

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 49 2014-12-19

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

My Editor Said to Me..

A Writer's Carol

Tutor Tales

Lessons Not Intended

Plus:

*Alone for Christmas
The Travelling Student
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
subscription form [here](#).

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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



The End of the Revolution

Welcome to the last issue of *The Voice Magazine* for 2014, and Happy Holidays! If you're reading this, it means you've almost completed yet another trip around the sun, travelling over 93 million miles only to end up exactly where we were before. But hopefully in the course of that revolution, things have changed for the better. After all, that's the point of a revolution in the first place, right? To make things better?

But since this is the last issue of the year, we've made it fairly large so you have something to keep you busy until 2015. That is, of course, assuming you aren't too busy already, in which case this issue is extra big so you can procrastinate that much longer.

The next issue of *The Voice Magazine* won't be available until January 2nd, 2015 and that will be our annual "Best of the Voice" issue. There's still some time for you to send your suggestions as to what articles you think deserve to be included as the best of The Voice. Which articles over the past year made you think? Made you laugh, or sad, or even just gave you a memorable line you remembered the next day? You can write with your suggestions to voice@voicemagazine.org and I'll be reviewing all of them next week. Then on January 9th, 2015, we'll resume our regular publishing routine with always all original content from and about Athabasca University students like you.

For this issue, however, the onset of the holidays has inspired a number of our writers, and I hope you enjoy the various Christmas themed articles this issue, from our sing-a-long version of The Writer's Toolbox by Christina Frey to Barb Lehtiniemi's look at how being alone at Christmas may not be the same thing as being lonely. Also, Barb Godin has turned the tables this week, writing a Christmas letter to the readers instead of the reverse.

Of course, one of the themes of the holiday season is how it's supposed to bring people together, from family and friends to complete strangers, the message of the season is one of celebrating your fellow humans. Our Primal Numbers column this week has found a way that that message could become a more distinct reality all across the globe. The implications of the technology she writes about could literally change how our society functions at its most basic level by allowing us to more easily import the customs, morals, and belief systems of other people across the globe.

But that's not all, we also have our usual selection of book reviews, music reviews, and advice to help you get the most out of your education, or at least out of the few minutes you spend here. We also have a Minds We Meet, interviewing Deanna Roney. If that name seems familiar it's because her interview tuned her into The Voice Magazine, and now she's written a couple of articles for us, including giving us her own Tutor Tale this week.

So, hopefully you all have a wonderful holiday, as we continue our spin around the sun, and with any luck, the next trip will be even better than this one! Enjoy the read!

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

MINDS WE MEET



Deanna Roney is an AU student who lives in Houston BC, a small town of about 3500. She's enrolled in the BA program with an English Major, and she balances her studies with helping her husband run their own business.

Deanna was recently interviewed by The Voice Magazine about school, work, and the great outdoors.

You mentioned that you and your husband have your own business. Describe what you do.

My husband contracts out and is selling heavy duty equipment and does pilot car services as well, both of which take him on the road a lot. If it is close to home I like to go with him; AU gives me the freedom to do this as I have on several occasions done schoolwork in the middle of a logging block. I usually can't go too far with him though as we have a small pack of dogs at home. I take care of the books for the company, which was a learning curve all in itself for me.

Describe the path that led you to AU. What was it that made you realize you wanted to go back to school, and what pushed you into the program you've signed up for?

I had heard about AU a year or so before I looked too seriously into it. My mom was actually the one that had pointed it out to me initially. It wasn't until I had ankle surgery and was laid up on the couch for 12 weeks that I started to get really bored. When I was younger I used to write all the time. I wrote a few stories when I was in elementary school, one I remember distinctly in grade 4, and I started to want to get back into that, just doing something I was passionate about and not just a dead end job. I had looked first for just the odd course but eventually found myself on the AU website, and made the decision that if I was going to do it I might as well do it right!

What do you do like to do when you're not studying?

Pretty much anything outdoors. This summer I took a week and kayaked the Bowron Lakes Circuit, which was incredible. I also love river fishing for salmon and steelhead (Houston is well known for its steelhead fishing.) Also hiking, and in the winter snowshoeing and sledding in the mountains.

What are your plans for this education once you finish? How does it fit in with where you want to go?

That is a good question; I am not totally sure. I would love to find a way to write, in what context I have not completely figured out yet, but this is a work in progress. I am focusing on taking courses I enjoy and finding my way from there. I have looked into several grad program options and that may be one route I take. But we will see at the end of this which way I jump.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

My husband and my parents play a huge role in my desire, and ability, to learn. I am not sure I would have taken the plunge if it wasn't for their support.

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

I would have to say Emily Carr; I find her fascinating. She lived a life against the grain, especially for the time. I think she would be incredibly entertaining and knowledgeable. I read the book, *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr*, and feel that she would be the type of person you would learn so much from in a simple conversation, and you may not realize it until you find yourself in a situation that requires it.

Describe your experience with online learning so far. What do you like? Dislike?

So far it has been great—I love being able to be self-paced. I have no issue disciplining myself to my studies. It is a process I actually enjoy, and when I start to feel burnt out I can take a day or two off. The only thing I could say I dislike is the feeling of isolation. You don't have the same sense of community as you do in a bricks and mortar university.

When was the point where you wavered the most about whether it was worth it to continue your schooling, and what made you decide to keep going?

I am just hitting my half-way point, and I am happy to say I have not wavered yet!

What's your most memorable AU course so far, and why?

WGST 333, *Goddess Mythology, Women's Spirituality and Ecofeminism*. I loved this course. It was great to look back and see where some of our traditions came from and how some images of goddesses were distorted and destroyed. The Minoan snake goddess, for example, was turned into Medusa. I just found the entire course to be fascinating and it didn't really feel like I was working on a course.

Describe the proudest moment in your life.

Our wedding day: it was awesome to have almost my entire extended family there to celebrate our day with us, as well as his family and our friends. I have never had as much fun as I did that day. Wonderful to have the support of so many.

What have you given up to go to AU that you regret the most? Was it worth it?

I don't think I have had to give up much to go to AU.

If you were the new president of AU, what would be your first project?

I would listen to the students' concerns about the way the university is thinking about going when it comes to the call centre model and e-texts. Students have some very serious concerns when it comes to this transition and I strongly believe they need to be heard. I know AUSU is working very hard on this and I really appreciate everything they are doing.

If you were trapped on an island, what three things would you bring?

Assuming the island has the essentials to live—food and water etc.—I would bring my husband, my dogs (this totally counts as one thing!) and a good book.

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.

I'm not too sure how to answer this one. I am very dedicated and typically once I set my mind on something it is getting done one way or another. Some may call that stubborn (ha!) but I am not sure this is unique?

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

Trust your gut! This seems redundant I am sure, but I have doubted myself many times, and only when I learned to put myself first and trust my instincts did things seem to start working out better. This is in life as well as in AU-life. I remember one course—a history course—I was unsure of a paper I was going to send in. So I sent it to a friend, who graduated with a history major, for help. Turns out the edits were not ones my tutor liked, and I should have stuck to the original. It was the difference between an F and an A. That was the biggest reminder to trust myself.

