

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 38 2014-09-26

The Benefits of Mensa

What's in it for AU Students

The Career Path

Have You Got One?

In Conversation

With The Honeyrunners, II

Plus:

*Music: Dull Days
Space Tourist
and much more!*



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***The Voice
Magazine***

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The Voice is published
every Friday in HTML and
PDF format.

For weekly email
reminders as each issue is
posted, fill out the
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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

Karl Low



Careers and Travel and Surveys, Oh My!

We're coming up on the end of my first year here, and it seems things are starting to speed up. This week, we'll have the start of a series of bi-weekly articles to provide distilled advice from various career help books. I think it's an interesting article just because one of the pieces of advice it gives is to warn people away from attending Graduate school without careful consideration. With this being a newspaper for people who have already decided that at least some further education is in their best interest, I'm interested in what you might have to say about it.

And next week, I'll have the first installment of a student who's taking full advantage of the AU distance delivery model, as he plans to travel across the country and globe while taking his AU courses at the same time. Personally, this is the kind of thing I'd hoped we'd have eventually, as one of the most unique things about our post-secondary is that we don't have to be anywhere in particular to accomplish it. It stands to reason to me that *The Voice Magazine* have something that

celebrates that.

Beyond that, the survey is now fully complete and will be announced in the next AUSU newsletter. It is fairly long, but the contest prize, a new Samsung Galaxy S, 8.4" tablet, makes it worth the doing, if you ask me. After all, you can't win if you don't enter, and you can only enter by completing the survey. Plus, I've also decided that I'll add some Voice merchandise prizes to the mix. Just for a little added incentive for people. Even if you don't get the big prize, anybody who helps out is still appreciated.

But don't think you need to wait until the survey is out there to get your opinion to me. If there's something you particularly like or don't like in *The Voice Magazine*, feel free to write me at voice@voicemagazine.org. Compliments I'll pass on to the article authors, because I know from experience how much motivation it can give a person as a writer just to find out that somebody out there is reading and enjoys what's being written. If, for some strange reason, you have complaints? I'll do my best to address them in one way or another. I know I'll never be able to please everybody, but that doesn't mean I

Getting back to this week, our feature article is on what the organization Mensa can provide to AU students, and when she mentioned that they have scholarships that haven't been awarded because of a lack of applications, I knew it was something that AU students need to be aware of. Especially in light of the recent [article](#) in the CBC about how Alberta Post-Secondary institutions have the highest compulsory fees across the country. This is what happens when you cap tuition, but allow universities to establish completely unregulated and compulsory fees alongside those costs. It's rather like passing laws against speeding but then refusing to put any police on the roads.

We also have the second part of our interview with The Honeyrunners, and the Mindful Bard looks at a movie that explores how some people get a head in the music industry—literally. Plus our usual assortment of advice, reviews, comics, and other things to keep you amused and informed. So enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl', with a stylized, flowing script.

What Mensa's Got for AU Students

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Last week's article introduced Mensa Canada, the high IQ society. This week, we look at Mensa from the AU student's perspective. What's in it for us?

For those who qualify, Mensa provides a rewarding social network that extends beyond Canada's borders. People with Mensa-qualifying IQ—an IQ that falls in the top 2% of the general population—often have some sense of the unique way their mind works. For those who always wondered if they qualify, the upcoming Friends & Family discounted test sessions allow them to satisfy their curiosity about their intelligence at very little cost. Even

if they don't join, full-time students could qualify for one of several Mensa Canada scholarships.

Fellowship and Fun. AU students who primarily study online may miss out on the stimulating social interaction that other university students enjoy. Social media allows for some interaction between AU students, and others join informal study groups with students in their area. Flung across the country and beyond, AU students may need to work harder to seek out mind-stretching conversations.

Many people think a typical Mensa meeting involves solemn-faced academics who sit around smoking pipes while they expound on esoteric topics and fan themselves with their PhDs.

"I think they're more likely to be sitting around drinking beer," says Mensa Canada's National Supervising Psychologist.

Mensa was initially founded in order to gather the brightest minds together to solve the world's problems. Nowadays, in addition to fostering, and supporting research into, human intelligence, Mensa's purpose is primarily aimed at "providing stimulating intellectual and social opportunities" for its members. Calgary's Mensans gather each month for trivia events, social drop-ins at members' homes, and, yes, pub nights. A pub night also features on the Ottawa Mensa calendar, along with a dining night which is held in a different restaurant each month. Local events are held regularly across Canada in a variety of settings. Mensans hike, dine, drink, play games, listen, learn, and talk, talk, talk.

Members are welcome at Mensa events worldwide. Mensa Canada's annual gathering, which will be held in Vancouver in 2015, draws visitors from across Canada and around the world who gather to hear stimulating speakers, play games, and generally have fun. In between events, members keep in touch via social media, local newsletters, and Mensa Canada's members' magazine, *MC2*.

Friends & Family testing rates. With one in every 50 people having an IQ in the top 2% range, Canada has potentially 700,000 people qualifying for membership. Worldwide, however, Mensa has only around 120,000 members. To attract new members, Mensa Canada is running their annual "Friends & Family" testing event in September and October. Potential members can write the Mensa qualifying test at the discounted rate of \$30 (there's also an advance-pay option of a non-refundable \$25 for further savings.) You don't need to have any friends or family members in Mensa to take advantage of this special rate—but you may find that some of your friends or relations are already members.

