal pleasure-seeking.

Writ large, the drama exposes the severe disappointment we feel in patriarchal systems that promised to protect us and help us grow strong but instead strive to keep us confused and infantile. In such a nightmare the house, i.e. the domestic sphere, once a necessary and comforting ego defense, has become a terrifying prison.



Film still from Guy Maddin's *Keyhole*. Image courtesy of monterey media.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book *They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good*, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

OVERHEARD . . .

Wanda Waterman

OVERHEARD



GUNS ARE
ONLY USED BY
RICH FARTS
FOR
PROTECTING
THEIR ROSY
LITTLE
HUMMEL BOYS
FROM
THIEVES...

...AND BY REDNECK
SHOW-OFFS FOR
KILLING BAMBI
MAMAS...



...AND BY COPS FOR
SHOOTING CRAZY
PEOPLE...AND BY CRAZY
PEOPLE...



IF I CAN'T HAVE
ONE I'LL JUST
DIE!!!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



Human Library Day

Libraries are wonderful things. They come in all shapes and sizes, hold a wealth of stories and adventures, and are willing to share their contents, good and bad, with everyone. No, we're not talking about traditional libraries; these are human libraries, and January 26 marks the first National Human Library Day in Canada.

A human library is a volunteer who acts as a book, telling stories and answering questions for the "readers" who borrow it. A simple idea, but its goals run deep. As the [Human Library](#) site explains, the idea grew from a youth organization called Stop the Violence. Five young people in Copenhagen had formed the group after their friend was stabbed.

By 2000, the organization had grown to 30,000 members across Denmark, and the director of the popular Roskilde Festival challenged them to organize an event for the festival. The Human Library was born.

This year, 15 Canadian cities will take part in [National Human Library Day](#), including Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, Yellowknife, St. John's, Ottawa, and Hamilton.

Wondering what kinds of "books" you can borrow? There's the story of Nick Denis, a student in the final year of a Ph.D. in biochemistry, who dropped out to pursue a career in mixed martial arts fighting. Rising to the top of his game, he retired because of the potential for brain damage.

In Thunder Bay, you can find out about Kevin Reiner—a trapper who helps work an area some 200 kilometres square. And in Surrey, BC, you can meet Danielle Kisser, a teenager who has "been a soccer player, made the B rep team in softball, spent 8 years riding horses and made her high school basketball team several years in a row"—even though she stands just four feet tall.

Then there are the intensely personal stories: the recovering drug, alcohol, and gambling addict who has turned his life around to counsel others; the director of a play on homophobia who was later beaten for his views; the young woman who, at 22, identified as transgendered and began the long journey from female to male.

All these human books have fascinating stories to tell, and it takes a certain bravery to open up in public, to complete strangers, about the details within life's pages.

But National Human Library Day is also about the bravery of readers. It's about the willingness to confront prejudices. To listen, to engage, to ask questions of people you might never otherwise meet—and might normally avoid. It means stepping outside your comfort zone and taking a risk.

On January 26, if you're going to be near one of the 15 host cities, plan an hour or so to open a "book" you wouldn't typically choose. You're sure to hear an interesting tale. But more than that, you might just open your mind.

*S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel *Kings of Providence*. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).*

CLICK OF THE WRIST

X Marks the Spot

Whether you've fractured your wrist, taken a cross-country flight, or just walked into the county administration building, chances are you've encountered an x-ray. Usually the connotations of this technology are negative (no one wants a broken bone—and the scanners at the airport have become legendary for their intrusiveness), but the applications are a lot further-reaching than most of us may realize. Check out these links to find out the latest on x-rays, and how these developments may figure into our future.

See Far

Typically we think of x-rays as useful for seeing *inside* something—whether a human being or a suitcase—but they can also be used to extend our vision far into the universe. This *Sky and Telescope* article profiles a new x-ray telescope that's sent us some powerful imagery of supernovas and "ravenous black holes."

Small and Beautiful

While x-ray machines are typically large, requiring huge outputs of electricity in order to function, researchers are at work perfecting a much smaller, more energy-efficient model that can potentially convert as little as 10 volts of power into 100,000 volts, enough to operate the handheld device. Although the model is only "the size of a stick of gum," the applications—from space exploration to providing inexpensive medical technology to third-world nations—are limitless.

In Living Colour

X-rays are traditionally black and white, with multiple pictures required in order to get a fuller image of internal organs, celestial bodies, or geographical layers, for example. This full-colour, 3D prototype provides more information in just one image through a better use of all elements of x-ray radiation.



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Album: *Lucky Lucky*

Artists: Patricia Deslauriers Trio (Patricia Deslauriers on bass, Guy St-Onge on piano, Paul Brochu on drums)

Classy Doesn't Have to Mean Shallow

Patricia Deslauriers is an accomplished contrabassist from Quebec. Despite a stellar career, her name has remained largely below radar except among the handful of elites she's accompanied (Wayne Shorter, Isabelle Boulay, Cheb Khaled, and

Diane Dufresne, among other notables).

