

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 01 2015-01-02

Best of The Voice Edition

Showcasing some of our best from 2014!

Including: From The Ground Up

Reprinted in AU's Blog

And: My Spcial Sister

Voted for by Students like You

Plus:

Firsts of 2014

Music and Film Reviews

and much more!



CONTENTS

The Voice's interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

Features

Minds We Meet: *Interviewing John MacPherson (Sept 5)* 4

From the Ground Up: *A Solid Foundation (Aug 8)* 10

Articles

Editorial: *The Social and Cultural Significance of Borscht (Oct 24)* 3

How Do You Like Those Apples *(Sept 5)* 16

Health Matters: *Preparing for Surgery Naturally (Feb 14)*..... 20

Efficiency vs. Atrophy *(May 9)*..... 22

My Special Sister *(Nov 14)*..... 24

Columns

The Travelling Student: *Beginnings (Oct 3)*..... 6

Primal Numbers: *The New Luddites (May 2)*..... 8

Mindful Bard: *Cargo Cult (Oct 31)* 11

Gregor's Bed: *Nebraska (Aug 22)* 13

Music Review: *Remix Eye Movement (May 2)* 15

From Where I Sit: *Both Scary and Sad (May 30)* 18

The Writer's Toolbox: *Whither That Word? (Aor 11)*..... 19

The Study Dude: *Coles Notes (July 25)* 26

Comic

Chazz Bravado: *At The Olympics (Feb 14)* 28

***The Voice
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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 Social and Cultural Significance of Borscht. Part I
(aka It's Not Terrorism Unless We Let It Terrify)**

Because this issue officially marks my first full year, I was initially planning this week's editorial to be a discussion of The Voice Magazine's history, and why certain things (such as our website) seem so out of date. The short version? Because it is.

However, with the events that happened in Ottawa, and a lot of the reaction I seem to be seeing, I thought I might as well make use of this platform to share my point of view, one that I hope will find itself echoed by most people.

First, we need to get some things straight. Terrorism is used far too loosely. The definitions of whether certain actions constitute terrorism seem to vary mostly based on who is doing the defining. Are the unsuspecting civilians killed by a drone strike terrorist victims, or collateral damage? Is a soldier killed by an enemy combatant a victim of terrorism? What if the combatant isn't in a uniform? What if the

soldier is in what we define to be the theatre of operations? When we level a building to wipe out people we think are enemies who have hidden inside, is that terrorism? What about if they do it to us?

As you can see, there's a lot of wiggle room, especially these days when we don't march up in red coats while they stand in line in their blue coats and everybody plays target-practice.

So we really need to nail down a definition of terrorism. To me, a terrorist activity has to have three basic characteristics. It needs to aim primarily at civilians. It needs to be organized. And it needs to have the goal of causing a people to permanently alter their normal behavior—that's the whole terror aspect. With these criteria, the attack in Ottawa fulfills one. Maybe. The guy wasn't organized, as we know from him having to hi-jack a vehicle after the first shots were fired. He definitely didn't aim primarily at civilians, the only people who got hurt in the whole incident were uniformed soldiers or guards, and, of course, the gunman. And did it have the goal of causing us to permanently alter our behavior? Given that we know we was at a senior's home a couple of days before telling people to prepare for the world's ending, it doesn't seem likely that any change to our behavior was intended—he thought the world was ending anyway, after all.

So the reality is that what we have here isn't a terrorist act, but rather the actions of a sad, desperate, and sick individual. In many ways, less of a real threat to Canadians than the recent shooting in Moncton, and nobody calls that terrorism. Yet as a result of this act, we have our government preparing to fast track increases and reviews to police powers, and that's entirely the wrong way to go.

Because, as I saw it mentioned by one of the various commenters on all of the stories that came out regarding this event: Terrorism sucks, but it's incredibly unlikely it will ever affect you directly. Government, however, will.

Enjoy the read!

Student selected. I won't toot my own horn more than that.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl". The letters are fluid and connected, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

MINDS WE MEET

A NEW VOICE COLUMN



John MacPherson is an AU student from Newmarket, Ontario. He's in his final year of the Bachelor of Management Program at AU. In addition to his studies, John works full-time in the hospitality and entertainment industry as an online marketer.