What do you think about e-texts or the plans to make the university follow a call-centre model?

This causes me stress. I can only hope I am done before these take effect. Though I hope they never do for future students. With an English paper, it is not so cut and dried—a lot of it is what the tutor wants and is subjective. I do not feel a call centre style would be beneficial to this style of course. As for e-texts: I just finished a course that had a few e-texts and one physical text. After the first unit I scrapped even trying to read the e-texts and hoped I was getting enough from what I had printed. I couldn't print the book in order to read it as you are only able to print 10%. This was frustrating for me. I had paid good money for the course and wasn't getting everything out of it. Reading the texts online was a waste of time, I couldn't focus on the information in a big enough way that I could retain it. And it took me much longer to attempt to read the works as I would have to reread pages in an attempt to retain it.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

My tutors have been wonderful. I have had a couple that I have not gotten along with well, and some communication errors, but everything worked out in the end. I had a wonderful tutor for ENGL 395: when I would call to talk to her about a book it was like talking to a (very well informed) friend.

Where has life taken you so far?

In high school we made a trip to Europe for the 60th anniversary of D-Day. That was an amazing trip. Since then, I have done lots of backpacking in Jasper, Banff, Yukon, as well as the West Coast trail, and in the Stein Valley.

What (non-AU) book are you reading now?

That running joke that says an English major has no time for reading? It's true. It has been awhile since I picked up a book to read for pleasure, I usually have a book I have to read and feel too guilty if I pleasure-read instead. However for the past while, when I need a break from studies I will read a bit of *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*.



Alone For the Holidays

Barabara Lehtiniemi



"Nobody should be alone on Christmas Day," proclaims the advertisement in the newspaper. A community service group is opening its doors on the afternoon of December 25 this year so that those who are alone for the holidays can enjoy a festive meal in the company of others.

For many of those who celebrate Christmas, whether they be practising Christians or not, part of the celebration is spending time with family and friends. For some, finding themselves alone on Christmas can be depressing and, well, lonely.

Helen emigrated to Canada years ago, just before Christmas. Despite the stress of moving to a foreign country, she was looking forward to spending Christmas in her new home. Unexpectedly, her husband, the only other person she knew in the whole country, was obliged to travel out of Canada on business and would not return until Boxing Day.

On Christmas Eve, Helen trudged up her new street balancing bags of groceries in each hand. She did not know a soul in this unfamiliar neighbourhood. The overwhelming aloneness of facing Christmas dinner in a silent house weighed heavily on her. Just before reaching home with her shopping, a woman burst out of the neighbouring house to introduce herself.

Discovering that Helen would be on her own for Christmas, the neighbour insisted that Helen join her family for the holiday. Not wishing to intrude, Helen initially hesitated, but in the end was persuaded to celebrate her first Canadian Christmas with her new neighbour—now the second person she knew in Canada—and her family. Decades after Helen's arrival in Canada, it is the memory she most cherishes.

Grace, in contrast, was looking forward to her first Christmas alone. Divorced, and living many miles away from her family, she planned to spend the day quietly with her two dogs. She shared her plans with a co-worker. The co-worker, who could not conceive of a quiet Christmas, was appalled. "You must come to my house and have Christmas dinner with my family." Grace assured the co-worker that she preferred to spend the day at home. The co-worker insisted. So did Grace.

In the end, Grace prevailed, and spent December 25 at home, in her pyjamas, in the company of her beloved dogs. She caught up on her favourite TV show, phoned her parents, and enjoyed her favourite Chinese take-out meal (purchased the day before and re-heated.) After supper, she walked her dogs around the neighbourhood. With snow softly falling and Christmas lights twinkling, "It was magical," said Grace, and it remains one of her favourite Christmas memories.

The difference between the experiences of these two women is as vast as the difference between lonely and alone. While both terms describe a state of solitariness—being without companions—they each connote different experiences. According to the *ITP Nelson Canadian Dictionary*, "*alone* emphasizes being apart from others but does not necessarily imply unhappiness." On the other hand, "*lonely* connotes painful awareness of being alone."

If you're facing a lonely Christmas, you may choose to seek out those community groups who open their doors December 25. Whether you partake of a festive meal or assist in serving it, you'll find camaraderie and shared joy.

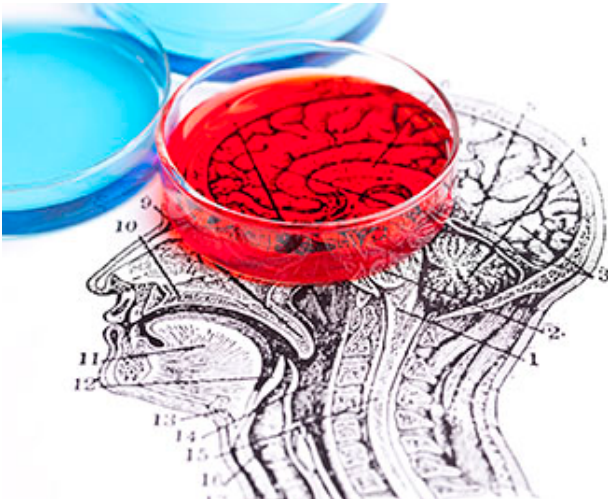
Others, in the spirit of brotherly love, may pause in the middle of the season's bustle and think about those who are alone for the holidays this year. If there's room in your day and at your table, you may extend an invitation to someone to join you and your family.

Recall, though, that alone doesn't always mean lonely. Don't make the mistake of Grace's co-worker and try to impose your idea of the holiday on someone else. Be sensitive and respectful of the individual's preference for how they want to spend their day. For some, aloneness is lonely desolation. For others, alone for the holidays is exactly what they wish for.



Primal Numbers Translating 2015

S.D. Livingston



If there's one overwhelming impression that will close out 2014, it's of people talking. Talking on cell phones. Chatting as they stream TV shows or watch YouTube videos. Making videos themselves, sharing ideas. Now imagine that all those voices can talk to anyone, anywhere, in any language, and instantly be understood. That's the potential of a new instant translator Microsoft has been working on. It's game-changing technology for 2015—and it might just change the world.

The prevailing wisdom, of course, is that people rarely talk to each other anymore. We're supposedly living in one of the least communicative

eras in history, with everyone so absorbed in their screens that they hardly realize there's anyone else around them.

But think about the last time you went an hour, or half an hour, without hearing another person's voice. They might not be speaking directly to you—they could be on the TV, radio, or Internet—but the fact is we're surrounded by people's voices pretty much everywhere we go. In spite of all the ways technology lets us interact, from SMS to selfies, the human voice is still our primary mode of communication.

It's how we make ourselves understood in perhaps the fullest sense, complete with subtle changes in meaning that come from things like tone and inflection. Body language and facial expressions add depth as well, but even without them the human voice conveys countless shades of meaning.

Which is why Microsoft's real-time voice translator holds such promise. It's called the Skype Translator, and it's an app that works as part of the Skype video and chat program. As Science Alert [reports](#), besides the ability to translate voice conversations in several languages almost instantly, the software is "also translating instant message conversations in more than 40 languages."