Qualifying tests are offered at scheduled testing sessions and by appointment through Mensa's network of proctors. Those in locations where no Mensa proctor is available can arrange for their own qualifying proctor. (Hint: AU students may be able to use the same invigilator they use for AU exams—check with your invigilator then contact Mensa Canada to set this up. As with AU exams, you'll be responsible for the invigilator's fee.)

Mensa Canada Scholarship Program. Even students who don't join Mensa can apply for Mensa Canada's scholarships. Open to Canadian citizens or landed immigrants, applicants must be at least 18 years of age and enrolled in a qualifying full-time program at a Canadian post-secondary institution. There are three scholarship categories, with awards ranging from \$1000 to \$3000.

Computer science and mathematics students take special note: the Frank & Betty Woodhams Memorial award is for students in either of those two fields of study and has not been awarded some years due to lack of applicants. The amount of this award varies; the last winner, in 2012, received almost \$7000.

The deadline for Mensa Canada scholarship applications is January 31 each year. An essay of up to 250 words is required. Read the rules carefully—an average of 25% of applications each year are rejected because applicants didn't follow the application procedure correctly.

For students looking for intellectually-stimulating conversation they don't get with online studies, Mensa provides a ready-made social network reflecting the diverse interests and backgrounds of its members. With the annual "Friends & Family" sale prices on the qualifying test, this time of year may be the best time to take the plunge and see if you've got a Mensa mind. And for full-time students not interested in pursuing a Mensa membership, there's still the opportunity for free money with a Mensa scholarship. Seize the opportunity.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario

Primal Numbers

Space Tourist

S.D. Livingston



When Flash Gordon was all the rage, the idea of an International Space Station seemed like nothing more than fantasy. So you've got to wonder what Flash's creators would have thought of the latest in space travel: space taxis that include room for tourists to ride along. It sounds exciting, but this is one idea that should never get off the ground.

It is, of course, an amazing achievement. Not just to carry average, ordinary citizens to the International Space Station, some 400 kilometres above Earth. No, it's astounding that we've conquered the challenges of space travel at all and now have a habitable outpost.

In part, that success lies in the fact that space travel is such a difficult thing. The industry is tightly controlled, with rigorous testing of both humans and machines. There are public and private protocols, and agreements that span nations. Running an aerospace program also costs billions, and mistakes are costly. In short, if you want to send anything from satellites to salamanders into space, you've got to run a tight ship.

So why would space programs want to introduce a random element to that mix—namely, paying tourists? Partly for the money. Not that the first few tourists will defray much of the cost. But funding for space programs always relies on their popularity. When space travel is cool and people are tuned into moon launches, governments are more willing to invest. When no one's that interested, funding tends to dry up.

Another big reason is research. People have long been fascinated with the notion of colonizing other planets, especially as we continue to strain the resources on this one. Space tourism brings us one step closer to gauging the real-world effects on ordinary citizens, people who haven't trained for years to withstand the physical and emotional stresses of seeing our planet through a spacecraft window.

Right now, in its infancy, space tourism doesn't pose much of a problem. Travellers are few and the idea is still such a novelty that safeguards are high. Indeed, Boeing's new space taxi program was just given the green light by NASA in September 2014.

And the space-tourism company [Space Adventures](#) has been around since 1998, but the CBC [reports](#) that singer Sarah Brightman will only be the "eighth paying passenger to travel to the station" when she completes her training for the trip in 2015.

Sounds good, right? A few well-known figures adding star power to research that could one day see human colonize other planets.

Yes, but the problem lies in that very popularity. Fast forward 20 or 30 years. Space stations are commonplace. Most people can afford the trip on a space taxi, much as plane rides used to be a luxury but cheap flights now abound and it's hard to escape ads for discount resort deals.

Now translate those planeloads of tourists to an atmosphere where the smallest mistake can spell disaster.

Like orbital debris, for instance. It's bad enough that, as NASA notes, there are already millions of bits of man-made debris orbiting Earth. Things like leftover spaceship parts. Some are bigger than baseballs but most are no bigger than a paint fleck.

Which doesn't sound that bad—until you realize that those tiny flecks are speeding around at over 27,000 kilometres an hour and "a number of space shuttle windows have been replaced" because of the damage they've caused. Even if you keep your feet right here on terra firma, *National Geographic* lets us in on the worrying tidbit that "on average one piece [of space junk] returns to Earth each day."

Then comes tourist season. All you have to do is picture the garbage strewn across planes, beaches, and movie theatres to realize the potential problem. Never mind the stories of planes being diverted because of arguments that erupt between passengers. It's bad enough when that flight to the Grand Caymans gets diverted to New Jersey, but what would a space shuttle pilot do in that scenario?

There's absolutely no denying that space travel and exploration will bring countless untold benefits. Even if we never find intelligent life or another Earth-like planet, we'll gain a new perspective of how the universe works. Of our place in it and the wonder and fragility of our home.

But tourist taxis to Mars? Thanks, but I think I'll stick to the Space Mountain ride right here on Earth.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her website for information on her writing.