John was recently interviewed by The Voice Magazine about school, work, and life in general. Here's the gist of that interview:

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 originally started at the University of Guelph in the Bachelor of Chemistry program. After a year and a half I realized that program wasn't for me. I switched to marketing at Guelph for the next two years. After four years of university, a job opportunity came up and

money was getting a bit tight anyway. My mother was taking courses at Athabasca University in pursuit of her masters, so she suggested I continue my education there. Athabasca allowed me to both work and continue my education.

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

Mostly I'm working full-time at byPeterandPauls.com, a hospitality and entertainment company, doing online marketing. I'm also managing some of the event venues during the busy wedding season.

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

Once I finish my BMgmt, I intend to pursue a Masters in Business Administration. But first I plan to enjoy a bit of time off from school. Eventually I'm working toward creating my own business in online marketing.

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

Both my mother and father have influenced me. Both went to university: my mother got her BSc in Nursing, and my father got his BSc in Botany. My father worked in his career for 35 years. My mother continued her education throughout her life, eventually getting her masters. Both my parents have been supportive of my education, offering advice and encouragement.

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

I think Carl Sagan. Even though I left the science program, I'm still keenly interested in science. I find it fascinating. Carl Sagan was one of my father's role models, too.

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

It was a strange transition going from the lecture hall to completely online. At first it was a bit of a struggle staying on top of it. No professors to push; it was all up to me. On one hand it was a bit freeing being able to work at my own pace. After a day's work if I just didn't have it in me, I could put off studying. But it takes a lot of self-motivation. I had to apply for course extensions a couple of times in the early days, but not so much now.

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?

It was difficult. After leaving University of Guelph, I was working full-time in the career of my choice. I asked myself if there was any point in continuing my studies. It could have gone either way. In the end, it was worth it to continue my education. In many cases, I can apply concepts from my classes to my work, so I really am getting something out of this. I'm committed to finishing my degree and hope to do so in the next year or so.

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

I would have to say *Personal Finance*, FNCE 322. I really think I learned personal financial management late in life; it would have been beneficial to learn this in high school. I found the information in this course both practical and enlightening. This was an elective and I'm glad I chose it.

Describe the proudest moment in your life.

There are two that come to mind. The first was in my 3rd year at the University of Guelph. I was on the Interhall Council Central Executive, part of the team looking after student orientation week for 5000 new students. The whole orientation came off without a hitch and I recall sitting with my fellow central executive members, letting it sink in that we had done it.

The second moment was at work. I was working at an event venue, and it had been one of those nights full of challenging moments. After the event, I sent most of the staff home while I waited for the decorator to pick up the chairs. Quite late, the decorator called to say she couldn't pick up the chairs until the next morning. I began the arduous task of stacking around 450 to 500 chairs. One of my staff came back in for a moment and, seeing what I was doing, offered to help. I said, no, don't worry about it, I've sent everyone home, I'll just look after it. The staff member left after a minute, then returned with 15 other staff members who had been outside. They got to work helping me stack the chairs, turning a 2-hour job into a 15-minute job. I felt appreciative of their help, and honoured that they volunteered to help out. It felt really good to know my staff would do that for me.

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

Free time! It really cuts into my personal life, but ultimately it's worth it. AU studies really help me in my work, and the flexibility of online learning makes it work for me.

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

Free t-shirts for all students! As president, I'd focus on student inclusiveness. I'd work on fostering a sense of student community. I'd send each new student an AU t-shirt so that each student would feel that they belonged. I'd also facilitate some student gatherings in each province. Right now, it's up to students to find each other—I think AU could do more to bring students together where they live.

Describe your earliest memory.

It was at a Santa Claus parade. I wasn't quite 3 years old. A parade participant dressed as Batman came up to me and signed a comic book for me. It made an enduring impression.

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

First of all, I'd bring a long book: *A Catskill Eagle* by Robert B. Parker. Second, I'd bring a camp hammock—may as well be comfortable. And third, a Swiss army knife. If I could bring a fourth item, it would be a roll of duct tape. That should cover all eventualities.