Lucky Lucky is her solo debut, an instrumental interpretation of songs by Quebec song and score composer, environmentalist, and director Richard Desjardins, whose widely covered lyrics and compositions are remarkable for their tenderness and depth. His songs manifest a melodic richness well-suited to jazz treatment (chanteuse Karen Young has covered his songs as well as helping him pen a few).

There could be no musical tribute more touching than these reverent aural meditations. There's a lovely slow pulse to these tracks and an enervating crescendo and decrescendo that keep it engaging. Frequent small touches from all three musicians make it an aural gourmet repast. *Lucky Lucky* is an example of consummate discipline and craftsmanship (the first delicious piano tones and swishing cymbal are almost too perfect), yet every track throbs with inventiveness and sincere emotion.

One of Richard Desjardins' life missions is to speak for the natural environment—notably by calling for the prevention of overharvesting of the forests in his native Quebec—and to expound on the sacredness of place, in particular respecting the attachment First Nations in his province have to their territorial lands. Choosing to interpret the songs of such an artist belies any accusations of self-indulgence so often thrown at jazz musicians.

"Lucky Lucky is an example of consummate discipline and craftsmanship . . . yet every track throbs with inventiveness and sincere emotion."

This album is Deslauriers' long-overdue solo effort. It's among the smoothest, most sophisticated music you'll ever hear. It's also one of the Mindful Bard's favourite things: chamber jazz performed by a virtuoso minimalist trio, the kind of music you turn to for healing.

Lucky Lucky manifests five of the Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 3) it is about attainment of the true self; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; and 5) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

*"Le saumon rendu à la mer,
le prisonnier dans les bras de son père,
Le goéland dans le dépotoir,
la bijouterie, la barre de fer.
Du rock'n'roll sur ma misère,
le brochet noir dans le banc de ménés.
la band, la band, est bonne à soir,
y aura pas d'hiver cette année."*

Richard Desjardins, "Dans ses yeux"

DID YOU KNOW?

DegreeWorks



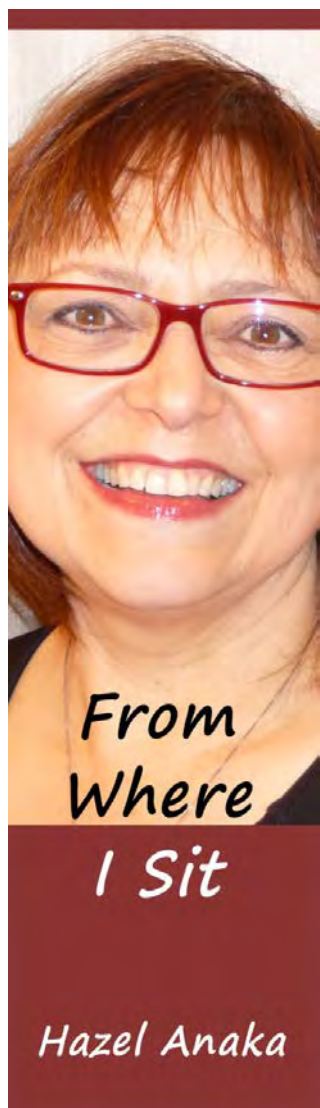
It takes a lot of planning to map out an academic career. But when you're working with information in several different media, the process can be time-consuming and frustrating. However, the future is promising: AU has launched DegreeWorks, "a comprehensive academic advising and degree audit solution" that communicates directly with AU's internal student information system and streamlines program planning.

DegreeWorks helps students plan their educational futures by "automatically [retrieving] a student's academic record . . . and [organizing] it into an educational plan on the web, identifying program requirements, courses completed and courses still needed to complete a degree."

Students are also able to "explore 'What if' scenarios to measure the effects of changing programs or adding majors or minors" and check GPAs based on projected future course grades.

It is user friendly, and AU has advisors available for students who need help navigating the system.

For more information on DegreeWorks, visit the [information site](#).



I Wasn't Ready

Five hundred words won't allow me much time for a backstory, so here's the scoop. In September, an aide at the local school asked me to come to the classroom as a guest artist. I needed more info about expectations, so I met with the teacher. She was tasked with teaching grades five/six and seven/eight split classes, and art wasn't her specialty. Would I come in once or for a series of days and teach them something more art than craft? And sooner rather than later.

I believe everything happens for a reason, so I said, *Yes, if you give me a copy of the curriculum.* It would be nice to dust off my skills, give back to the school my kids and Roy and I attended, and see inside a classroom in 2012. I spent time and energy looking through my resources and class plans. My goal was to find something meaningful that could be completed in an hour.

Fast-forward to late December and the second-last day of school before Christmas break. The teacher was in Saskatchewan for a funeral, but there was another regular teacher and a sub for the older kids. The eighth-graders were excused to listen to a DARE presentation in the gym.