It's easy to see how this type of technology could be used in business or legal settings, making deals and decisions go much more smoothly. But the real potential is captured in the video on the Science Alert site—the demo that features school kids communicating across borders, even though they speak different languages.

In the not-too-distant future, this is the kind of thing that could break down barriers in the global village. It's all too easy, in a world of countless political and ideological battles, to see things in black and white. In terms of us and them, of the known (good) and the unknown (bad). Far too easy to believe the partisan talking points about events and places that are foreign to us.

But what if we could open an app and a dialogue at the same time? A dialogue with no language barriers, no matter where the speakers were. A dialogue between ordinary people who might find that they share a lot of common ground in spite of outward differences.

It's easy to see how, even though some aspects of modern technology do break social bonds, other aspects of that same technology can build global connections between people in ways that would have seemed impossible a mere 20 or 30 years ago.

So as 2014 comes to an end, and 2015 beckons, let's welcome the new while keeping the best of the old. Let's pursue the advantages that science and technology bring, while we find ways to make them benefit humanity.

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season. See you in 2015!

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

Colleen asks about the reasons why other students are taking AU courses. Kevin muses on the wisdom of scheduling back-to-back exams. Jesse seeks help on identifying rhetorical devices for an English essay.

Other postings include bad tutors, telephone quizzes, transitioning to graduate studies, waiting for course materials, and courses ENGL 401, HSRV 421 and WGST 305

Twitter

[@AthabascaUSU](#) (AUSU) tweets: Corrina Green, our VP of Finance and Administration, is our blog writer for November! Check out what she has to say: <http://www.ausu.org>

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets a link to news about AU associate professor Dr. Virginia Vandall-Walker's recent honours. Read the full story [here](#).



The Mindful Bard

Next Spring



Musical Innovation Giftwrapped in Traditional Paper

Album: *Next Spring*

Artists: The Mehmet Polat Trio

"Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us."

~Martin Luther

Once winter has commenced, it's never too early to allow one's mind to leap ahead to next spring—it's a great way to stave off the winter blues—and so this CD was released

just in time and with just the right moniker.

If you divide your music tracks into lists under such pragmatic headings as "Workout," "Motivation," or "Get Out of Bed NOW, Ya Lazy Slug," I suggest you file *Next Spring* under "Cramming." Why? Because it's great music to study to—beautiful but unobtrusive, advanced and rich in mental stimulation without jumping up and down for your attention.

Mehmet Polat is an accomplished composer and master of the *oud* (the Arabic lute), noted for having taken on a particularly exacting program of musical study from an early age, for developing new techniques in his playing, and for mixing different traditions (Turkish, Arabic, Azerbaijan, Persian, Indian, Flamenco, and Jazz, to name a few) in his compositions. Born in Urfa, Turkey, the seat of ancient Anotolia, a region of mostly Kurdish and Arab inhabitants, he studied Ottoman music in Istanbul. It appears that this unique background was the perfect foundation for unique achievement.

It took years, but Polat invented a new left hand technique and designed an *oud* with two extra bass strings, both of which developments allowed him to perform a wider variety of scores.

In 2007 he found himself in Amsterdam where he met Mali's Zoumana Diarra (also known as "Would"), master of the *kora* (an African harp). Diarra came from a family of *griots*—Malian storytellers who recount the history of their people. In addition to the *kora* Diarra could also play guitar, *ngoni*, *balafon*, *djembe*, and saxophone, and build his own instruments. Obligated to provide for himself from an early age, he'd been forced into ingenuity by necessity (he'd built his first guitar from a tin can and some fishing line).

Polat met the third member of the trio, Sinan Arat, at an *Alevi* (a mystical brach of Islam) ceremony in Rotterdam in 2012. In addition to possessing deep spiritual insight, Arat was a master of the *ney* (a Turkish flute).

All three of these musicians have created milestones in the histories of their respective instruments. Zoumana added semi-tone tuning clips to the *kora*'s strings to create a new sound. Sinan has opened himself to every

culture he's visited to enrich the style of his *ney* playing.

Polat composed all the pieces for this album, but improvisation is a salient part of the mix, and although the music is couched inside several very old musical traditions, the chemistry between these players and their respective traditions ensures the kind of call and response synergy that makes for some original sounds.

It's a bit rare to find a musician who is both true to the pure traditions of his instrument and equally devoted to originality, but Polat has often been credited with creating what might be called a particularly well-informed innovation, rooted in the long memory of the *oud* itself.

It's worth checking him out on Youtube. Be sure to have a look at his interpretations of Paganini.

Next Spring manifests three of the Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.

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.



In Conversation With William Susman

Wanda Waterman



*William Susman is Chicago-born composer of film, chamber, and orchestral music, with a thorough education in both jazz and classical piano. His work is notable for its human concern as well as for his use of technical innovations, based on the science of sound, like Shepard Tones and isorhythms. (Read the Voice review of his album *Scatter My Ashes* [here](#).) Susman recently took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about his experiences and influences.*

"Every day that is born into the world comes like a burst of music and rings the whole day through, and you make of it a dance, a dirge, or a life march, as you will."

- Thomas Carlyle

Do you consider yourself a member—or harbinger—of any particular school of music?

Not really, although some people say my music sounds like it's an outgrowth of post-minimalism.

What elements in your childhood or early years pointed you towards music? Toward serious music in particular?

I had a wonderful professor in college who introduced me to a wide variety of 20th century music. I took a special interest in performing Webern's Op. 27 because of its clarity and crystal-like beauty. It inspired me to learn more about modern music.

What is it about your character or background that makes it possible for you to syncretize so many disparate elements in your work?

I've studied and performed a variety of western and non-western music, which has enriched me with different genres and instrumentations. I've also been fortunate to have had the opportunity to collaborate with all sorts of musicians.

What was your most beneficial educational experience? What or who in your educational training had the most - and best - influence on you as a composer, as a musician, as a human being?

I would have to say that as far as educational training, the most beneficial was the time spent at The University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana). I had a variety of composition and piano professors who were a constant source of inspiration and motivation.

What was the most mesmerizing musical experience of your life?

When I was a student at The University of Illinois and listening for the first time to Xenakis's *Pithoprakta* for string orchestra. It opened up my ears to new sounds.

Does the use of technical innovation (e.g., Shepard Tones) in your compositions feel like fun, or just hard work? And why?

I used the concept of Shepard Tones in a number of pieces and it was fun. I took this concept to help structure things that swirl.

Why do you often choose to address themes related to the existential dilemmas faced by humanity?

They resonate with my life experiences. Many of these themes have touched me personally. Writing about them can be liberating and help me find meaning.

Has anything funny or strange happened to you in the process of composing, recording, or performing your music?

In my early twenties I wrote *Pentateuch* for soprano, three choral groups, and orchestra, with almost 100 solo parts played at once. That's a lot of music and when all the pages were stacked it made the score an unwieldy 9 feet long. Even after visiting a blueprint shop it was still around 5 feet. I carried it around in a garment bag. (That was before inexpensive photo reduction.)

Are there any books, films, or albums that have deeply influenced your development as an artist?

