

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 47 2014-11-28

Holiday Havoc

Holiday Scheduling for AU Students

Christmas In Oz

Santa in the Summer?

A Modern Fairy Tale

The Yoga Princess

Plus:

Buyer Beware

The Travelling Student

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

Karl Low

**What's The Best Of Anyway**

Along with the end of the year comes a plethora of lists, telling us the best and worst of various things that happened during this revolution around the sun.

The Voice Magazine is no exception to this, as the first issue each year is a look back at all of the articles we presented, and a selection of the best of them reprinted for your enjoyment. Of course, the determination of what is "the best" is highly subjective. I know what I like, but that may not be what you, the readers, thought was best. And you outnumber me.

So, a task for you, if you think you're up to it. Dig through the Voice archives for the past year and send me your votes as to which articles you believe are worthy of inclusion in our January 2nd issue. Once you have that, mail your choices to voice@voicemagazine.org and help me make our "Best of" issue truly a showing of the best articles *The Voice Magazine* has had on offer.

Somewhat related to the idea of "best of" is how Dr. Peter MacKinnon has agreed to stay on with Athabasca University for another year. While the sentiment I have heard about Dr. MacKinnon is not all positive, the bulk of it does seem to indicate that he is putting a significant effort toward bringing the various AU stakeholders together. This will also allow AU more time to search for, and find, the best possible candidate for the permanent role of President of the organization. As most organizations would consider it folly to let go of someone who was working diligently and well for them, especially with no alternatives readily available to take over the needed position, it seems a no brainer that AU is excited about this turn of events. Of course, what else this extension means is that AU will have another year to implement the changes to the new centralized model before a long-term president is hired. Thus having the opportunity to make sure everything is properly organized for a smooth change-over. So perhaps there's something to be said for "Best of" practices as well, especially when you compare them to the alternatives.

Of course, the nearness of the Best Of issue also means that Christmas is even closer, and this week we have a number of articles that are starting to touch on the Christmas theme, from our feature article that provides advice as to the important things we need to look out for as we take our courses over this holiday season, to our own travelling student giving us a little taste of what the season brings when it happens during the summer down under.

We also have advice from Barb Godin about some of the troubles kids can cause during this season without even doing anything themselves. And, in a bit of a twist, Hazel Anaka brings to us a modern fairy tale with princesses, magpies, golden coins, and the power of will-power.

Plus, a timely warning from S.D. Livingston about how your anti-piracy software can rob you, and Christina M. Frey lets me know that I'm not actually a grammar Nazi, I'm more of a punctuation tyrant. I'm still not sure if that's any better. And of course our usual selection of reviews, comics, and other bits of news for AU students. Enjoy the read!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl'.

Holiday Havoc Are You Ready?

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Holidays can play havoc with your study schedule. Whether it's your own vacation, or the upcoming Christmas/New Year's holidays, the effect is similar. You need to make plans to minimize disruption to your studies.

Have you looked at the calendar yet? There's still time to plan ahead and keep your studies flowing smoothly. If your life, work, and studies revolve around a traditional M-F workweek, you'll find this year's holiday season packs a double punch. Christmas Eve kicks off the season in the middle of one week, and New Year's Day falls later the following week. With pre- and post-holiday activities, two weeks can easily disappear from your schedule.

Your Very Own Holiday Schedule

The holiday schedule you create is not going to look exactly like any other student's. First, check the calendar and figure out what's going on in your life and when. Consider your work schedule, get-togethers with family and friends, and any holiday travel. Next, review what you want and need to get done on your courses over the holiday period. Somehow, you'll have to make it all work! There's no magic solution, but the earlier you begin planning, the better you'll feel prepared.

AU's Holiday Schedule

You might have seen the news [post](#), or received the e-mail. Now it's time to actually read it and consider how AU's holiday closures affect you. In a nutshell, AU's offices are closed from 3pm December 24 and don't reopen until January 5 (with "reduced operations" on January 2.) That's 11 consecutive days; a significant period of downtime. Although you can still log in to your *myAU* account and continue your studies, most other AU services will be unavailable. A few specific considerations for AU students follow.

Exam requests.

Exams are not shipped during AU's holiday closure. If you plan to write an AU exam in early January, make sure you get your request in early enough for the exam unit to process it. You can review the exam request deadlines in Undergraduate Calendar [here](#).

Course completion date of December 31.

If you have a course with a December 31 completion date, AU has special provisions in regards to exams. Exam request deadlines must still be met but "exams requested prior to the University closure for courses with a contract end date of December 31 must be completed no later than January 15 of the following year." All your course work, assignments, essays, quizzes, however, must still be completed by December 31. Read the full details in the [Holiday Closures and Examinations](#) section of AU's undergraduate calendar. Contact the [Exam Unit](#) if you need more information.

Tutor support and Student Support Centre services.

Unless you've heard differently from your tutor, assume they will not be available during AU's holiday closure dates. If you'll be working on a course assignment during the holidays, review the requirements ahead of time to make sure you know what you need to do. Get your questions in well before the holidays, or plan to wait until early January for a response.

Library materials.