Click of the Wrist

Keeping It Clean

Now that you've decluttered and organized your workspace, you want to keep it that way. These tips will give you the tools you need to create your own system for managing the flow of paper and other office clutter:

Make a Pile

We all make piles—the trick is to deal with them before they get out of hand. Here, the ZenHabits blogger suggests how to process your paperwork daily.

Organize Your Desk

Organizing your desk shouldn't be done without a strategy. This article gives guidance on how to organize logically, prioritizing what you'll use often and hiding items that are less important.

Nightly Habit

As this article suggests, making a habit of straightening your desk area every evening keeps the clutter from overtaking your workspace again.

Go Minimalist

The more you have, the more you have to take care of—and a minimalist workspace means less time spent keeping it neat. Check out these ideas for creating a work area that's a little easier to manage.





Only So Far

When we were working without ceasing for what felt like a year I kept my spirits up imagining the holiday we would take. One of the possibilities that rattled around in my head included a quickie trip to Las Vegas. We haven't been there for ages. The appeal is the typically short four days, three nights scenario. Unfortunately, the glory days of three hundred dollar trips for flight and hotel are but distant memories. Usually we talk ourselves out of the Vegas junket because of the math. Add a bit more and you've got a week at a Mexican all-inclusive we figure.

Another possibility is the January trip to Palm Springs with the kids. This time, however, the dynamic would change. By then Greg and Carrie will have a new baby (due late November) and Hilary will take a pass because she can't afford it—starting a Master's program this fall will suck up all her available time and money.

We didn't commit to the two weeks in the large rental house because we felt that visiting the same city for the third time had a "been-there, done-that" feel. There are so many places we haven't seen even once.

Speaking of new places, I've been talking about Portland, Oregon for a few years now. I understand the outlet shopping is great and, with the absence of a state sales tax, our bucks should go further. Apparently it's got a great food scene as well. At about sixteen hours driving time it seems like a great road trip. We haven't done that in years. There's something appealing about hitting the open road with a map and a chunk of time. With Roy's past experience as a US long haul truck driver this would be a breeze for him. No logbook to keep, no forty-eight foot trailer to load, haul, or unload. Taking the new Venza would have us traveling in style what with the power memory seats, keyless entry, navigation

system, and thirteen (!) speakers.

Another potentially new adventure would be a cruise. We have friends who love the experience. The timing of an Alaskan cruise doesn't jibe with farming so that isn't likely to happen. A seven-day Caribbean cruise would either turn us into believers or get that dream off the table once and for all.

So in this limbo of cool rainy weather that has delayed the start of our harvest I've taken the next steps in turning wishful thinking into reality. A trip to a travel agent netted a stack of cruise guides. The Saturday travel section in the Edmonton Journal gets a more thorough look-see. I even Googled Trivago to see if it's the cat's meow for finding a hotel room.

Now I just need to ensure that we don't talk ourselves out of taking this well-earned break. Because planning and anticipation only goes so far, from where I sit.

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

Music Review

Dull Days

Samantha Stevens



Album: *Dull Days*

Artist: Sleepy Hahas

Sleepy Hahas' latest album, *Dull Days*, will mesmerize you. The band's sound is a melding of the typical garage-band sound with a generous splash of psychedelic sound added for flare. For fans of David Bowie and The White Stripes, Sleepy Hahas have taken the well-known psychedelic rock genre and added powerful vocals and strong lyrics to create an abstract sound that is refreshingly

unique.

Sleepy Hahas was formed in 2011 by Pat Butler and Phil Shore. Lifelong friends from Buffalo, New York, the duo was joined by Nico Kelly and Steve Tripi in 2012. The four extraordinarily talented musicians have released two EPs and two full length LPs, a major accomplishment in only a couple of years.

Dull Days is a live to tape recording that was put together by Paul Hamann (of Sumo Recording Studio in Cleveland, OH) who is known for his work with bands like The Black Keys and Ben Folds. Being their first full-length album, *Dull Days* captures the best songs and showcases their talents as musicians.

The title track "Dull Days" opens with strong drums and guitar playing. The vocals are a wonderful tribute to garage bands everywhere, and the song is a great introduction to the band's strengths.

"Red Eyes, Red Skies" is by far my favourite song on this album. The psychedelic vocals and guitar are entrancing, with the strong rhythm and bass rounding out the sound perfectly. However, it is the chorus that strikes me. The piano that emerges in the chorus lends an earthy yet surreal feeling to this song that gives me goosebumps every time I listen to it.

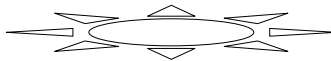
The influence of The White Stripes can be heard in the song "Little Girl." The wailing guitar and fierce vocals capture the ears, and for lovers of this style of rock, energize the soul. Yet, the band is not done with showing off their versatility.

The piano in "Girl Johnny Cash" blew me away. The song is melodious and soothing, and the blues inspired vocals accompanied with electric guitar is a work of genius. It's with this song that they truly demonstrates their talents.

Further along in the album, the listener is greeted with the powerful rock sound of the song "Bolero del Fuego." The lyrics are energetic and poetic, and remind me of David Bowie's songs from the 70s.

Honestly, I could talk about every single song on this album, because each song is truly unique, and those that listen to this album will continuously find something new in each song. Sleepy Hahas has already recorded their second full length album, *From the Bottom of a Warm Lake*, and I am eager to listen to it. If you are looking for an album that you can listen to while studying, relaxing, or even hanging out with friends, Sleepy Hahas's *Dull Days* is perfect.