In my twenties I read Arnold Schoenberg's *Style and Idea*. I also loved *Doctor Faustus* by Thomas Mann, which alludes to Schoenberg. Back then, I also learned about film scoring by performing live for silent films such as *Un Chien Andalou*, *Entre'acte* and *Nosferatu*. I once wrote a string orchestra piece called *Angels of Light*, inspired by Mark Halperin's novel *The Soldier of the Great War*.

What music have you been listening to lately?

I've been listening to both old and new opera.

If you had an artist's mission statement, what would it be?

Write what speaks your truth.

What's your next project?

I'm working on an opera about Henry Ford.

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.

**The Travelling Student**

4:30 am

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 ten in the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program.

In the first nine parts my childhood friend Matt and I left London, Ontario on a journey to Northern Quebec. Our contact in Quebec, whom Matt had met tree planting that summer in BC assured us we would have jobs when we arrived. After several surprises, a hitchhiker, and hours of crazy driving we arrived at camp in Longue- Rive. We were welcomed into the camp by friendly faces despite being the only English Canadians at the camp. We hit the sack early knowing our day

would start at 4:30am the next morning.

"Wake up you guys, its 4:40am" was the first thing I heard that morning. I struggled out of bed, took a five-minute shower, and headed over to the kitchen with Matt. Breakfast was already being served and eaten by several people. The food, like the meal the night before, was carb heavy and I was amazed at the amount some of the other workers were eating. Breakfast consisted of grits, pancakes, omelets, cereal, and fruit. One worker had a small mountain of grits on his plate measuring thirty centimeters high. I ate as much as I could knowing I would need much more energy than on an average day. Being a web developer and communications student I was definitely out of my element. I must say though, the pancakes were excellent, and Matt had brought a bottle of real maple syrup that made them even better.

While we ate, several people prepared their own lunches with the ingredients provided by the camp. My lunch consisted of two baloney sandwiches, three boiled eggs, an orange, and an apple. I would regret not bringing more just a few hours into the day.

After eating, we grabbed our equipment that we had prepared the night before and waited out front for our ride to be ready. A half hour of standing around was required before the van was ready. Several saws were being strapped to the roof of the large extended van. Always ready to help, Matt jumped onto the roof of the

van as another worker handed him saw after saw. Once the equipment was packed several of us jumped into the back of the van.

Matt and another worker who had travelled to the work site from Vancouver talked about tree planting in BC. The main focus of their discussion was high ballers. A 'high baller' is a widely used term in tree planting, fruit picking, brush cutting, and any profession which pays by piece. A 'high baller' is someone who makes extraordinary amounts of money in a single day. While an average tree planter might expect to make \$90-\$150 a day, high-ballers will make \$300-\$700 in a single day. Legend has it that some high ballers have made up to \$1000 in a single day. Of course being a high-baller has its downsides as many push their bodies to the limit and beyond.

They talked of different high ballers each with their own styles and tricks. For example one high-baller was described as going into 'demonic mode'. In which he zoned out and looked as if he had become possessed moving with intense speed striking the ground with his shovel repeatedly and quickly planting a tree over and over for the full day. A French Canadian girl described was said to eat pounds upon pounds of cottage cheese daily to fuel her intensity. Yet another high baller was said to wear even the most expensive pair of boots out in only a few weeks, because of this he would go to second hand stores and literally buy every shoe in the store which was his size.

As I listened to Matt and the other workers talk I looked outside to notice we were no longer on pavement. Instead, we were on a logging road going deeper into the forest—into a place only hunters and forestry workers would ever see. I checked Google Maps only to find that according to the map the road didn't exist, and soon after I lost connection completely. The further we went into the forest the more nervous I grew. Would I have what it takes to do brush cutting? Would I even make fifty bucks that day? Would I learn the secrets of the brush cutting high ballers? Nothing was certain but I would soon find out.



Tutor Tales

Deanna Roney



Everyone has their own stories when it comes to the tutors who help us, or hinder us, as we work toward our goals. My goal is to graduate with a BA in English, and, in my pursuit, I have had my share of tutors. Some have been amazing, some have left much to be desired, and some I contacted very little. I think some of my frustration toward tutors stems from myself; they are simply an outlet for my frustrations. *Some.*

While some of my tutor-woes are due to a sense of not getting the help I need, sometimes I feel like I understand the course requirements more than the tutor does. In one case this was undoubtedly true. My first assignment was an 'F', and I was devastated. Not only were the comments unclear, leaving me unsure about why I had failed, but this course required a minimum

grade of a D on each assignment and exam (rather than an overall composite grade) in order to receive credit for the course. When I requested a rewrite, and was denied, I pointed out that if I did not rewrite I would fail the course, and surely, as this is the first assignment, I could get a second chance. I was assured, however, that

I only needed a composite pass, not a pass on each assignment, and because this was the first assignment I had plenty of time to bring my mark up.

After completing the course I waited for my disappointing final grade to come through. When it finally came in and I saw that I was not going to receive credit for the course, I was shocked. I called the tutor to discuss the issue that my composite grade was a pass, but I had still failed the course: as advised, I had used my remaining assignments and final exam to bring my grade up. I found my old emails where we had discussed the issue and was prepared to take the matter as high as it needed to go, however, the tutor realized the error and adjusted the grade on initial paper. This experience highlighted the importance of saving emails; as I was mis-advised the final grade was adjusted for me. My GPA was destroyed, but I received credit for the course, and any credit is always better than an 'F' on transcripts. Beyond this experience, most of my tutor-issues stem from other communication errors such as unhelpful emails or comments on assignments. Most tutors have, at least for me, made every effort to work with me to solve a problem, as long as I communicate to them that there is an issue that needs to be addressed.

I have had amazing tutors, tutors who have encouraged me, written lengthy emails back in response to my questions, and made me feel that my lack of understanding of the material actually demonstrated a great understanding (Philosophy, of course—I am pretty sure this is the only course where great confusion can be a good thing.) My courses have all been in this area, all subjective, and none have been science, yet, thankfully. The subjective courses depend on understanding what it is the tutor is looking for, as there is no right answer. I have had tutors that, when I call to discuss a book, it feels like I am talking to a friend who is enjoying the conversation as much as I am. Typically in these cases I come out of the conversation feeling like I can tackle the world—the world in that moment being my current assignment. I have also had tutors where I have contacted them for help and gotten responses that I found less than helpful. I stare at the email and wonder how they think that can possibly answer my question. It seems to me to be asking me the exact same questions I asked them. Now I know that we should be able to find the answers ourselves, and sometimes looking at a question from another angle will allow us to do this. However, usually in these cases I am left feeling frustrated, I obviously do not understand something and need help with it, I have just waited two days to get an email response back, and the email just leaves me feeling more alone and isolated than ever before.

*I have gotten
comments on a paper
that consisted of
"???" and that is all.*

Sometimes I find myself wondering if I am expecting too much, too detailed of a response in emails, or too much detail in comments on assignments. It is true that I can get too personally attached to my papers, but I surely cannot be the only one this happens to. And having negative comments can cause me to become defensive of my child/paper. However, I like to think that when a comment is clear I will be (and have been) receptive to it, and my work will improve. I understand that I did something wrong, however, rather than making me feel like a fool because I have comma splices scattered throughout my paper, an indication of how I would be able to correct it would be helpful.