AU's Library will also be closed for the holidays and will reopen January 2. The library [website](#) will remain accessible throughout. If you want library materials shipped to you before the holiday closure, get your request in by December 18. There are further considerations for inter-library loan requests; read the full [notice](#) on the AU Library website.

Perhaps you planned ahead wisely and can take a break from your studies. Perhaps you're hoping that the holidays will provide you with a bit of extra time for AU courses. Or, like me, maybe you're doing a holiday juggling act to make it all work. However you spend your time over the upcoming holidays, at little advance planning can reduce holiday havoc.

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



HOW CAN NEUROSCIENCE HELP CHEMOTHERAPY PATIENTS?

It's a question graduate student Anna Kovalhuck (BSc '14) is seeking to answer.

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In Conversation With Helen Grime

Wanda Waterman



Helen Grime is a Scottish composer, teacher, and oboeist. Her compositions are steeped in a romantic mindset and bear the influence of early twentieth century Russian and French composers. She's received numerous high honours from the international musical establishment, as well as commissions from major orchestras. (Check out The Voice Magazine's review of her recording debut, [Night Songs](#).) Recently she took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about her training and inspiration.

1981, this highly assured and distinctive composer has an expanding reputation: *Night Songs* was a [BBC Proms](#) commission in 2012 and she is now associate composer of the [Hallé Orchestra](#). No wonder these musicians play her music so expertly."

- Fiona Maddocks writing about Helen Grime in *The Guardian*

What's Your School?

I definitely don't consider myself to belong to any particular school or style of music. I think, like many others today, my style has a variety of different origins and influences and is something that is constantly evolving.

Classical Car Trips

I grew up surrounded by music. My grandparents and mother were music teachers and I can remember listening to recordings of classical music at a very young age, particularly on long car journeys! Although I heard pop music I was very much drawn to classical music, particularly Debussy and Ravel.

I was lucky enough to have attended music schools in Edinburgh from a young age, and my family has been very supportive. Their musical backgrounds made them aware of how much discipline and hard work is required to become a composer. I've always been quite stubborn and very determined, and I think these "qualities" have helped keep me going!

Formative Training

I was offered composition lessons as part of my education at the City of Edinburgh Music School from the age of twelve. I think it's incredibly important that it was something that everyone did and was an essential part of musicianship.

There was also an arts organisation called ECAT (formerly Edinburgh Contemporary Arts Trust) that held annual workshops on calls for scores. This was an important part of my development as a composer. Hearing my work (at the tender age of 13 and 14) played by top professionals really inspired me to pursue composition.

When I first went to music college in London I was profoundly influenced by the music of Oliver Knussen.

Borrowing a Muse

As a composer my creativity is often sparked by other art forms, and often this is poetry. I wouldn't say there is one writer who has particularly influenced me; it seems to change all the time although there are certainly writers that I return to time and again.

A Personal Process of Evolution

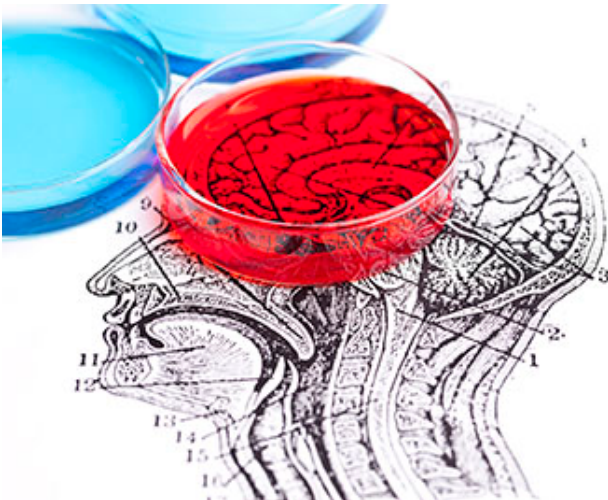
I write music that I want to hear and that I hope will also speak to others. I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel but rather to carve out a very personal body of work that evolves and changes over time.

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.



Primal Numbers Buyer Beware

S.D. Livingston



Trojans, spyware, ransomware. They're all words to strike fear into computer users' hearts, and send them on a search for software to protect their devices. That usually means checking things like tech specs, but if you're smart you'll look a little further—at the company's ethics. Because sometimes, even the folks who claim to protect you are just as shady as the hackers.

When you think of antivirus software, you probably think of the big brands out there: Norton, McAfee, Avast, Bitdefender, Kaspersky. After all, the goal is to protect your valuable hardware and files. You want to deal with someone you can trust.

So the first thing you probably do is look for reviews from well-known tech sites. Maybe PCMag or TechRadar. There are at least a dozen of them, and they'll go into plenty of detail on firewalls, whitelists, and spam filters. As you compare the recommended programs, you learn that while most of them offer free versions (or at least a free trial), the paid versions give you better protection.

But before you hand over your credit card details, read on for a few cautionary tales that could save you from being scammed.

First up is what I discovered about Avast, one of the best known antivirus brands. Their website looks perfectly legitimate. More than 220 million customers, a written 30-day money-back guarantee, and 24/7 phone support. What could go wrong? Apparently, a lot.

Last year, I bought a one-year subscription. Ten months later, the email reminder came in. Renew now and you won't lose a minute of your existing subscription. I waited, but finally decided to renew with a month left to go. And immediately lost the month that was remaining on my paid subscription, despite the company's written promise.