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.



In Conversation With The Honeyrunners, Part II

Wanda Waterman



The Honeyrunners are a Canadian band that play rock and roll spiced up with Motown, neo-punk, soul, and rhythm and blues. Their first single, "Jet Set," was featured in a Bacardi ad campaign and their "My Garage" became part of Coca-Cola's project 52 Songs of Happiness. They're currently touring their new EP, titled EP II. Recently the band's keyboardist-vocalist, Dan Dwoskin, took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about their musical tastes, songwriting methods, weird experiences, and plans for the future. (See the first part of this interview [here](#).)

Describe a typical rehearsal.

We have a 20-minute warm-up jam and a few beers, and we then run through our songs again and again until they're nice and shiny or until we're too damn tired to keep playing. Then we all get in Marcus's car and head to Apache Burger.

What music have you been listening to lately?

Album playlist on my iPhone this morning:

- Jack White—"Lazaretto"
- Half Moon Run—"Dark Eyes"
- Rival Sons—"Head Down"
- Ray Lamontagne—"Supernova"
- Ike & Tina Turner—"Proud Mary: The Best of"

- Souljazz Orchestra—"Solidarity"
- Kongos—"Lunatic"
- The Arkells—"Michigan Left"
- Kings of Leon—"Mechanical Bull"
- Valerie June—"Pushin' Against A Stone"

Has anything weird or funny happened on tour or during performances or recording sessions?

Two of the band members recorded the song "Muse" butt naked; if you listen closely, you can hear the nakedness.

Another funny one; Brandon broke a drumstick while playing live television on CTV's *Canada AM*. It flew about 15 feet into the air. Without missing a beat he grabbed another stick and finished the song like a champ! Check it out here: [The Honeyrunners on Canada AM](#) (it's at 1:42).

How does the songwriting process work?

We all write the music together; typically someone comes to a jam with a new melody, beat, chorus, etc., and we mess around with it until it's a song (or send it to the junk yard). Dan tends to write the lyrics; they spew out of him like a fountain—kind of like Pentecostal gibberish at first—and then a story takes shape.

Why did you choose the specific musical instruments you play?

We're all picky about our instruments; you keep looking for new gear until you find that tone that seems to fit with the alchemy of the band. Brandon used to (and still does) have an obsession with buying and selling his drum kits, though he's been true to his Tama Starclassic Bubinga (Birch shell, Stewart Copeland Signature Brass Snare, and Shiloh Stave Snare 14 x 6.5) for a while now.

Marcus is completely in love with his ladies—his Ice Tea Burst Gibson Les Paul Traditional and his Gibson SG 61 Reissue. Dan's workhorse is a Nord Stage Ex 73 (mostly for Wurly and B3) and his trusty Super 55 Sure Mic, and Mike is loyal to his Fender Jazz (with precision and jazz pickups, like a matador or gryphon).

If you hate gear talk: "We make pretty, gritty sounds that make girls look at us funny."

Tell me the story behind "Muse."

Muse is a song about a woman, but the undercurrent is about the fear of losing your inspiration for writing new music. I think all musicians face that fear of "when will the next song come?" My favourite line in the song? "I know I'm not the only one, who lies and waits for her to come." Nice dirty little reference there. Got to love writing in double entendres.

What kind of music have you been listening to lately?

We're heavy into soul music right now. Can't stop listening to Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings, Charles Bradley, Lee Fields & The Expressions, Vintage Trouble, The Heavy, Janelle Monae—it's nice to see that brand of music all over the radio right now.

What's next for the group?

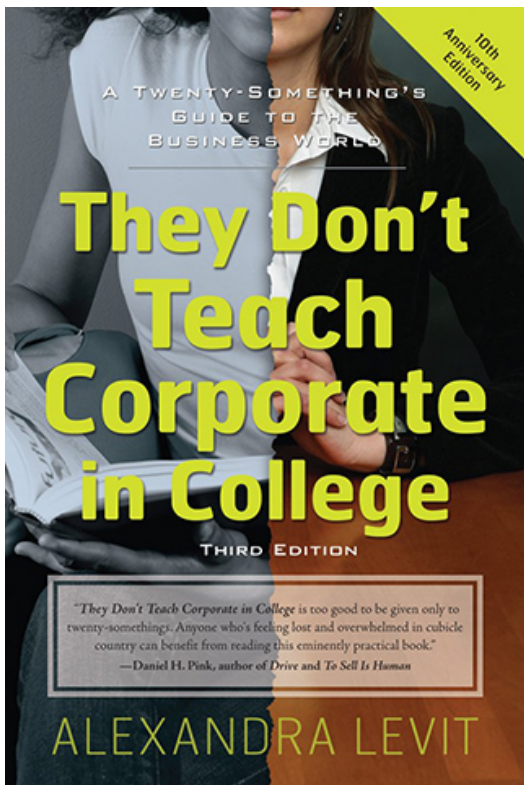
Tour season! We're heading to the US in November for our first American tour (dates TBA here: www.honeyrunners.com/tour). The music video for "Under Control" is coming the end of September, and a vinyl release in December for EP 1 & 2!

Do you have anything to add?

"Don't take drugs."—Mom from *Almost Famous*.