What I find even worse is each time they find an error the comments get more and more rude. With comments like these I usually end up feeling inadequate. I think, "Maybe I should already know this." I begin to doubt myself and if I belong in these courses: help to resolve the issue would be constructive and not make me feel completely out of place, so what do these comments mean? Should I already know these simple issues? Should I rethink my program choice and my major altogether? Tutors may not realize the impact they have on students, but comments that come across as condescending can cause students to rethink their educational paths.

I have gotten comments on a paper that consisted of "?????" and that is all. My reaction to that was, initially, disgust. Really that tells me nothing. However, it was this particular paper that made me take a step back and reevaluate the comments I get on papers, and how I take the feedback. Maybe they did not give me an example of how to fix a problem, but the problem is apparently a problem, which, in most cases, has a name. Naming the problem allows me to find a solution to the issue from outside sources. While the tutors are there to help students, they likely have more on their plate than we may realize, and sometimes with a simple issue like a comma splice, it is up to us to resolve the problem on our own. As for the paper with the "?????" comments, it was the next paper that tutor marked that actually made it clear what the question marks meant, and made me feel somewhat ashamed of my reaction. This paper was much more clear and concise, and I realized that all she meant was that the sentence was not clear, it was not only the punctuation that was highlighted, but the sentence as a whole. I still think that this could have been made clearer, but had I been more receptive to the "comment" perhaps I would have understood what she was referring too. Though I find it a bit ironic that the comment on an unclear statement was unclear in itself.

While sometimes I think I may feel frustrated with tutors because they take too long to respond to an email, their responses are unclear, or the comments on papers may not give me a clear understanding of what it is I am doing wrong, generally, if I am persistent enough, I am able to get the information I need; whether I am nagging them with emails, calling, or taking to outside sources to find my answers, I do eventually find them. This detective work may be giving me more skills beyond the course work, skills which may be beneficial to me in the future. Maybe this is why the responses from tutors sometimes seem vague or unhelpful. Perhaps they are teaching us skills beyond this virtual classroom, skills we can fall back on when we no longer have experts to email or call for help.

Deanna Roney is an AU student who loves adventure in life and literature.



Music Review

Stroamata: "Get You Good"

Samantha Stevens



Single: "Get You Good"

Artist: Stroamata

In the rough times, music can be a wonderful way to cope with intense feelings. Stroamata appears to recognize this need for music to comfort us during the ups and downs of our lives, and their latest single seeks to remind us of our internal strength that we sometimes forget we have. However, when simply listening to the song as a recording, "Get You Good" didn't quite hit the mark for me.

Inspired by Radiohead, The Doors, and The White Stripes, Stroamata seeks to push the boundaries of rock and roll, and create a new genre of rock music.

Formed in Boston, Stroamata played many different venues around the city during the early 2000s. By the time they had released their first album, *Things Left Lying Around*, in 2008, they had fine-tuned their sound and were comfortable playing together live on stage. Since 2008, they have released a second album, and moved to New York City, where they continue to play many live shows.

I feel that perhaps their comfort with playing live shows is something that fails to be captured when they record a song. Stroamata's single "Get You Good" is comprised of strong lyrics with equally strong music. The guitar is dramatic and the drums are hypnotizing, but the song failed to capture my imagination. I listened to it several times, and I couldn't feel the spark of emotion between the singing and music, even though this song is intended to be very emotional.

I checked out another one of Stroamata's singles, "Anything", and found the same thing. The lyrics were full of emotion, speaking of the darker side of love that is infected with desperation and obsession, and the music brilliantly accompanied the singing. But once again, my imagination wasn't captured.

I decided to watch their video for the single "Dollar". After watching the video, I understood why the other songs failed to capture my attention. Stroamata's music is both an audio and visual experience. The lead singer emphasizes her singing with her body language and facial expressions, something that we obviously can't hear. And the guitar, drum, and bass playing is more than creating music, the musicians also appear to be vivid entertainers that put all of their emotion into their playing. After realizing that Stroamata is best enjoyed live, or at least in a recorded video, I adjusted my initial impression of "Get You Good" and "Anything," trying to imagine how the songs would be performed by the band.

The songs have their charms, but I think that seeing Stroamata live on stage would help me gain a better understanding and appreciation of their music. Unfortunately, Stroamata is only playing in New York at the moment. But if you happen to find yourself in that city, like rock music, and have a chance to see Stroamata perform live, I have a feeling that the show would be one to remember.

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

DID YOU KNOW?

Not Studying Might be Smarter



At this time of year, a lot of students are busy trying to juggle not only their studies, but also the additional pressures of Christmas shopping and the expectations of family.

However, a recent article in the *Globe and Mail* points out that attempting to cram everything in while studying as well can be worse for your exam than just taking a breather from the studying. It also gives a few tips for how to effectively manage your studying time so that stress doesn't kill your grade.



Best Wishes

Are you ready? How are your Christmas preparations coming? Is your tree up? If you can manage it, get one of those fancy shmancy pre-lit ones. It will save untold hours of frustration and give you a perfectly balanced look. The fun part is selecting the ornaments and garlands to use. Will it be a collection of all your favourites including those kid-made ones, or will it be done in the latest fashion colours? Whatever the decision, it magically strips away the decades and takes us back to our childhood.

With the price of postage stamps and the convenience of email, is it any wonder that receiving a 'real' Christmas card is as rare as a dodo bird? This quaint tradition is more special because it happens so rarely. Imagine my writer's cramp as I signed and addressed more than 125 cards for festival volunteers, sponsors, interpreters. I even added a short greeting in Ukrainian for the benefit of those who understand it.

Are the presents all wrapped with care and tucked under the tree or hidden in stockings? Whether you buy for everyone, or pick names like we do, the task is either fun or frustrating. Whether you do it all year round (and struggle to remember what you bought and where you hid it!) or love the Christmas Eve madness is largely a matter of attitude and preparation. Knowing the recipient is key. For some people a carefully selected gift card for a favourite store is better than some wildly inappropriate thing. To others it's a cop out.

At this time we also remember Salvation Army's kettle campaign, food bank drives, World Vision's catalogue of farm animal gifts, clothing drives for the homeless, and a host of other worthy causes.

Have you recaptured the essence of Christmas by overdosing on holiday movies? From the innocence of a child's faith to true love found to ludicrous slapstick, there is something to make you laugh or cry depending on your taste and mood. Whether it creates some unattainable expectations or provides much needed escapism is

again a matter of perception.

If baking turns your crank, you're in luck. 'Tis the season of excess. Shortbread cookies, Nanaimo bars, Christmas cake, homemade chocolate, and all manner of other goodies fill the air with heavenly scents. Of course, overindulgence also fills out our figures and not in a good way. Add the comfort food and snacks and you have a recipe for regret. At least the mandarin oranges are healthy.

Has anyone been able to top Boney M's 1981 Christmas album? *Mary's Boy Child*—ahhh. Or Wynonna's rendition of the soaring *O Holy Night*? I realize it's no *Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer* or *All I Want for Christmas is a Hippopotamus*, but hey.