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people. What is unique or remarkable about you?

I think most people would say it's my outgoing, optimistic attitude. My sister says I'm a bit of a schmoozer. If I go into a room of 50 new people, I'll come out with 50 new friends. I guess that's why I'm suited for the hospitality industry.

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

My father taught me to stay calm. He quotes Corrie ten Boom: "Worry does not rob tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its strength." It helps to remember that.

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

I'm adaptable, so I just deal with whatever comes. I haven't had any e-texts yet, but I don't find that I rely heavily on textbooks. I'll just adapt; I'm pretty easygoing.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

I've found my tutors to be reasonable. Communication has been good. They always seem to post when they will be away and I've had no problems getting in touch with them.

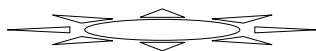
Where has life taken you so far?

So far, I've made my way to Scotland and England, visiting Edinburgh, Liverpool, and London. I've gone to Cuba, New York City—which is huge and crazy—, and Chicago. I'd like to return to Scotland for an extended visit. I don't have immediate family there but it's the land of my heritage. I'd also like to experience some uniquely different places like Singapore, Tokyo, Beijing, Australia. Ideally I like to get away somewhere every year.

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

I'm reading *A Game of Thrones*, the first book in the series by George R. R. Martin. I haven't watched the TV series yet, so I'm getting a preview before I begin watching.

One of the firsts of 2014, this column was the first Minds We Meet column, one that has sparked off a regular column of interviews of students. Since I've received positive reaction about this column from both the interviewees and other readers, I felt we should really give it a place here.

**The Travelling Student
Beginnings****Philip Kirkbride**

My name is Philip Kirkbride. I'm a college graduate from Ontario in the field of Multi-Media Design and Production working on upgrading to my Bachelor's Degree at Athabasca University (AU). I've always wanted to do an exchange program or study abroad but never found the right fit or time to do so. This is the story of how I decided to make my own study abroad program using the flexibility of AU.

I've been an AU student for a little over a year now, doing courses part time while working as a web developer in

Waterloo Ontario. When the area's tech giant, BlackBerry, started doing badly, I was laid off and found it tough to find any work that interested me. I decided that there would be no better time to finish my Athabasca degree. I down sized from my two-bedroom apartment to a single room in my hometown, London, Ontario.

While it was great to catch up with family and friends, I quickly grew bored there. A friend of mine, Matt, who does seasonal work, told me he was leaving Alberta, where he had been tree planting for the summer, to go do brush cutting in Northern Quebec. He offered to stop by and pick me up on the way, he could even get me a job with him at the final destination.

Matt had always been a sort of maverick traveler. Only a few months after we finished high school, over 6 years ago, Matt decided to hitch hike his way from Ontario to BC. While everyone from our school thought he was crazy and would likely die on the trip, he made it all the way to BC and back. Over the last 6 years he had worked all over the country doing interesting jobs, like picking exotic mushrooms in the wild, tree planting, and forestry. I lived vicariously through hearing about Matt's travels and journeys.

Any other time I probably would have turned down the offer as impractical, but with little opportunity in London I figured this was my chance to have a crazy adventure. With only a three-course workload from Athabasca, I could work on my classes just as easily from Quebec as I could from London.

A few weeks later he arrived. I helped him in his Dad's shop as he repaired four giant saws using a welder and some spare parts scavenged from old lawn mowers. As someone who had, in the past, mainly worked on computers I watched in amazement as scrap metal was turned into highly valuable saw parts (each saw being worth \$1500 a piece).

When everything was ready we packed his 16-year-old SUV with equipment, clothing, and of course a few Athabasca textbooks. Our destination was Val D'Or, Quebec, which translates to Valley of Gold. We had two choices in which route we could take. The first route was slightly quicker and would involve going through Northern Ontario past North Bay. The second was slightly longer but allowed us to travel through a more popular area heading from London to Toronto to Kingston to Ottawa and then roughly 5 more hours northwest to the final destination. We left that morning not knowing which route we would choose, but, either way, we first had to head toward Toronto.