The Career Path

Marie Well



Finalizing your education and making the transition to a rewarding and fulfilling career is no easy task, but with the right preening, you are certain to land a position about which you are passionate.

Alexandra Levit (2014) wrote a career guide specifically for people in their twenties, although the wisdom imbued in the pages applies to anyone leaving the school system for the workforce. Levit's book is called *They Don't Teach Corporate in College* and provides many scintillating facts to help propel any job campaign to its maximum potential.

Peripheral to her thesis is her stat on career changes for people prior to age 26: "the average young American has more than seven different employers before she reaches age 26" (Levit, 2014, p. 213). With an ever-circulating doorway to the working sphere, Levit presents some timely advice on how to manage the present-day career landscape.

Graduate Studies

Levit (2014) argues that going to graduate school may incur a massive debt while leaving you no more marketable than you were prior to the additional education. With this caveat in mind, she advises that the graduate candidate research and get in-depth, hands-on experience in the prospective educational field prior to entering the respective graduate program. You should have a stellar plan on how the graduate education is going to enhance your career goals prior to making such a financial and time-related commitment.

Starting A Business

When considering starting a business, Levit (2014) alerts the reader to personality traits that are central to entrepreneurship, which include leadership ability, optimism, sales orientation, and related traits. She advises that you serve as an employee in the field prior to committing to a business initiative. Plus, taking business-oriented coursework is vital to ensuring the success with tasks such as accounting, marketing, and the like. She also advises on claiming a mentor or possibly joining an industry association related to your respective field of interest. Of course, writing an exceptional business plan and securing financial backing are two fundamental tasks for any entrepreneurial visionary.

Irresistible Resumes

When creating your resume, Levit (2014) recommends you embellish it, wherever possible, with plenty of statistics, particularly if the data sounds in the slightest bit impressive. For instance, when divulging your last position managing budget spreadsheets, redefine the activity as financial management and allot a dollar value or estimate to the funds to which you attended. Adding statistics provides meaningful fodder for employers on the lookout for exceptional resumes.

Self-Assessment

Not at all superfluous to your career goals is an assessment of what you want from a prospective job. Levit (2014) reports that, ideally, you should assess your value system, your passions, your preferences, and your

definitions of what it means to be successful before scouting out a particular career field. She suggests that you go online and find listings of careers that fit with your "skills, interests, and personal mission" (p. 21). She even goes so far as to recommend taking internships and courses related to the field to get a better sense of the fit in your life. If you were to pick a dream job, what would it be? If you were to pick a job that you would continue to be passionate about within a five to ten year span, then your assessment of which career path to choose is on the right track.

Work For Free?

The issue of whether to work for free or not is particularly vexing for recent graduates. Levit (2014) exhorts that you should evaluate whether you have the financial freedom to work for free, while ensuring that you limit your total free work hours to 25 hours per week maximum. She also recommends that you ask for large, meaningful tasks that expand your horizons rather than relying on menial ones that don't get you any further ahead. When the free work stint comes to end, Levit (2014) urges you to maintain communications with your former colleagues either through email or in person.

Goal Setting

Establishing goals can form the crux of your professional development if done correctly. Levit (2014) outlines how you should focus on the big-picture when allocating your goals, and then break down each goal into the following questions/answers: "What I'm going to do?", "Why do I want to do it?", "When am I going to do it?", and "How will I measure my success?" Using this template, Levit (2014) formulates a system for establishing meaningful priorities that address your foremost agenda for your professional growth.

Levit (2014) also highlights the value of taking professional development courses, accepting "job rotations and temporary assignments in other departments" (p. 95), joining committees, taking on projects outside of your job scope, and seeking "additional education in the form of certifications or online courses/webinars" (p. 95).

Periodically reassess your goals with the big picture in mind. Priorities change over time—and so should you.

References

Levit, Alexandra. (2014) *They Don't Teach That in College*. Career Press; 10th Anniversary Edition edition. New Jersey

DID YOU KNOW?

Your 15 Minutes Awaits!



Every AU student has a story, and we want to hear yours! *The Voice Magazine* will be publishing profiles of AU students from across Canada and around the globe. Being at a distance doesn't mean we can't help other students be inspired, and maybe your story is the one that will give somebody else the motivation they need.

If you can spare 15 minutes for a telephone or e-mail interview, contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org. Also, we'll make sure to get you some nifty *Voice* swag just for participating!

Mindful Bard

Wanda Waterman

What Makes the Huge Papier Mâché Cartoon Head Beautiful?



Film: *Frank*

Director: Lenny Abrahamson

Screenplay: Jon Ronson and Peter Straughan

"What makes the desert beautiful," said the little prince, "is that somewhere it hides a well . . ."

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in *The Little Prince*

And what makes Frank's huge papier mâché cartoon head beautiful is that it hides a beautiful human being, one who happens to suffer from a mental illness, but who is, nonetheless, a productive, self-actualised *person* who inspires others and creates brilliant songs. Knowing that it's the handsome actor Michael Fassbender who plays Frank makes the head all the more magical.

The Original Frank

If you know anything about Captain Beefheart, Ivor Cutler, or The Incredible String Band, you'll see elements of them in *Frank*, but Frank-the-character was inspired by Frank Sidebottom and is very similar in appearance to that fake-head-wearing character conceived from the fertile brain of British entertainer Chris Sievey (one of the screenwriters, Jon Ronson, once played in Sievey's Oh Blimey Big Band and so had insider knowledge). Frank Sidebottom is campy family fun, and this film took that and ran with it until it became fringe theatre of the highest calibre.