My plan was three-pronged. As a warm-up, I would get them to capture, through line quality, what they heard when I played tracks from Vivaldi, Adele, and Gotye. Next, they would practice the discipline of contour drawing and begin to "see." Finally, they would make many quick gesture drawings using student models as references. All in all a good mix of learning and fun, I reasoned.

Oh, my God. I was not ready for how disrespectful they were. I wasn't ready for their teeny-tiny attention spans. I wasn't ready for the half-hearted effort most offered. I wasn't ready for any of it.

A good stiff drink, relief it was over, and chalking it up to "kids these days" was my plan to get over it. But what I can't get over is the fact that the teacher did not address the blatant bullying and insensitivity that occurred. One boy who modelled was overweight. The cruel picture another boy drew of him had the class roaring with laughter. Some of the girls who modelled were teased about how skinny they are. The substitute teacher did nothing. This all happened just days after the Newtown school massacre.

When I asked her privately why she didn't use this as a teachable moment, she said she was a sub who didn't have that kind of relationship with the class. I said that school boards and schools claim to have zero tolerance for bullying, yet are shocked when a kid snaps and brings a gun to school. She repeated the sub relationship crap; I said I was old-school and believe it takes a village to raise a child.

All I can say now is this: Heaven help any kid who doesn't fit in, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Robot Attendant

Just when you thought the age of full-service fuel attendants was over, a Canadian technology is changing the game. But there's a catch: It only works in space.

As the CBC reports, Dextre, a "Canadian-built robot handyman" working on the International Space Station, will "[attempt] to demonstrate for the first time that a machine can carry out the delicate task of refuelling a satellite in orbit."

During the course of the five-day mission, Dextre, "supporting a 250-kilogram, washing machine-sized, module . . . that's equipped with 28 different tools," will refuel a satellite with 1.7 litres of liquid ethanol in much the same way that you might gas up your car.

Working with Dextre will be another piece of Canadian technology: Canadarm2, "the robotic arm . . . that helps with assembly and maintenance." On the human side, controllers in Houston and Quebec will be operating the robotics.

Around the World: Diagnose Me

Got a funny ache in your leg? Fever and chills? Weird rash? If the first place you turn for answers is the web, you're part of a growing trend.

As the CBC reports, "one in three adults in the U.S. have used Dr. Google or other search engines to try to figure out a medical condition." Users, known as "online diagnosers," went online to look up issues ranging from "a specific disease or medical problem" to weight loss to "food safety or recalls."

Hypochondriacs? Not necessarily; 38 per cent of users decided that the issue "was something they could take care of home." And for those who decided to involve a medical professional, nearly half of the diagnoses were confirmed.

While search engines are still "the most popular way to search for health information," there are new trends: 13 per cent of online diagnosers used a site like WebMD, and some turned to social networking for answers to their questions.

For the most part, users seem primarily concerned with the facts. As study author Susannah Fox, of the Pew Internet Project, told reporters, "[the] social life of health information . . . — personal stories, peer support, user-generated reviews of clinicians, drugs, medical facilities— are important to . . . a minority of U.S. adults."

AUSU UPDATE

Bethany Tynes



AUSU e-newsletters a success

AUSU has been piloting the use of e-newsletters to contact our student body over the last year. We began by sending these newsletters to students registered on our website, and after a very positive initial response, we are now sending e-newsletters to all students currently enrolled in any AU undergrad course, as well as all students registered on our site who wish to receive email. We're looking forward to keeping in closer touch with our members, and hope in future to be able to send regular monthly e-newsletters to all members (though we'll also respect your right to unsubscribe). If there's something you'd like to see included in our newsletters, please let us know!

Instructional model survey

Last June, AUSU learned that AU planned to move all undergraduate courses to a call centre model (like the one currently used in AU's Faculty of Business) beginning in September. We felt that this was a very major change, and was surprised that the university had not conducted consultation of AU's students or academics. AUSU drafted a survey and sent it to all our members via e-newsletter. Over 2,500 of you took the time to fill out this survey, giving us a wealth of information about what's important to AU's undergrad students. The AUSU Executive is now working to make sure that these important student perspectives are communicated to the university, and we have presented our survey results report to a number of AU community members and committees, including CUPE 3911 (the AU tutors' union) and the Board of Governors (AU's highest governing body).

DegreeWorks now available

We've been waiting for AU to roll out their new DegreeWorks system—and it's finally available to students! If you started an AU program after September 2010, you can now use DegreeWorks to see how your courses fulfill the requirements of your program. DegreeWorks is available online anytime, and can instantly help you see which courses you still need to complete on the way to your credential. Let us know what you think of DegreeWorks, and we'll make sure we let the university know how they're doing meeting student needs.

Get in touch with us

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany at president@ausu.org. You can also e-mail our office at ausu@ausu.org or call 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

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

THE VOICE

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