On the way to Toronto we weighed the benefits of each route. The brush-cutting season had already started, so we were in a big hurry to get there quickly and the Northern Ontario route would ensure that. On the other hand, we might end up needing to stop at a hotel that night, and finding one in Northern Ontario would definitely be a bit more difficult. About 10 minutes from the exit we would need to take to head north we still hadn't decided—and a decision had to be made.

2014 brought The Voice Magazine a number of firsts. Including several new columns. This one was nominated by a student for being our introduction to the tale of Philip Kirkbride and his travels across Canada while attempting to complete his studies



Primal Numbers

The New Luddites

S.D. Livingston



You probably wouldn't trade your smart phone for a mechanical loom, but they've got a lot more in common than you think. From smashing cotton looms to attacking Google Glass users, the fight against technology is nothing new. But are today's tech haters really the new Luddites—or the voice of reason in a fight to protect your privacy?

It's easy to dismiss the original Luddites as short-sighted opponents of progress. After all, the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution brought us most of the modern benefits we have today—everything from cars to dishwashers to computers. But those machine-smashing workers of the 1800s

had a point. They were fighting against new technology that was, in many ways, making life worse.

Gig mills, for example, were cutting-edge technology that sped up production and reduced the need for workers. Instead of requiring 100 hours worked by one adult, the gig mill could accomplish the same job in a fraction of the time, and only needed an adult and two child labourers (at lower wages, of course). Still more workers were displaced by shearing frames, which cut the time needed for shearing cloth down by three quarters.

And that was just the tip of the industrial iceberg. New technology allowed for unskilled labour working for lower pay, soul-crushing days in factories filled with the clang of machines, and families being forced to leave the relative freshness of the countryside for the squalor of tenements in their search for employment.

Fast forward to 2014 and the attacks on Google Glass users.

In case you don't know, Google Glass is one of the latest pieces of wearable tech. It's a tiny computer mounted on a pair of glasses and, as this [Telegraph article](#) explains, it allows users "to film what they see, or to discreetly browse the internet, using voice commands to summon information on a small screen in their peripheral vision."

This is very cool—unless you don't want to be filmed without your permission. And that's where several Glass users have run into trouble, facing everything from personal assaults to having their expensive new pieces of tech destroyed. The hub of the protests, so far, has been in San Francisco, where some bars have actually banned the devices in response to attacks.

Of course, smart phones and camcorders can record you too, but it's fairly obvious when someone's pointing a camera or phone at you. The problem with Google Glass seems to be its discreetness. Who can tell whether the Glass wearer across the restaurant or subway car is simply staring out the window or filming your every move?

And that's where Glass and the gig mill become historical cousins. There's nothing wrong with the inventions themselves, but they're both part of the power struggle that's inevitably created by new technology—a struggle that, in the 21st century, is about privacy instead of steam power.

And the war over digital privacy is about much more than Google Glass. It's about how we're being tracked on the Internet. How much of our data the social media sites are selling. How ebooks track our reading habits, and the way loyalty cards feed corporations every last detail of what we bought and when we bought it. Those slightly geeky-looking spectacles are just an outward symptom on which to vent our anger.

The question is should we be fighting it? Those 17th-century workers would no doubt be pleased to see how society eventually adapted to the Industrial Revolution. It took time and struggle, but governments brought in laws to abolish child labour. Workdays were shortened. Unions bargained for fair wages. A rising middle class enjoyed greater leisure time and access to consumer goods. And that's not even counting improvements in things like sanitation and health care.

Still, privacy is a far different matter than wages or the length of a workday. The digital revolution we're part of has incredible benefits, but it also has the potential to create a surveillance society. You only have to read *Brave New World* or *Fahrenheit 451* to understand the dangers in that, and scan the latest headlines to realize it's not a far-fetched scenario.

As Edward Snowden revealed, governments in supposedly free countries conduct mass spying on their own citizens. In Canada, for example, the CBC [reports](#) that CSEC "used information from the free internet service at a major Canadian airport to track the wireless devices of thousands of ordinary airline passengers for days after they left the terminal."