But better than the music, the gifts, the food, or the entertainment is the time spent with family, Uncle Ed and Auntie Beryl notwithstanding. All the best wishes for a blessed Christmas and an incredible New Year, from where I sit.

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

Writer's Toolbox

My Editor Said to Me...

On the first day of Christmas, my editor said to me
I don't think you quite meant literally.

On the second day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*It's "too much"—use the adverb
And I don't think you quite meant literally.*

On the third day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*Put commas inside quote marks
"Too much" takes the adverb
And I don't think you quite meant literally.*

On the fourth day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*Please go check your sources
Commas inside quotes
"Too much" takes the adverb
And I don't think you quite meant literally.*

On the fifth day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*Ending with a preposition's fine!
Please go check your sources
Commas inside quotes
"Too much" takes the adverb
And I don't think you quite meant literally.*

On the sixth day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*There's no such word as "alright"
Ending with a preposition's fine!
Please go check your sources
Commas inside quotes
"Too much" takes the adverb
And I don't think you quite meant literally.*

On the seventh day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*Capitalize "mom" when you talk to her
No such word as "alright"
Etc.*

On the eighth day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*Embrace those split infinitives
Capitalize "mom" when you talk to her
Etc.*

On the ninth day of Christmas, my editor said to me
"You're" stands for "you are"

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](#).

Christina M. Frey

*Embrace those split infinitives
Etc.*

On the tenth day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*Watch your plural possessives
"You're" stands for "you are"
Etc.*

On the eleventh day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*You "lay" something but "lie down"
Watch your plural possessives
Etc.*

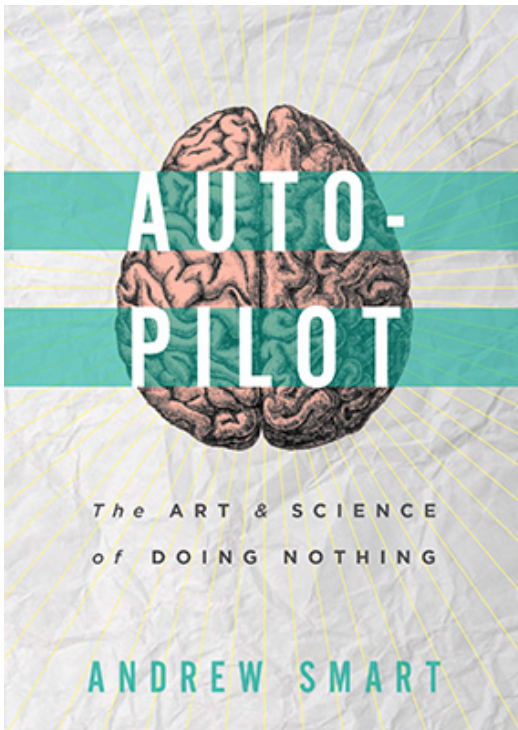
On the twelfth day of Christmas, my editor said to me
*Rules create understanding
"Lay" something but "lie down"
Watch your plural possessives
"You're" stands for "you are"
Embrace those split infinitives
Capitalize "mom" when you talk to her
No such word as "alright"
Ending with a preposition's fine!
Please go check your sources
Commas inside quotes
"Too much" takes the adverb
And I don't think you quite meant literally.*



The Travelling Student Book Review

An Economist Gets Lunch

Philip Kirkbride



I Experiencing writers block, lack of concentration, or a general lack of ideas? According to Andrew Smart writer of *Auto-Pilot: The Art of Doing Nothing* the solution could be taking more time, as you might expect from the title, to do nothing. I found Smart's book on sale at a used bookstore. Having recently experienced days where I worked so hard doing physical labour that I was unable to think at the end of the day I thought it would be interesting to read about the connection between thinking and leisure.

It's a short read, but overall it's a good read. In contrast to many of the time management self-help books which have become popular, Smart promotes a more holistic style of both thinking and living. He gives a scientific argument as to why doing so can make us smarter.

A long-standing myth among the public is that humans only use 10% of their brains. This is far from reality. In *Auto-Pilot* Smart explains that the myth originated with early scientists who studied the brain by monitoring it with an MRI machine while applying external sensory inputs. The scientists found that different external stimulus only

activated around 10% of the brain, and assumed only 10% was used. The reality is that we use our whole brain but the large majority of it simply functions on its own.

Smart looks at ways in which we can improve the effectiveness of that other 90%. Often simply leaving the brain alone during some down time, daydreaming, or relaxation can improve its efficiency.

In a Reddit "[Ask Me Anything](#)", Smart was asked about the effects of 'mind-wandering' or daydreaming and gave an interesting response:

I think that our brains have this natural tendency to engage in mind-wandering and it isn't always a bad thing. In fact, why would we have such a strong tendency to daydream if it wasn't useful for something? Perhaps in our evolutionary history daydreaming was adaptive, but in our society and culture today it has become maladaptive.

During mind-wandering I think your brain is trying to tell you something, or even that random thoughts are actually creative new ideas your brain is pushing up into your conscious awareness. I, for one, love daydreaming when I can really enter into a relaxed state without any effort, and it is then often that new ideas pop into my head - like writing about book about idleness and daydreaming.

I found Smart's concept to be especially useful for your average Athabasca University student. Many of whom, including myself, are running on a hectic schedule balancing work, study, and family life. Smart reminds us of the importance of taking the time for a break. After all Newton discovered the laws of gravity while sitting idly in a garden after some afternoon tea.

The Career Path

Marie Well



Get Rich with Online Media or Get Dizzy Trying to Figure out Paypal Integration?

With more reports saying that the idea of a life-long career is dead, it will be up to us when we graduate to develop our own forms of employment.

So I recently read the book *Launch* by Jeff Walker, and, without question, it was an enticing read. Midway through the book, I was committed to starting my own launch project, and ever since then I have been getting the education required to make the start-up a reality. Yet success with doing such a launch relies on a number of critical factors for students without the financial means to afford Walker's instructional classes. For instance, starting up an e-commerce business, an online educational site, or a membership site with informational products requires that the online companies that provide these services also have the necessary support to make it a reality.

Jeff Walker's Launch In Summary

Jeff Walker (2014) takes a very innovative approach to internet marketing that includes getting set up with an email auto-responder service that also supplies an opt-in form. One such example that I have discovered is ideal is AWeber, which has nice templates for the opt-in

form and automatically generates the code you need to insert into your website html. I happen to have built websites using HTML, CSS, and a little JavaScript, so I had an easy start with the endeavour.

From there, he recommends a service called Kajabi, which provides you with a paid membership site that you can download your pdfs, videos, audio clips, and other information products onto that people pay memberships to access.

Jeff Walker uses his opt-in email list to send emails with links to quality content in the form of videos, audios, and pdfs (that are hosted on his Kajabi site and integrated with his AWeber account). He entices people to purchase his product through a strategy that you can access with his free book located at <http://thelaunchbook.com>.