Frank never takes off his fake head. He dresses like Mr. Rogers. When told that the head is a little intimidating, he kindly replies, "But underneath I'm giving you a welcoming smile."

Frank is the lead singer of an experimental band called "Soroprfrbs," and in this capacity he's become the creative guru for this small group of mad artists.

Exploiting the Need to Be Known

Mental illness and eccentricity aside, Frank, being human, has an ego, and the ego needs to be seen and loved by many. And in the Internet age, exploiting the need to be seen, heard, and known is big business.

Social media forms such an integral part of the film's character that it's almost like a ubiquitous prop. But it's not painted in flattering colours here; we see the mindless insults and blind worship that can be quickly whipped up by a bizarre media event or surprising story line, but in the end social media publicity tries to usurp the substance of life and humanity, replacing it with vacuous art and then dictating to the rest of us that this is precisely what we ought to love.

Frank clearly faces the threat of such usurpation; he himself is full of substance, and, as long as his bandmates follow his aesthetic and don't get distracted by goals as trivial as building an audience, their work has substance, too.

Frank's Amazing Sound

The sound track will tickle you pink. It's impossible to nail down the musical genre here but the music is pretty darn wonderful, weaving neo-grunge, nerd rock (à la The Bare Naked Ladies and They Might Be Giants), anthemic '90s punk à la Fucked Up and Beth Ditto, aleatoric experimental music along the lines of Jon Cage (including "found sounds"), and elements of beat poetry.

Unglamorous Creative Process

Substance is less salient in the character of Jon, the protagonist and a newcomer to the group. As much as he longs to create something great and be recognised for it, he has no talent. (Writers will get a hoot out of his clumsy efforts to generate song lines from the mundane events of the street, a kind of parody of the often very awkward and unglamorous creative process.) To make matters worse, he's easily distracted by the prospect of quick and easy fame proffered by social media sites like Twitter.

Jon brings money and publicity to the group, which would be helpful if Jon were not at the same time trying to muscle in on the creative territory over which Frank so majestically reigns.

Like Dostoyevsky's protagonist in "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," Jon clearly senses what an awesome privilege it is to be a part of this beautifully insane group of people in the marvelous and nerve-wracking process of putting an album together. But it isn't long before his ego all but destroys the magic.

He comes head-to-head with Clara, who has seen through him from the first; if Jon is the ego's fear of failure and invisibility, Clara represents the ego's fear of success and notoriety (i.e. the ego's will to maintain its integrity). Between these two fears one wonders how musicians can maintain any sanity at all.

Dispelling Myths

Frank quickly dismisses myths about madness. For one thing, nothing terrible happened to Frank to make him what he was (he came from a safe, comfortable, loving, middle class American family). It also points to the well-evidenced fact that the mentally ill are creative in spite of their illnesses, not because of them.

Irony and the Dawn of the Gods

A telling bit of irony is that the band's name, Soronprfbs, cannot be pronounced. There are shades of deity in such a concept, and so we're drawn to Northrop Frye's observation in *Anatomy of Criticism* that works that are heavy on irony always end up pointing to the origins of things—the births of the gods, even—and the characters take on mythic proportions. This is exactly what happens at the end of *Frank*.

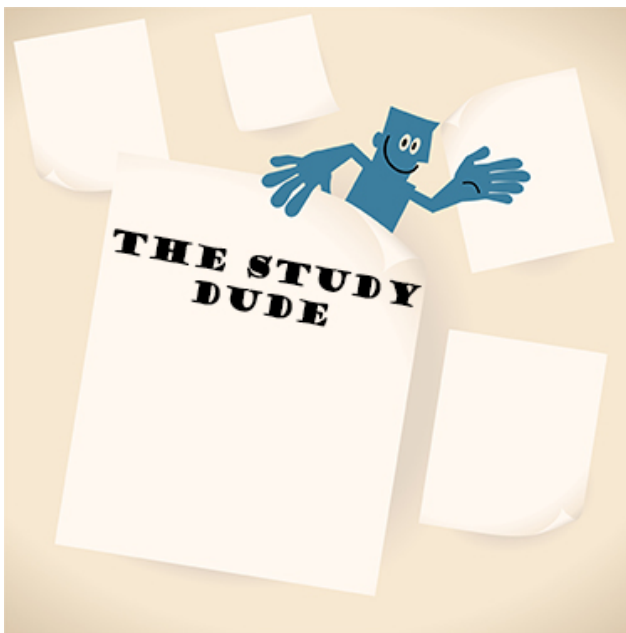
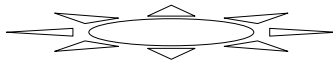
Frank manifests 10 of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering;

- It makes me want to be a better artist.
- It gives me tools of kindness, enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

Many thanks to Bill Waterman for invaluable research assistance.

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.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than for you to be loved by the world for your soul—and your giant brain!