And as the *Guardian* [reports](#), Snowden recently testified that in the US "the National Security Agency—for which he worked as a contractor—had deliberately snooped on bodies like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch." If knowledge truly is power, the last thing we need is governments spying on reputable organizations that protect basic human rights. Especially if we ever decide to challenge the government.

So, are the Glass breakers right? Or are they simply the new Luddites, too short-sighted to see the incredible benefits we'll enjoy thanks to the digital revolution?

The key is that it's not about the technology. It's about how we adapt to it. The rules we make to ensure that it's used fairly and to benefit the masses, not just the few in control. Fundamentally, cotton mills and the Internet are nothing more than tools. It's how we use them that makes the difference.

Will this digital revolution end as well as the industrial one? Not without its own struggles for power. And how those will turn out is anyone's guess, because not even Google Glass can see into the future.

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.

While a couple Primal Numbers columns were nominated this one struck me as the type of Primal Numbers I like to have, one that looks both at the here and now of the technology, as well as the wider implications of it for future.

From the Ground Up: Building a Solid Foundation for Your Studies

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Are you new to AU? You might be waiting for your first course to begin or perhaps you've taken a few and are ready to immerse yourself in a program. With many courses ahead of you and years of study, it's sometimes overwhelming to decide where to begin.

If you've never taken university courses before, or you've been away from formal education for many years, you may benefit from a few foundation courses. Foundation courses allow you earn undergraduate credits while building a solid base on which to build the rest of your studies.

Here are a few courses I took early on—and I'm glad I did.

Critical Thinking (Humanities, PHIL 252.) A good place to start. Especially helpful if you're been away from formal education for a while, *Critical Thinking* is a solid introduction to university studies. This course covers reasoning, analyzing arguments, and spotting logical fallacies. In addition to honing your thinking ability, you'll learn how to structure an effective essay, a skill you'll make much use of. This was my first AU course; I learned how to read academic texts effectively and how to organize my thoughts for writing. No prerequisites. There are two assignments of 15% and 20% each; a critical essay worth 25% and final exam of 40%.

Introductory Composition (Humanities, ENGL 255.) You won't believe how much English grammar you've lost since high school! A required course in some programs, *Introductory Composition* is an essential review of English grammar and structure. You'll also learn the essential elements of the paragraph as well as how to compose several types of essays. The text contains examples of essays and a section on the citation styles (eg. MLA, APA) you will come to know so well over your university career. For me, *Introductory Composition* was a much-needed review of English syntax. And although I still dislike writing essays, I can compose reasonably good ones thanks to the practice here. No prerequisites, unless your basic English skills are rusty. Marks are spread among a number of writing assignments, including three essays, and a final exam of only 20%.

Western Thought & Culture I: Before the Scientific Revolution (Humanities, HUMN 201; also HIST 201.) If your prior education missed classical studies altogether, you can begin to catch up with this course. Traipse through western civilization from its beginning stirrings circa 3000 BCE right through to the late 16th century. *Western Thought & Culture I* examines history, art, literature, and philosophical thought through the ages. The course syllabus describes this course as "a good starting place for new students" with "little or no previous university experience." For myself, I would have been discouraged if I'd taken this as my first course. It was the most intensive of my early courses—we're talking 46 centuries here—and requires more finely-honed study practices than a new student might possess. Definitely worthwhile, however, especially if you intend to take further courses in philosophy or history. No prerequisites. Two essays of 25% and 35% each, and a final exam of 40%.

Each course you take benefits the courses that follow. Build from the ground up. Selecting a few good foundation courses early on will serve as a strong support as you continue your studies.

If you're registered in an AU undergraduate program, be sure to check your program requirements first. Then browse the AU undergraduate course [listing](#) to finding your educational building blocks.

If you're an experienced student, what AU courses did you take early on that you'd recommend to new students? Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org.

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

The original article contained a note from me about INFS 200 also being an excellent foundational course. This article was selected because it simply applies so directly and so well to AU students, something that even AU agreed with, because they reprinted it in their blog on the main AU site.



The Mindful Bard

Cargo Cult

Wanda Waterman



Film: *Cargo Cult*

Director: Bastien Dubois

Big Men, Big Planes, and Big Dreams of Plenty

"The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich."