So, I Took The Journey, Starting with the Sidetrack Ambition of Zazzle

Wanting to sell the information products of my partner, I embarked on the journey to learn more about online sales. Initially, I discovered an online store called Zazzle that enables you to place your designs on t-shirts and other products and sell them by setting up a store. You can link to that store using a hyperlink or you can set up a storefront as a folder in your website directory. Unfortunately, Zazzle has very little customer support for anything involving their store builder. I keep getting the same customer service representative each time I call in (with a fifteen minute wait on the line minimum), and this individual has little-to-no developer knowledge, although she is highly amicable and super sweet.

The Joy of Kajabi

Although I'm still attempting to make contact with someone different at Zazzle and hope there might be less of a phone wait if I hold off until after Christmas, I have begun attending what is called Kajabi University with the hopes of getting the support I need to get started on a project. Kajabi has no phone support, but, if you are a member, you

can chat with them to get set up. The most prominent feature of Kajabi is that they have very good video tutorials that you can access for free from their site.

Kajabi offers you a site that hosts your membership forum where people come to pay to access your information products. Kajabi also has what they call a funnel, which is the free stuff that you can integrate with an email auto-responder program like AWeber. So, in other words, you can send emails with links to video squeeze pages encouraging the individual to sign up for your membership site when they sign in to your email list (with the opt-in form AWeber provides, which you then place on your Wordpress or other Website).

In fact, Kajabi cites Jeff Walker (author of the book *Launch*) as one of its inspirations in the Kajabi videos. Also Kajabi has video tutorials on how to link to AWeber, as they have some type of integration system together.

Yet Difficulties Arose

After watching a vast majority of the Kajabi University video tutorials, I have found myself stumped on a number of situations. For one, AWeber doesn't have very good video support, and the integration with Kajabi isn't readily spelled out. For instance, I'm not sure conceptually what role AWeber exactly fulfills in relation to the emailing of the Kajabi products nor am I clear on how to integrate the two. AWeber offers a fifteen minute tutorial, but Kajabi is not mentioned in it.

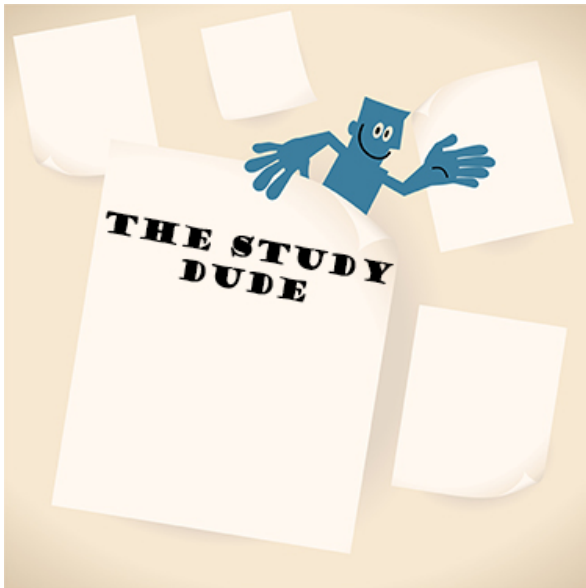
Another difficulty is that Kajabi University brushes over how to integrate Kajabi with Paypal. I don't have a PayPal account, so that is a significant limitation at the outset, but I initially thought this shortcoming could be surmounted by going onto YouTube and searching for related videos. However, for some stifling reason, the video tutorials on how to set up Paypal for ecommerce purposes are grossly lacking. Even lynda.com doesn't seem to have a sufficient outlay of courses on the topic. Instead of video tutorials on PayPal integration, Kajabi has a heinous text document that blinds you with lines of confounding instructions devoid of meaningful graphic overlays.

To Move Forward or Not to Move Forward

So, with Christmas nearing, I'm planning on phoning Zazzle when the customer support service is more streamlined due to less customer demand. I also hope to finally access someone with a little developer knowledge to just give me the reassurance that there is someone available to help mitigate problems if I go ahead and install their store builder product.

As for Kajabi, their excellent video support is leaning me toward setting up a membership site filled with information products. The integration with PayPal may be a barrier, resulting in my closing shop, but I'm certain Kajabi wants to maintain my month-to-month contract by at least providing enough text support to get me started. The cost is nearly \$100/month for three membership sites, if I'm correct, so the investment needs to be well thought through before making the initial investment.

Finally, as for AWeber, I have enough developer know-how to implement the HTML code on a site I've already built, and the cost isn't too prohibitive. Any developer can get your opt-in form up-and-running within seconds, and all you really need to know from your developer is the width of your sidebar that the opt-in form will be issued on. The customer support and lack of excellent video tutorials make AWeber and PayPal integration the two biggest barriers to getting started with a membership site, but for those of you who don't need to rely on documentation for learning purposes, with Kajabi's video supports, you likely will be able to traverse safely.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to critically think your way into a posh career as a professor.

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 two of the Study Dude's dissection of that ever-perplexing

construct, critical thinking.

The Small Sample of the Water Cooler

Smaller samples give more extreme outcomes (Kahneman, 2011). Does that make perfect sense? Probably not at the outset, but if you see some probability in action, you will start to recognize how extremes are often found in small sample spaces. Think about having an urn filled half with red and half with white marbles. You will have a greater probability of more extreme outcomes with a smaller sample size. For instance, if you drew two marbles out of the urn, you'd have a probability of WW, RR, WR, RW with a 1/4 chance of drawing all white or 1/4 all red, instead of a combination of red and white. On the other hand, if you drew four marbles out of the urn (yielding a larger sample space), you'd have a probability of RRRR, WWWW, WRRR, WWRR, WWRW, RRRW, RRWW, RWWW, RWRR, RRWR, WRWW, WWRW, etc. with only one entry being all red and only one entry being all white, in spite of all the other possibilities available in the large sample space. Thus, the chances of drawing on the extremes (all red or all white) are much smaller for a larger sample space. If that didn't make sense, don't worry. The basic principle that smaller samples show more extreme outcomes is all you need to really grasp to follow along.

Believing what you hear from a small sample space is System 1 thinking (the automatic, emotional thinking); recognizing it as potentially spurious is System 2 (slow and deliberate thinking). So, how much credibility should you give the information you hear at the water cooler?

The Study Dude warns you to never listen to anything you hear at the water cooler, particularly if it is something negative about someone else. Here is why from a statistical perspective:

- Smaller samples show more extreme outcomes.
- Large samples are more precise than smaller samples, as larger samples are not as extreme or anomalous.
- The problem with the water cooler, is that anomalous or extreme behaviour can be reported, and it can spread like contagious gossip. Even if message is untrue, it can spread by association. The larger number of people passing on the gossip can make it seem representative when it is only the misrepresentation or malicious intent of the initiator.
- Lawyers will attack either the strongest arguments or the weakest arguments, not the stuff in between, as humans can undergo more bias by more extreme stories.

(Kahneman, 2011)

So, speak well of your supervisors, instructors, and fellow student—and don't believe what you hear at the water cooler—even if the Landing, or Yahoo, or AOL, for that matter, has a lot of support for a particular negative position. My goal in life is to never utter a negative word or even harbour a negative thought toward another human being. I read these truths in the Bible (and it says the same thing in Buddhism, Hinduism, and other spiritual circles—it is just plain spiritual common sense). Plus, the more you get in the habit of looking at the positives in others, the happier you become overall—and your overall happiness level means the world to the Study Dude.