The 24/7 phone support? Only for technical issues. So I logged in, started a support ticket, and claimed my "guaranteed" refund. Three weeks later, including several requests on the Avast Facebook wall, there's no refund in sight. No word from anyone at the company. Just a very telling silence.

Which got me digging. As it turns out, my own experience in the antivirus world is just the tip of the iceberg. Here are a few things to watch out for.

One common practice at antivirus companies is to set their customers up for auto renewal. If you download their software, buried in the fine print is a clause that permits them to bill your credit card again the following year. You might not want their software anymore. You might not even know you agreed to renew it. But don't be surprised when that unexpected charge shows up on your Visa or Mastercard.

The problem is so big that, in 2009, Symantec and McAfee were both fined \$375,000 in penalties by the New York Attorney General. As this *Computerworld* [article](#) notes, the companies not only didn't get clear approval to keep billing customers, they had "made it difficult for customers to opt out or obtain refunds."

But the fines didn't stop them—at least, not Symantec. Just seven months later they were at it again, and another New Yorker sued them for doing the same thing. Want to find out if your antivirus brand engages in the practice? Just Google their name along with "auto renew" or "auto renew scam." You might be surprised.

Then, of course, there's the old double billing trick. You put in your credit card info, download the software, and all seems well. Until a month, or a few months, later you see that the company has charged you twice for the same software. Another common variation is that the second charge will be a few dollars lower—say, 49.99 instead of the original 59.99—so that you don't notice it right away.

Again, a quick Internet search shows up complaints about even the big names in antivirus doing it. Like this customer's experience with Kaspersky, found on [CNET](#).

Maybe it's just a simple error, but customers shouldn't have to spend their time chasing a refund for unauthorized charges. If you're thinking of giving out your credit card number to an antivirus company, no matter how reputable they seem, search their name along with "double billing."

And finally, beware of customer support lines that claim there's a major problem with your computer and try to sell you on expensive upgraded support service. It's another common complaint about antivirus companies, so don't fall for extra charges.

Still, for the thousands of consumers who are thinking about upgrading to a paid antivirus program, what's the solution? If the people who are selling trust can't be trusted, what should consumers do?

It might seem old-school in a world where downloading software is fast replacing physical disks, but from now on I'll be going to the store and buying my software in a box. That's no guarantee that you won't have a problem (most software is non-refundable once you've broken the seal), but at least it prevents unauthorized charges on your credit card.

As for my own experience with Avast, I'm not really expecting the company to stand behind their word. Not after seeing the countless complaints from other people with similar (and often worse) complaints.

So this holiday season, when you unwrap all those new computers and smartphones, think seriously about sticking with the free version of your antivirus program. And if you do decide to upgrade, buyer beware.

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.

Student Sizzle

AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.



AthaU Facebook Group

Laurie wonders if her ENGL 255 exam will be marked as stringently as the course assignments. Michelle seeks advice on how to submit an audio/video file on Moodle for an assignment.

Other postings include exam courier fees, taking a full course load, and courses ADMN 233, ECOM 320, MATH 265, MKTG 396, PSYC 304, PSYC 315, PSYC 387, and PSYC 388,

Athabasca University Library Facebook page

AU Library posts that their information desk will be closed Dec 25 to Jan 1, inclusive. If you need materials soon, you'll want to check out the details [here](#).

Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets that Peter MacKinnon's term as interim president of AU has been extended. Full details [here](#).

Click of the Wrist

Holiday Cards

Whether or not you still keep the tradition of mailing out holiday cards, family newsletters, or other bundles of good news and good cheer, these links make the perfect accompaniment to a cold winter's afternoon and a mug of hot cocoa.

Special Delivery

Worried about sending out the cards on time this year? At least they won't be 71 years late, like this batch of cards German soldiers sent home during their occupation of Jersey, UK. Or tried to send home; the cards were stolen from the post office by some teens (who eventually turned in the stolen mail decades later).

Getting Crafty

If you want to try your hand at homemade this year, BuzzFeed's list of 49 DIY cards—ranging from simple cutting and pasting or finger-painting to embroidering and machine stitching—are a great starting point. If you're really feeling ambitious, check out this pop-up [star card](#) tutorial.

Be Prepared

Waiting until the last minute to ship a package? Canada Post's holiday page has all the dates and information you need to make sure your mail reaches its destination before the holiday break.





A Modern Fairy Tale

Once upon a time there was a Scanner named Hazel who wanted to know and try everything about virtually everything. (And because she is attempting to believe and live self-acceptance she won't—will try not to—make the easy and self-deprecating crack about being magpie-like in her attraction to the next shiny new thing.)

What this confused maiden long feared is that there was something wrong with her. Unlike the majority of people in the kingdom she wasn't able to pick one true thing and follow it with single-minded dedication to the end of her days. But lo, years into her life she happened upon a tome called *Refuse to Choose* and felt relief. This hard wiring in her brain was not only not bad; some may even have called it a blessing.

So she felt free to pursue the knowledge and experiences her innate curiosity aroused. She accepted that being intrigued by something and then losing interest when her needs were met was not wicked but efficient and understandable.