- John Berger

"Avarice is fear sheathed in gold."

- Paul Eldridge

This animated short film is set during World War II, and touches on how a native of Papua New Guinea might view the spectacular plenty of the Americans and the Japanese as it falls unbidden from airplanes flying overhead. Naturally these drops from the sky look like the beneficence of some higher power, some distant source of love.

This is the first time the Mindful Bard has devoted an entire article to one short film, but this one warrants it; it's so well made and the subject matter so relevant that it deserves exploration. It's no surprise that this little animated piece has won awards and nominations at film festivals the world over; it presents the extremely intriguing fact of the cargo cult phenomenon, reframing it to show its poignancy and its significance to the world at large. The film is also sublimely beautiful and a pleasure to watch.

Cargo cults have been springing up in Melanesia in some form or another since whites first started showing up in the region, bringing with them all the trappings of Western "progress." Their occurrences have dwindled but they still exist in various forms in Melanesia, particularly in Papua New Guinea.

These cults, in general, manifest a fascination with the goods dropped from airplanes, predictions of the coming of a great personage or great wealth, millenarianism (predictions of impending doom or salvation in the near or distant future), and the involvement of dead ancestors, all mixed in with the particular society's history and myth, as well as some rather confused Christian elements.

Devotees often fashion makeshift items as copies of Western goods; thus you'll find bamboo headphones, airplanes, and radio towers, fetishes created to attract the generosity of the cargo deities.

Most cargo cults are initiated by "big men" among the natives—men who've already impressed the other natives with their personal wealth (usually measured by livestock) and who are thus granted authority to create a religious narrative and demand it be accepted and acted on. These men quickly achieve the status of prophets and everything they say is accepted as gospel.

Strangely enough, cargo cults are formed partly as *resistance* to colonial oppression, like in the sixties when young people rebelled against the establishment by buying jeans that symbolised the Wild West and working class solidarity, even as the corporations that produced them became powerful enough to put the price of jeans beyond the budgets of workers and cowboys.

Sure, it's all down to the distinctive character of the primitive mindset, but really, are the "big men" who create cargo cults that different from the CEOs of global corporations, people who implicitly ask us to believe that the free market is a benevolent god that wants only to deliver joy and well-being?

Just like the Papuans, we're often torn between a naive assumption that these "big men" are acting in our best interests and our gut instinct that they're ready to throw us all under the bus to line their own pockets. True, Melanesian culture has prepared the natives to accept the cargo cult theology, but our education system also prepares us for deception and consumer slavery, giving us false information and discouraging our ability to think for ourselves.

Looking at it all from the outside, yes, the bamboo headphones and airplanes make us wince with the pathos of it, but why don't we wince when we see how our masses worship worthless commodities like big name soft drinks, cold breakfast cereals, and heavily promoted but foul-smelling deodorant spray—just because marketing has assured them that these products will bring joy, love, and good fortune into their lives?

This little film is one stone that kills two birds: First, it shows the primitive essence of consumerism, and second, it encourages us to lay aside the vulgar but universally human urge to show off one's material possessions, and to look instead at the nobler urge to find a beneficent power beyond it all. As the utilitarian philosophers pointed out, the ways in which we pursue happiness may be misguided, even counterproductive, but, in the end, the urge to happiness is beautiful in itself.

Cargo Cult manifests five of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It stimulates my mind.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