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

*Today's study tips are based on a reading of Adam Robinson's *What Smart Students Know: Maximum Grades. Optimum Learning. Minimum Time.* (1993).*

Condensing Notes

The Study Dude never got so innovative as to continually condense and integrate study notes, as advised by Adam Robinson (1993). Instead, I highlighted nearly everything on each and every reading or lecture note page and transferred the massive pile of ideas onto cue cards. This system was so cumbersome that it left me at a loss when taking a full course-load plus acting as a TA in grad studies.

Now the Study Dude is going to share with you the secret elixir to making exam time more manageable and more time efficient. Here are Robinson's (1993) timeless tips for condensing notes:

- At the end of the first week of school, type up study notes that combine your readings and lecture notes.
- At the end of each and every week, add the new information from lectures and readings into your notes, but organize and consolidate them more succinctly each week.
- Never throw away any of your earlier versions of condensed study notes, but keep them always on hand for reference (as you may need to investigate the notes in more detail, which an earlier version might better convey)
- Your first week of class should result in one page of notes, each week gradually getting larger (reaching up to a hundred pages by the 2/3rds point of the course), but then decreasing in size to one page of notes. Your aim is to be able to condense the course into one or two pages of notes by the end of the

semester (while maintaining, again, all of your prior versions of the condensed note for additional detail).

- When you have your final one or two pages of condensed notes at the final week, if it is two pages long, photocopy it.
- You should be able to recite the information on your study notes by heart.
- Again, your study notes should be reorganized, restructured, and consolidated on a weekly basis.
- After the first week of classes, make a rough outline of major topics by referring to the Table of Contents in your textbook and the syllabus (and the week's lecture notes, of course). This initial sketch should constitute one to two pages of your first round of study notes.

Choosing a Topic

When choosing a topic, the Study Dude recommends you link your topic with either something that you are naturally interested in or something into which you already have insight.

Robinson (1993) has a complete strategy for writing papers, and what follows is his advice on how to most effectively choose an essay topic:

- Find topic ideas by reviewing summary sheets, your study notes (see above), or lecture notes.
- Also find topic ideas by reviewing your textbook bibliography, suggested readings, index, or Table of Contents. Sometimes a surprising book or article title might take you in a fascinating direction.
- Look in the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature for magazine articles that might present a new and exciting topic idea.
- Consult a reference librarian at your local library or at the university for assistance.
- Find topic ideas by looking up the subject matter in an encyclopedia or periodical.
- Overlap topic subject matter with areas you are familiar with. For instance, if you have a music background, integrate a history course topic with an investigation of the role of the saxophone in a certain past political leader's charisma. Even go as far as applying your topic to multiple classes you are taking or have taken.
- Ask your instructor for ideas.
- Choose a topic you know something about.
- Make sure your topic is not strictly factual, but is something can be disagreed upon (or is somewhat controversial, but not overly controversial).

Find the Expert Questions

The Study Dude took classes mostly in math to start, developing a problem-solving knack that is a must for the sciences. When I tried a dance class, believe it or not, it was a drastic transition from the learning style to which I was accustomed. In dance class, you had to practice hard, spend lots of time lifting weights and doing cardio outside of class, and write essays on famous dance icons. Practice and performance—not problem solving—were essential to dance classes.

I longed to take English classes and anatomy classes, but the unknown of what the shift in the study demands would be left me reticent. These weren't the problem solving classes I was accustomed to. My dilemma was similar for taking a computer science class: what mode of study do computer science classes require and how cryptic might this be from a newcomer's perspective?

With the above in mind, Robinson (1993) encourages us to quickly determine the "expert" questions in any subject and hone in on them right away. These expert questions are the crux of exams. To summarize, here is the foundation of these expert questions that will get you started in the right direction for any type of diverse class format you take:

- Every type of course, whether it be English, math, art, or sociology has at least twelve questions that could be considered "expert questions", or questions that you would be expected to know in order to have an expertise in the subject matter.
- For analytical and responsive subject types, such as art history, dance theory, English, literature, philosophy, and theology, the questions would be different from a problem solving course, such as math or chemistry.
- Literature classes will have common expert questions, such as "who is the major character?", "what does each character want?", "what are the obstacles that each character faces in light of attempting to achieve what they want?"
- In a literature class, there are many questions that can be broken down into topics such as character, theme, setting, and so forth.
- In math, which is a problem solving type of course, the expert questions can include "what is the pattern?", "if one variable changes, what will be the change in the next?", "what does each step of the problem try to capture or solve?", "how can I derive this formula from scratch?", "is this question generalizable?"
- The important thing is to start isolating the key questions that arise in your readings and lectures. Make them general so they can be applied to multiple examples or situations.

Supplementary material

One of the many hallmark features of Robinson's (1993) book is his emphasis on students acquiring multiple sources of supplementary materials. For instance, when you get your textbook, go to the library and bookstore to get similar books on the topic for added reference. When you get stuck in your main textbook, look up the subject in the index of other supplementary sources, and have a go at learning from a different perspective. Plus, the added perspective of different authors from different books will provide additional and often unique problems for you to get a better mastery of the subject.

The Study Dude knows someone who did so well with utilizing supplementary materials that he was PhD fodder. You, too, can excel by scouring supplementary materials. After all, Robinson (1993) says that we must understand the material before we commit it to memory.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

Robinson, Adam. (1993). *What smart students know. Maximum grades. Optimum learning. Minimum time.* New York, NY: Random House.