She also discovered comfort and meaning in circling back to something that had piqued her interest, however briefly, in the past.

And so it was with yoga. When she discovered a class and a teacher in the nearby village she opened her silk purse for the necessary coins. And at the appointed time she showed up. In her small castle she had found a long-ago purchase of mat, strap, and block. And while she was stiff and far from graceful she was a good sport and tried all things. And nigh, week after week she saw slight improvements.

And so her passion was re-ignited. She fought the urge to go forth and buy all things: scrolls, moving picture shows, a wardrobe of stretchy outfits, pillows, toe socks, eye masks, bolsters, special towel, and more. But because she is still evolving, she did buy a couple of picture books, two DVDs, and a cotton blanket.

Because she is resourceful, she began looking for more tools for her new practice. Among her possessions she found a scented silk sachet to use as the perfect eye mask for Savasana or corpse pose. She located a Mexican blanket from her first trip to Puerto Vallarta twenty years ago. Her meditation chimes now had more than a decorative role to play. One day she'll even remember to light candles and burn incense.

Because frugality is a virtue, she was enchanted to find a square cushion with carrying handle for only nine gold (loonie) coins. It would become the ultimate meditation cushion. She intended to sew a more beautiful cover with truly magnificent fabric but decided that really using it was more important than causing delays. She found fingerless yoga gloves for three coins (instead of fifteen). She loves the beautiful fabric tote bag she now uses to store the small supplies of her practice.

And now if only Santa Yogi would place a yoga bolster under the tree she could avoid the outrageous cost and live happily ever after, from where she sits.

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

The Travelling Student Arriving at Camp

Philip Kirkbride



My name is Philip Kirkbride. I'm a college graduate from Ontario studying at AU. I've always wanted to do an exchange program or study abroad but never found the right time to do so. This is part nine in the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program. In part eight we took a ferry across Saguenay River, road on the hilly roads of Route 138, and ended with me grasping my seat as Matt took a steep turn at one hundred kilometers per hour.

"Slow down!" I yelled. Matt accelerated with an evil grin. I leaned to the left as we took a left turn hoping my body weight would help us to stay on the road (stupid, I know). As we turned I swore profanities, for what seemed like a lifetime. Then it was over, no crash. We both laughed and Matt called me a wimp.

We were approaching our final destination Longue-Rive. I texted Matt's contact Simon saying we would arrive in less than an hour. As we approached the city we got a text "The Auberge Motel I will be back from work soon." I tried googling the motel but as far as Google was concerned it didn't exist. I was worried, as asking for directions in this part of Quebec would be difficult.

But, soon my worries were put to rest as we saw a big sign with the name Auberge Motel. We pulled into the parking lot of the motel. The sun had just gone down, so it was fairly dark outside. There were three African-Canadian men who also seemed to have just arrived. They were removing some equipment from the trunk of a car.

As we got out they looked over and one man with a huge smile said loudly "Mathew, you made it! It is so good to see you," he had a thick African accent. After some small talk he invited us to come with him to have some food and meet the boss. There was a small house beside the motel which was converted into a kitchen. Simon, as it turned out he was named, introduced us to the boss who was standing on the porch. He was a tall African man who spoke English well with a stern voice. After the introduction we entered the kitchen where between ten and twenty other African men were eating. I would later find out that everyone else at the camp was from Africa, specifically the country of Burundi.

Burundi is a small African country located south of Rwanda. Colonized by Belgium, French is widely spoken there alongside the languages of Burundi, Kirundi, and Swahili. Being one of the world's five poorest countries, many Burundians seek refuge in Quebec where their knowledge of French is an asset.

Burundian cuisine was being made in bulk and we were invited to help ourselves. Simon was afraid we wouldn't like the food and warned us that it would be served nightly. Fortunately, both Matt and I love trying new and exotic foods. There was a giant pot of an African style beef stew, plenty of spiced rice, and grits.

The food was excellent and I was thankful that they were so open to letting us part take in their culture. They in turn were happy that we were interested in them, their food, and their work. They had come to this country

as immigrants looking to build something, and the fact that two English speaking Canadians wanted to work for them must have been confirmation that their hard work was paying off.

After stuffing ourselves with food, Simon took us to our room in the Motel. The whole of the motel had been converted into a work camp. We would pay a daily fee of ten dollars that included motel cost, transportation to work, and food. Really, an amazing value, as it let me eat on my student budget and have a place to rest. Our room contained two single sized beds, a dresser, and two end tables. We unloaded our stuff and went outside with Matt to prepare our equipment for the morning. We each had a giant brush-cutting saw which Matt had provided, a bag of tools, and a container to carry gas in.

We drank beers as we assembled our saws and double-checked to make sure we had everything we needed. I tried to hide the fact that I had no idea what I was doing as I put together my saw, though I imagine it was probably quite obvious to everyone else. Everyone was paid based on how much land they cleared each day, meaning the harder and longer you worked the more you'd get paid.

The effect of this pay arrangement meant everyone prepared themselves to make sure they could be as efficient as possible, clearing vast spaces each day. I felt like I was at an army camp the day before we were to go into battle. The enemy, the thick bush. And we would have to cut our way through to secure glory and victory.