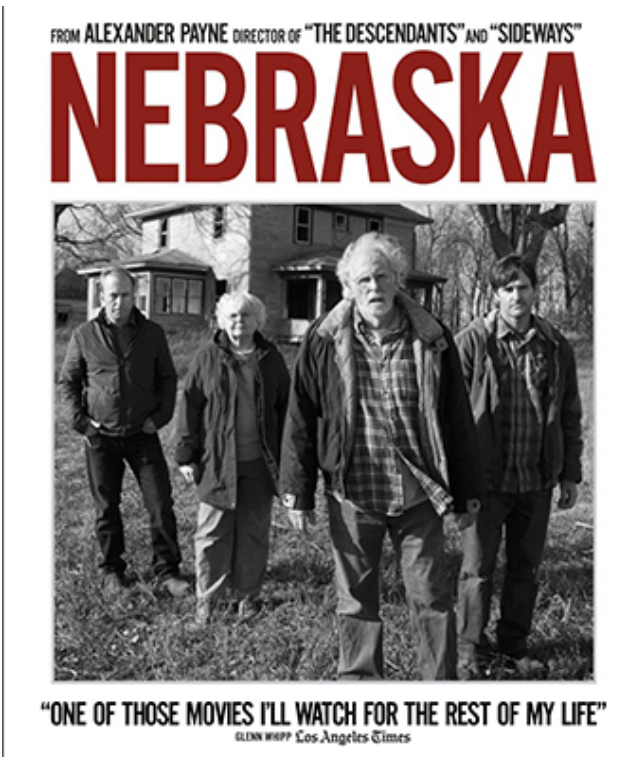
Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

A personal pick, this article and this film touches on a number of issues close to my heart, from animation to consumerism, anthropology and the interdependence of human individuals and societies. It made me interested enough to start doing my own research into cargo cults, and, to me, a Voice article that can do that deserves to be in here.

Gregor's Bed Nebraska

Wanda Waterman

Not Your Average Black-and-White Existentialist Road Movie



DAVID: Hey, Dad, how about we go see Mount Rushmore?
WOODROW: We don't have time to see that!
DAVID: It's just 30 minutes off the interstate. And we're right here.
WOODROW: It's just a bunch of rocks!
- Dialogue from *Nebraska*

Woody wants to go to Nebraska to pick up his million dollars in winnings. His family knows the "sweepstakes" he's supposedly won is just a scheme to get people to buy magazines, but Woody is going to Nebraska come Hell or high water.

His son David sells stereo equipment in a working class town in a recession economy (you do the math). He's a handsome guy with an obese, plain, and surly ex-girlfriend he's begging

to come back to live with him. She won't come back unless they marry, and she's not even sure she wants to marry him.

David looks around him and realizes that driving his father to Nebraska makes about as much sense as anything else in his meaningless life, so he decides to call in sick and hit the road.

Woodrow T. Grant is an aging mechanic who rationalizes his drinking problem ("beer isn't drinking!") and admits that he never really loved his wife and hadn't especially wanted children. His name contains the first name of one American president and the last name of another (if we're to believe Garrison Keillor, such hopefully pretentious names are fairly typical of rural Midwestern families of Scandinavian descent). He is, like his ilk, trapped in the mundane and longing for something new, occasionally intoxicated by gleams of the transcendent between bouts of intoxication by beer.

His wife is one of the most foul-mouthed mothers in film history; the film asks us to consider whether she's an abusive psychopath or simply a woman at the end of her rope dealing with a husband who seems to be growing ever more useless and demented each day.

In the cemetery scene we see the historical context of the family's woes. Here lies the depressed Swedish grandfather. Here lies the uncle who died in infancy, after whom David had been named. Here lies Woody's slutty sister who died in a car crash at 19. Over there is the Catholic side of the family, who literally would not be caught dead with these Catholics.

As if to prove Freud right in his theory of the proximity of sexual to death urges, Mother just gets cruder and cruder, finally lifting her skirt over a dead boyfriend's grave to show him what he missed out on.

Yes, it's all a big downer, but the new romanticism must include realism, and the grittier the better. Alexander Payne fills the order with this aching unglamorous portrayal of a midwestern father and son road trip.

The film presents mostly just the seamy side of small town life, and if you've ever lived in a small town some of the scenes will seem annoyingly familiar. This is no bucolic *pastorale*, and these are neither kindly peasants nor simple farm folk. Their mean little hearts harbour no warm fuzzy feelings about America despite the fact that their votes and apathy have made America what it is. They're petty, narrow-minded, graspingly greedy folks who work hard but lack initiative. There's no spiritual dimension to them although they appear to be religious in name at least; these stalwart Catholics and Lutherans see their religious affiliations as political divides more than calls to higher ground.