*Dear
Barb*

Barbara Godin

Pressure Cleaning

Dear Barb:

I am single father with two young daughters. I have just moved into a new neighborhood and met other parents with young children. We decided to arrange Saturday morning play dates with our children. We have been taking turns dropping off our children at different homes to play for a few hours. Things are going well except when some of the parents pick up their children they leave my home in a mess. My children have always been taught to pick up after themselves. Am I being unreasonable to expect other children to do the same at my home?

Ryan

Hi Ryan:

No you are not being unreasonable. Children should be taught to clean up after themselves, whether they are at their home or someone else's home. Maybe when the parents arrive to pick up their children, you could tell them that the children will be ready in a few minutes after they clean up the playroom. I'm sure most parents would be receptive to their children taking part in this practice.

Dear Barb:

I have a beautiful wife and a beautiful sister-in-law. They both have great shapes and take good care of themselves. Last weekend my sister in law and her wonderful husband invited my wife and me to spend the weekend together, and it was a wonderful weekend. One of the subjects that came up was our health. My sister in law told us about her blood pressure. She was very concerned about it. Now, she is a beautiful woman and is in very good shape—she does not look anywhere near her age. When she was talking about her high blood pressure I made a comment about not to worry about it so much. My reason for saying this was so she would not get depressed about it. Was I wrong to say anything about it?

Big Red

Big Red:

Often people take offense when someone says "don't worry about it," as they see this statement as minimizing their concern. The more important aspect of this situation is making sure that she is under a doctor's care, as high blood pressure can be a serious issue if left untreated, and signs may not always be visible. It sounds like you have a good enough relationship with your sister-in-law that you could discuss this with her. Ask her if she was upset by your comment and if she was, you could explain to her how you meant it.

Thanks for your question.

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.

Comic

Wanda Waterman

CHAZZ BRAVADO IN: BE MY BE MY BABY



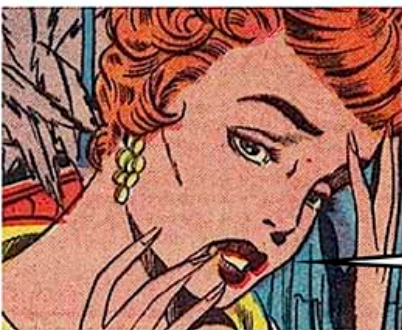
Look, Chazz, don't take this the wrong way, but I want you to stop calling me "baby."



Hey, the Chazzman always respects a lady's wishes. What do you want me to call you, baby? Sugar Cake? Muffin Butt? Jam Tart?



Call me by my name! And you just did it again!



Sure, sure, so sorry. What's your name again, baby?



Um, sorry Chazz but this just isn't working. Have a nice life. 'Bye.

But . . . baby?



WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



AUSU
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

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Group Name: **AUSU Student Moms' Club**

Where: **Facebook**

Members: 140

About: Members are moms taking all types of AU courses. There is support, encouragement, venting, and advice on course content, study tips, "how do you do it," and just about anything else.

Activity: Multiple posts daily with lots of post replies and discussion.

Great AU Finds Online

Open AU -- AU's student-focused magazine is distributed through various national daily and regional weekly newspapers in Canada. This publication is no longer available online, but has been replaced with a news link through the banner at the top of the AU home page. You'll find more AU news in the News and Announcements feeds at the bottom of the home page, and AU will continue to publish Open magazine, in print form, for the AU community, once a year. <http://www.athabascau.ca/>



This Week at lynda.com

lynda.com experts have curated playlists to get you started. With hundreds of lists on a variety of subjects, there is something for

everyone. Visit the playlist center for more information and enter the playlist title. This week's featured list:

Explore Web Content Writing

As distance and online students here at AU, you are likely doing some web writing on the side. If you are operating a blog, business website, or creating recreational web content then this playlist may be for you. Learn how to maximize your rhetoric to be compatible with search engine algorithms and to be an effective communicator via online and digital platforms. Lynda.com has all sorts of resources for eager learners! What you will learn from this list:

IMPORTANT DATES

- Sept 30: extension deadline for Oct 31 contract dates.
- Oct 10: registration deadline for an Nov 1 start date
- Oct 13: Thanksgiving: AU closed
- Oct 31: extension deadline for Nov 30 contract dates.
- Nov 1: AUSU fall awards deadline
- Nov 10: registration deadline for a Dec 1 start date.

- Business storytelling and article writing
- Writing Fundamentals: The craft of story
- Leading with stories
- SEO fundamentals
- HTML essentials training
- Web semantics

Courses: 7

Duration: 14h 25m

Skill Level: Beginner

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Featured AUSU Member Service

Awards

AUSU offers a variety of scholarships, awards, and bursaries for members. Here are some with a pending application deadline of November 1:

Academic Achievement Scholarships reward scholastic excellence. The applicant with the highest GPA over the last thirty credits will receive the award.

Overcoming Adversity Bursaries help students in financial need. Special consideration is given to those who have other challenges such as disabilities, single parenting, and extraordinary financial concerns.

Returning Student Awards recognize the commitment of students who return to university after a long break.

Balanced Student Awards reward students who balance multiple life commitments with university study.

Student Service Awards recognize those who provide outstanding support to students or their community.

For more information on these and our other awards (the Emergency, Computer, and Travel Bursary), visit the [**AUSU awards page**](#).

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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The Voice is published every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

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