Simon came out again and informed us that breakfast would be served at 4:30am. Knowing I would need all the strength I could gather I went to bed a few minutes later just after 9:00pm. I fell asleep quickly, exhausted, and dreading the pain I knew I would face the next morning.



Writer's Toolbox

Proper Usage of Grammar

Christina M. Frey



You cringe at incorrect capitalization. You mock misplaced modifiers. You figuratively die every time someone uses the word "literally" incorrectly. And confusion of "your" and "you're" makes you want to tear your hair out and resign from the human race.

That means you're desperate to promote good grammar, right?

Wrong—because none of the above are *grammar* issues.

We tend to use "bad grammar" as a catch-all to describe a number of language errors: grammar, yes, but also punctuation, spelling, usage, syntax, typos, and more. This week's Toolbox will sort them all out.

Spelling

Misspelled words are not grammatical issues, but spelling problems. These could be confused word pairs like "too" and "to" or plain old misspellings like "arguement" (there's no "argue" in "argument").

Sometimes misspellings are labelled as typos, but that's not always accurate. Typos are a subgroup of misspellings; all typos are misspelled words, but not all misspelled words are typos. Typos occur when you're

not paying attention when you type and your fingers inadvertently introduce errors. For example, I just typed "typed" with an *n* at the end because my finger slipped. The word was spelled wrong, but it was a typographical error and not a technical misspelling. However, if I were to type "accommodate" with only one *m*, as my brain tells me to do every single time, that's a spelling error and not a typo.

Punctuation

Punctuation involves the proper use of periods, exclamation points, quotation marks, hyphens, and other forms of punctuation. It isn't a question of grammar; although certain grammatical forms, like possessives, require particular punctuation, any errors in those cases are punctuation and not grammar related.

Usage

If you think that this discussion so far is too nitpicky for words, then blame usage. Usage is concerned with using words properly and correctly; in other words, according to their meaning. "Literally" (when "figuratively" is meant) is my pet peeve. So, apparently, is "grammar" used to describe usage, punctuation, and spelling.

Syntax

Syntax looks at how sentence structure can change meaning. You may have seen the meme with the sentence "She told him that she loved him" and the instructions to insert the word "only" in different places in the sentence. Try it out: "She told only him that she loved him" has a very different meaning from "She told him that only she loved him." That's syntax at work.

Grammar

Finally, what about grammar? Grammar is a set of rules governing how parts of speech, like nouns, verbs, and adjectives, interact. So when a subject and verb don't agree, or match, that's a grammatical issue.

Let's see all these borne out in an example:

She said "I am definately going to insure that the group take their own advice to follow the requirements at the meeting tomorrow."

Error #1: There should be a comma after "said." This is a punctuation issue.

Error #2: "Definitely" is misspelled. This is a spelling error.

Error #3: The correct word is "ensure," not "insure." This error falls under usage.

Error #4: "Group" is a singular collective noun, so the verb and pronoun should match its singular form. The phrase should read "the group takes its"—and yes, this is actually a grammar issue.

Error #5: The phrase "follow the requirements at the meeting tomorrow" is placed in the sentence in such a way as to make its meaning unclear; does the writer mean that the group should follow the requirements while at the meeting? Or that at the meeting, the writer will impress upon the group the necessity of following the requirements elsewhere? This very common error is a syntax issue.

"Grammar" is a fairly limited field, but if you're obsessed with language there are plenty of other language errors to get hot under the collar about. If bad grammar makes you [sic], take another look. It may actually be usage that deserves the full force of your objection.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor, literary coach, and lover of great writing. For more tips and techniques for your toolbox, follow her on Twitter (@turntopage2) or visit her [blog](#).

Christmas in Oz

Philip Kirkbride



It's that time of year again. Christmas lights are going up and the Christmas tunes are playing. The snow is falling and hot coco is being served. The Canadian Christmas is truly an amazing one. This year I found myself sitting in a coffee shop in Sydney when the song White Christmas came on. Given that the temperature was thirty-two degrees Celsius, it was a truly strange experience.

I've always known that many western regions of the globe that celebrate Christmas with vigor are in a warm climate, but it wasn't until I was faced with the prospect of a beach-filled, sandy Christmas that

I really thought about it.

For starters, I'll talk about one of the aspects that I've been hearing regularly from travellers. Christmas in warm regions like Australia is expensive. The price of my current hostel is 35AUD a night. The same hostel on Christmas week extending to New Years is just over 100AUD. So if you're planning a warm vacation of your Christmas holiday you can be sure you're not the only one.

Cost aside, Australia is a truly amazing place to spend Christmas. To show you just why I present you with five uniquely Australian Christmas traditions.