Professional Stereotypes

Kahneman (2011) uses the movie *Moneyball* to highlight the difference between stereotype and base rate statistics. In the movie *Moneyball*, it was common practice for scouts to choose players based on factors as seemingly innocuous as how chiselled their chins were or, basically, how well they "looked" the part of a top athlete. Chiselled pectorals and barn-door lateral muscles were part and parcel of what constituted an ideal prospect. Yet, in the movie, the main character decides to crunch the statistics of past performance to pick out who might be a top player—and at a lower cost to the club.

Yes, incorporating statistics—and not just relying on stereotypes—is the system 2 thinking I discussed in the previous article, which is a slow, deliberate thinking process. Just relying on stereotypes in a state of ignorance of the base rate (or statistical) foundation is system 1 thinking, which is the automatic, emotional, intuitive thinking.

The Study Dude has a (shh!) disability that started when I was doing graduate studies while working full-time. I get anxiety attacks so extreme that, when I have one, I can't do something as simple as brush my teeth without being laden in terror. Yet, in the past, I loved to spar in martial arts, race my bicycle down the number one highway, and do hard-core exercise for up to five hours a day. I also was at my peak performance, taking advanced university mathematics exams, often finding myself in the greatest state of flow during the examination process—and often receiving the highest final mark of the entire class.

According to my performance, I should have been a prime candidate for anything dealing with intense physical activity or intellectual analytics. I was a jock and highly logical. Yet, statistically speaking, anxiety runs in my family.

Now, I avoid exams at all costs—the thought of taking a math exam comes with thoughts of actually failing due to anxiety attacks during examination—and I get frequent panic attacks whenever I get so enamoured with the thought of training again that I reattempt a daily hourly exercise routine. I fit certain stereotypes, but the statistical propensity toward anxiety was more pronounced.

Here is a breakdown of the stereotypes and base rate (statistical) assessments in action:

- When we are posed with a stereotype of a person, we will often ignore relevant statistical data that would point in a different direction.
- Professional stereotypes (the highly organized accountant, for instance) have hardly changed over time.
- People will tend to substitute stereotypes instead of recognized statistical direction.
- Yet, with the absence of information, judging based on stereotypes may have its merit.

- Sometimes plausibility is substituted wrongly for probability. If something seems plausible, we might guess it to be the case, in spite of contradictory statistics.

(Kahneman, 2011)

Rewards Versus Punishment, Success, and Luck

Did you know that severely depressed adults that eat pickles three times a day show signs of improvement? Did you know that severely depressed adults who dance around in their underwear once a day also show signs of improvement? However, severely depressed adults are extreme cases, and will inevitably tend to merge closer to the mean (or average) given time (Kahneman, 2011). So no matter what they do, they will tend to show signs of improvement.

Yet, we humans seek causal explanations for everything. Kahneman (2011) looks at why highly intelligent women marry men who are less intelligent than they are. Why? It's regression to the mean. Sometimes our causal stories can be explained straight away with a simple examination of the concept of regression to the mean.

The Study Dude had so much good luck at the outset of graduate school, including tens-of-thousands of dollars in scholarships (a SSHRC award), a silver medallion, media coverage, and a TA spot. I was lucky to the core. However, graduate studies continued on, and I found myself scrambling with full-time work to help pay for the continuation of graduate studies. I struggled to make each tuition payment on time, and, well, my GPA was shy of the 3.8 needed to get into the PhD program. A way to describe what happened to me was I very lucky with a little talent, but ended up regressing toward the mean.

- If a golfer has great luck the first day, it can be seen as luck and talent. The next day, his or her performance will likely revert more toward the mean, with a less promising day. This is just a statistical reality that will likely occur.
- It is a running view that athletes featured on Sports Illustrated will perform worse after their showcasing in the magazine. That is likely because to be featured in the magazine, they had to performing at unusually great levels, which would be naturally followed by a reversion toward the mean (less successful performance).
- Changes in performance toward the mean need no causal explanations as often enough luck plays a role, and the player will revert toward the mean.
- Our brains are geared for causal stories and don't take too well to statistical explanations.

(Kahneman, 2011)

If there's one thing we can take away from all this, it's to remember that when we hear something new, we're dealing with a small sample, and shouldn't rely on it without double-checking. Not only will doing so keep you from making mistakes in your assignments, but will help to reinforce your knowledge. 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.



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

A Christmas Message

Dear Readers:

This is my last column of the year and I would like to turn the tables and address my readers.

This world can be somewhat overwhelming at times with so much going on, especially with career issues, raising children, and trying to keep relationships healthy and happy. At times our priorities get messed up and we lose our perspective on what is important. We get caught up in the trivialities of day-to-day life and lose sight of the big picture.

At the end of the day, family and friendships are what are important. Career and work will end one day, and at that point you will look to your family and friends for happiness and enjoyment in life. Many people don't realize this until it is too late, or when they have lost someone. At this point their world comes crashing down around them and they are filled with anger and regret. Don't let this happen to you. Cherish your family and friends, warts and all!

Christmas frequently creates feelings of nostalgia in many of us. Use those feelings as a starting point to change your life, not just for the Christmas season, but forever. If you are still fortunate enough to have parents, enjoy them and treat them with patience and love. Not only for this Christmas, but always. Many people are missing their parents and would change places with you in a heartbeat. If your children are young, cherish your memories.

They will grow up far too quickly and you will wonder where their childhood

went. If you have a partner, accept their shortcomings, as we all have them. Choose to focus on the love and kindness you have shared together. Also, remember grandchildren are the most special gift your children can give you. Cherish them and create memories that they will treasure and someday share with their own children. Finally, consider a person's intentions before you judge them. Very few people truly intend to hurt another person; it is their own inner pain lashing out. Treat them kindly.

Most importantly, love yourself and regard yourself with the same love, compassion, and understanding as you would your best friend.

Throughout this last year I hope that by offering an objective voice to your problems and difficult decisions I have been of some assistance to all of you, and that I will continue to be in the new year.

Finally, I would like to wish my readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

"The best index to a person's character is how he treats people who can't do him any good, and how he treats people who can't fight back."

- Abigail Van Buren

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: A VERY CHAZZY CHRISTMAS



Christmas is a very special time for me, Chazz.



I love Christmas, too, baby! It's such a festive time, a time when muzak, overeating, mood lighting, and excessive friendliness are suddenly okay!



Um, that's all very nice, Chazz, but what about the true meaning of Christmas?

Hey— is it my imagination or are you hitting on me?



WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



AUSU
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

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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>

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

AUSU Featured Groups & Clubs

Group Name: **AU – Faculty of Business**

Where: **Facebook**

Members: 1134

About: Members are all types of students, staff, and alumni with AU. The members of the group seem to

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

support, encourage and give advice to each other on AU Faculty of Business topics.

Activity: Posts several times per week that are mostly news and information on the AU Faculty of Business.



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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Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union
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www.voicemagazine.org

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

Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org.

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