1. **Massive Bush Fire:** A common Australian tradition is to get the extended family together and have a massive bushfire in the country. While Christmas is a winter holiday in Canada it takes place during the Australian summer, making it a great time for an outback camping trip.
2. **Boxing Day Beach BBQ:** While the traditional English turkey dinner is common for Christmas day, the uniquely Aussie Boxing Day BBQ is commonly held the following day. Surfing or water skiing is a great way to turn off those extra Christmas calories.
3. **Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race:** If physical activity isn't your thing, another great way to spend Boxing Day is watching the famous Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race. This year 119 boats will race along the eastern coast from Sydney to Hobart, capital of Tasmania.
4. **Australian Christmas Plants:** While you can find Canadian Pine Trees growing in parts of Australia (planted as a lumber crop) there are some uniquely Australian Christmas plants in Australia known as Christmas Bells and Christmas Bushes. For a complete list see [the Australian Botanic Gardens website](#).
5. **Surfing Santa:** You can find Santa at your local mall, like in Canada, but you will also find him at the beach. I'm currently staying in a neighbourhood called Bondi Beach in Sydney. On Christmas day, Bondi Beach will be full of people wearing Santa hats. You'll also find a few people dressed in full Santa gear heading out into the ocean for the entertainment of spectators.

Music Review

The High Learys: "I'm a Fool for You"

Samantha Stevens



Single: "I'm a Fool for You"

Artist: The High Learys

The pop music of the 60s was dominated by guitars, drums, and mid-range male vocals, with the synthesizer lending the iconic sounds that the music has come to be known for. Often the upbeat tempo would have listeners up and dancing, or enjoying the music while spending time with family and friends, whether this was at a picnic, barbecue, or on a Sunday drive. Perhaps it was because of all of these elements that I recently began listening to bands like The Animals, The

Rolling Stones, and The Doors once again. So you can imagine my delight when I came across The High Learys, who are deeply influenced by bands like The Animals, The BeeGees, and The Kinks, to name a few.

Formed in 2011, The High Learys are a rhythm and blues band from Perth, Australia. Their personal style and music will make you feel like you've travelled back in time. Even the cover art for their three albums is done in a style reminiscent of the 60s and 70s Beatles' album covers. Some may find them nostalgic, but I find The High Learys refreshingly fun.

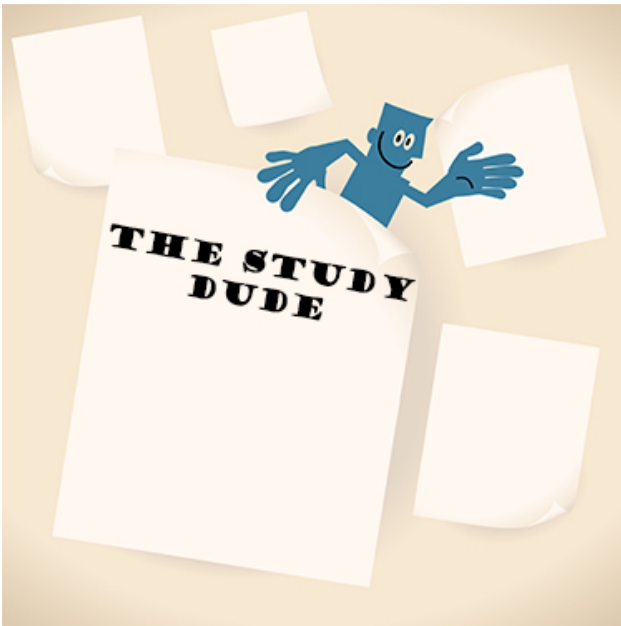
"I'm a Fool for You" is the band's latest single and it pops with vibrant guitar, bubbly drum rhythms, and, of course, a synthesizer solo. However, the lyrics are the exact opposite of the music. They speak of unrequited love and heartbreak sung in the typical 60s pop music fashion.

But apart from the obvious similarities to the band's musical influences, the song left me somewhat disappointed. In both the lyrics and music the song is very repetitive. It also comes across as somewhat flat and devoid of any emotion. But, considering the dark lyrics, perhaps the band is merely trying to mask them with upbeat music, almost like a smile that is masking a troubled heart. If that is the case, then they remain true to their influences, who often also masked darker lyrics with upbeat music.

But despite my disappointment in this song, I was still intrigued by The High Learys, and after listening to some of their other music I became a fan. I found that in their other music (like the song "Let You Down", which can be found on the band's [bandcamp](#) page) they were able to demonstrate their talents as musicians, and they seemed to have more fun in a song that had more of a blues sound.

So although their latest single didn't hit the mark for me, I highly recommend checking out The High Learys if you are a fan of 60s pop and rock-infused blues music. Their music is the perfect pick up and great to listen to just for fun. The High Learys' music can be found on their [bandcamp](#) page and in iTunes.

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



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to use your critical thinking to cater human behaviour to the utmost of positive outcomes.

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 *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman. The critical thinking analysis in this book will be divided into a three part series. Welcome to part one of the Study Dude's dissection of that ever-perplexing construct, critical thinking.

System 1 Versus System 2 Thinking

Let's face it. There are two kinds of thinking: system 1, which is emotional, intuitive, involuntary thinking versus system 2, which is slow, deliberate, deep thinking (Kahneman, 2011). It's the difference between answering what 2+2 is (system 1) versus 57 X 86 (system 2) (Kahneman, 2011). Yet, one form of thinking is not necessarily better than the other, as the emotional thinking can yield a relatively high degree of accuracy, just as the slow deliberate thinking can oftentimes be in lazy mode--and the two types of thinking often work in tandem with one another (Kahneman, 2011).

So, to launch the series on critical thinking it is essential to know the difference but what is, respectively, referred to as System 1 and System 2 thinking.

Here is a breakdown of what constitutes System 1:

- effortless impressions and feelings
 - free-wheeling impulses and associations
 - automatic, intuitive thinking
 - example of system 1: "orient to the source of a sudden sound" (p. 21)
 - another example of system 1: "understand simple sentences" (p. 21)
 - yet one more example of system 1: "make a 'disgust face' when shown a horrible picture" (p. 21)
- (Kahneman, 2011)

Here is another breakdown, this time of what constitutes System 2:

- strain, burden on memory, deliberate, effortful, orderly thinking
 - muscles tense, blood pressure high, heart rate rapid, and pupils dilated
 - example of system 2: "focus on the voice of a particular person in a crowded and noisy room" (p. 22)
 - another example of system 2: "monitor the appropriateness of your behavior in a social situation" (p. 22)
 - yet one more example of system 2: "fill out a tax form" (p. 22)
- (Kahneman, 2011)

Write a Persuasive Message

There is a little notion called "cognitive ease" that has impacts you can incorporate in essay papers, public speeches, sales pitches, and creative design. Cognitive ease not only feels good, but the messages conveyed when we don't have to think in depth also seem to be more true and even more familiar.

Here's how to leverage this System 1 type of thinking, cognitive ease, in writing persuasive messages and in influencing others:

- Repeat falsehoods to get people to believe them (not a recommended strategy for engaging in any kind of ethical conduct, which should be all conduct.)
- Familiarity with an incomplete sentence makes all other sentences that randomly complete that sentence seem true.
- The more legible and clear something is, the more we are likely to believe it.
- We are more likely to believe things printed on high-quality paper.
- We are more likely to believe information printed in bright blue or red as opposed to "middling shades of green, yellow, or pale blue" (p. 63)
- Using complex, pretentious language for familiar ideas makes us seem a little dimwitted, so use simpler language versus complex language
- Make the idea memorable by putting the message into verse or giving it a rhyme. People are more likely to believe an aphorism is more insightful when it rhymes (for example, "woes unite foes" (p. 63).
- Choose names that are easier to pronounce.

(Kahneman, 2011)

Halo Effect

The Study Dude loves you, the reader, and thinks there is nothing at all out of step with you, and everything about you is gold. That's the halo effect in action. I can make further inferences about you, and assume that you are kind, generous, and warm-hearted, and if you, by some odd chance, don't possess all of these traits, then, hey, maybe that's normal. Yet, the halo effect would dictate otherwise.

Here are some of the characteristics of the halo effect, a System 1 type of thinking:

- You either like or dislike everything about a person.
- If you like someone, you might even more readily conclude that they have other positive traits, such as generosity, whether or not this has been shown to be true.
- If you hear traits about someone listed with the positive words before you hear negative traits, you are more likely to have a more favourable impression of the person; conversely, if you hear the same traits, but with the negative ones listed first, your opinion will be less positive.
- If three positive words are introduced about the traits of someone, and then three negative words are said to describe the same person, people often think it is impossible for the negative words to describe the same person when the positive traits were first listed.
- In other words, the weight of first impressions in contributing to the halo effect is huge.
- Kahneman noticed that if he marked an essay favourably for a student, he was inclined to mark the second paper high, even if it was poor. (That's the power of first impressions!)

(Kahneman, 2011)

You can use this in your work by taking extra time with your introduction to make sure it's insightful and memorable. Give your marker a favorable first impression to carry through the rest of your assignment. 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

Kahneman, Daniel. (2011). *Thinking fast and slow*. Canada. Anchor Canada.

Council Connection

Barb Lehtiniemi



Wednesday's AUSU council meeting started on time and moved along at a crisp pace—two qualities every meeting should aspire to. Once again, agendas were not available to meeting observers, making it difficult to follow the discussion. And once again, the formal meeting was followed by a closed councillors-only session.

First item up for discussion was a motion to temporarily increase the number of annual AUSU computer bursaries from 8 to 12. Council had already voted on this by e-mail, and that vote was ratified at the meeting.

Next up was another e-mail vote ratification, this time on engaging OOHLALA to develop a mobile app for AUSU. Since this had been discussed and voted on prior to the meeting, little detail was provided before the e-mail vote was ratified, except that roll-out is expected around September 2015.

Following next were a series of proposed amendments to AUSU policies. Without access to an agenda, I can't tell you what the changes were, but the amendments were passed for policies 3.02 Election of Executive Officers, 6.03 Expense Claims, and 6.04 Travel and Related Expenses. Changes to a fourth policy, 3.04 Referendum, were voted down when it was discovered more information was needed.

The remainder of the meeting was the usual round of executive reports. The reports are not available to meeting observers and only some items are discussed. Here are a few tidbits gleaned from listening in:

- Enrolment numbers in AUSU's new healthcare plan are encouraging. While formal statistics aren't available yet, the number of students signing up is higher than anticipated.
- The final draft of the AUSU Student Planner has been approved and printing is underway. AUSU expects to take delivery of the planners January 5 and will immediately begin distribution to students who have placed orders.
- The problem preventing updates to the AUSU website has been resolved and updates will get underway shortly. It was noted that the Hallowe'en theme on the live chat had finally been refreshed to a Christmas theme.
- AUSU is moving to EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) for payables. This is expected to reduce postage and courier costs as well as making the payment process easier.

As reported February 21 in *The Voice Magazine*, Council announced at the February 19, 2014 meeting that their executive reports would be made available to AUSU members. The reports, for a time, were posted along with the approved meeting minutes on the AUSU website. Unfortunately, no reports have been posted since the June 11, 2014 meeting. Reading the reports is a great way for us students to keep up with what AUSU is doing on our behalf (and with our money!) so I hope the practice of posting reports continues.



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Christmas With(out) the Kids

Dear Barb:

My boyfriend and I have been dating for six months. He is divorced with two young children who live with their mother. His ex is very bitter, so my boyfriend hardly sees his children. Recently, his ex began to date someone and they are going away for Christmas and want my boyfriend to have the kids for the Christmas week. I was looking forward to spending Christmas alone with my boyfriend and now we have to have his kids. I don't think this is fair! His ex only lets him see the kids when it is convenient for her. When I told my boyfriend that he should tell her to make other arrangements, he became angry with me. Why would he be mad at me, it's not my fault, I just want to spend our first Christmas alone together.

Sad Sara

Hi Sara:

You are dating a man with young children, therefore it would be best for you to get used to taking a back seat to his children. Also since he doesn't see his children very often, he is probably looking forward to having them for Christmas. If you are hoping to have a future with this man, then you need to embrace his children as it will strengthen your bond with him. Don't make him choose between you and his children as you may not like the outcome.

Thanks for writing Sara.

Dear Barb:

My husband and I are preparing to have a New Year's Eve party at our home this year, as going out is just too expensive with babysitters etc. We have invited ten people for a quiet party at home. I have told everyone that this is an adult party; however my sister and her husband cannot find a babysitter so I told them they could bring the kids for a sleep over. Recently I heard through one of my friends that another friend has her nose out of joint because they were told not to bring their kids but my sister is bringing hers. I think the situation is a little different with my sister bringing her kids, as they are cousins and often spend the night at my home. What do you think?

Cara

Hey Cara:

Thanks for writing. House parties are on the rise as many people agree it's just too expensive to go out for New Year's Eve. Having your sister's children for a sleepover should not cause a problem, although you may want to explain to your friends beforehand that they will be spending the night at your home with their cousins. Without a doubt, there is a difference between cousins sleeping over and your friends' children sleeping over. I really think most people will understand the difference. Happy New Year Cara!

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

Weird Canada

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) may be revoking the licenses of AOV XXX Action Clips and AOV MaleFlixXX because they just don't have enough Canadian content.

According to the law television and radio channels must air 35 per cent Canadian programming every year.



WANDA WATERMAN



AUSU
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

This space is provided free to AUSU: The Voice does not create this content. Contact ausu@ausu.org with questions or comments about this page.

Featured AUSU Member Service: AUSU Forums

AUSU forums provide an opportunity to talk online with other students.

AUSU forms is a student-only space to post messages for others to read and respond to. Discussions take place over time and remain online indefinitely. To start a discussion, post a message and come back later to check for replies. The system can e-mail you when replies are posted. Or, browse the older posts to see if someone already asked your question!

This is a great place to find out what the AU experience is like for others; share study tips; find out what others think about a course; get support when things get rough; and engage in discussion on an endless variety of topics.

Check it out at <http://www.ausu.org/phpBB3/index.php>

AUSU Featured Groups & Clubs

Group Name: **AU - Bachelor of Commerce**

Where: **Facebook**

Members: 171

About: Members are typically B.Comm students or students taking business courses. The members of the group typically discuss their views and tips on courses.

Activity: Active several times a week but not daily.

Great AU Finds Online

Counselling Assessments – Am I Ready for studies in ...?

Counselling Assessments – A series of review modules to test your skill in a variety of subjects (currently there are assessments for English, math, chemistry, Microsoft Access, and computing science). Use these to determine if you need to brush up on a subject before diving in to a course, or just for fun. Also, Mapping Your Future helps you choose an occupation.

For links, see:

http://counselling.athabascau.ca/assess_yourself.php

IMPORTANT DATES

- Dec 24: Last day AU & AUSU open before winter break
- Dec 25 – Jan 4: AU & AUSU closed for winter break
- Jan 5: AU & AUSU reopen
- Jan 9: Last business day to register for courses starting February 1
- Jan 14: AUSU Council Meeting
- Jan 30: Last business day to extend courses ending February 28



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:

Master Office 2013

Microsoft Office products are needed for almost every AU course. Mastery of these products is not only beneficial to your schooling, but also for many jobs. Although using the most basic functions of Word and Excel is almost intuitive, there are so many other functions that that can help you put out superior work. Take the time to get to know your tools. Use Lynda.com.

- Office 2013 New Features
- Excel 2013 Essential Training
- Word 2013 Essential Training
- Outlook 2013 Essential Training
- PowerPoint 2013 Essential Training
- Up and Running with Office 365
- Up and Running with Lync Online

Courses: 7

Duration: 24h 8m

Skill Level: Beginner

Have you signed up for lynda? It's free for AUSU members. To learn more, check out ausu.org/services/lynda.php

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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