The lowest point of the underbelly of rural middle America with all its bitterness and inertia is represented by David's two loser cousins (played brilliantly by Devin Ratray and Tim Driscoll). The actors really need to be commended on a superlative portrayal of n'er-do-wells practically rotted out with envy, laziness, and moral depravity.

The sometimes deliberately wooden, amateurish acting is reminiscent of sixties educational films created by social workers to explain interpersonal family dynamics, or the films they showed us in school to help make us better citizens.

The scenery is like an extra character. Even in black and white the sky is an amazing spectacle and a potent symbol of the freedom to which everyone seems to be aspiring but is woefully ill equipped to achieve. The slow transformation of the rolling hills of Montana into Nebraska prairie is a drama worth watching unfold, and there's one oddly lovely scene in which groups of bikers slowly pass the car.

Juxtapositions of signs are a motif in *Nebraska*—a newspaper office called "The Hawthorn Republican," a misspelled loan offer, and a store that boasts "Monster Tan" are jarring reminders that this was the America that voted in the younger Bush.

In most hero journeys we don't know our own misery until we catch a glimpse of the possibilities beyond it, and these possibilities put our pain in sharp relief. The sweepstakes letter telling him that he's a winner has shown him a way out of his despair and so sets him on one last hero's journey. He'd sooner die than pass up this chance.

Woody chooses to believe in the letter because believing in it makes him a better man, gives him a purpose, sets him on a hero quest for the first time. In contrast, his friend, Ed Pegram, is punished not just for denying the existence of a hero quest, but also because life without a hero's journey is not worth living.

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.

Student nominated, but I chose this one because of how it exemplifies the artistic critique of a film that the Gregor's Bed column seeks to bring

Music Review

Sétamùr: *Remix Eye Movement*

Samantha Stevens



Following the 2012 release of their second album, the internationally acclaimed *Rapid Eye Movement*, Sétamùr is now releasing the remix, *Remix Eye Movement*, a collaboration with a variety of talented musicians from around Europe.

The original album was dedicated to Serbian musician, Melinda Ligeti, who not only collaborates with Sétamùr in the remix album, but also created a duet album with the band in 2011, *5 Coins in a Wishing Well*, where the sultry guitar, piano, and male and female vocals in both English and Italian produced the most alluring harmonies, seducing the ear of any listener.

Sétamùr, founded in the winter of 2009, is the creation of Italian musician Norman Baiocchi. The band has evolved since its inception from a solo project to a duo, and eventually to a full band consisting of seven members. With each change,

Sétamùr has proven that they can evolve as the band grows, changing their sound and style. Over the years, Sétamùr has collaborated and performed with bands like System of a Down and Chumbawamba.

The producers of *Remix Eye Movement*, Acustronica, located near Perugia in central Italy have made it their mission to seek out musicians and bands with music that is both refreshing and creative. Sétamùr's latest album definitely fits that description.

The first thing to consider when contemplating whether or not to listen to *Remix Eye Movement* is whether or not you can accept an album that functions outside of the normal musical expression that you are used to. If that doesn't deter you, then get ready to delve into the fantastical world of Sétamùr.

Like the original album, *Remix Eye Movement* is an imaginative expression of the soul through music, and some of the songs are reminiscent of the electronic and techno bands of the early 2000s. The other musicians that collaborate with the band enhance the originals and prove that we all hear and feel music differently. Listening through the album once, you start to gain an appreciation for the variety of electronic effects that can be added to music to make a song something more. Listening to the album again, you will notice things about the music that you may have missed before: a gentle crescendo that gives you goosebumps, an electronic effect that twists the very image that you originally had in your mind's-eye.

However, not all of the remixes are gems. One of the songs, Frammento Di Sogno (Alex Bowlin RMX), is almost 9 minutes long, a far cry from the original which is only 2:30 minutes. At first, I was hesitant of the longer track, but once I began to listen to it the minutes melted away, and I let myself be carried off with the sound, totally unaware that the song lasted for almost four times longer than the original.

Another song doesn't quite do the original justice, and seems to be no more than noise with no flow. That could be what the artist was going for in the remix, but it comes across more as if they couldn't decide which

instrument to use, so they used them all at once. Granted, the original is also just as jarring, but the addition of extra electronic sound doesn't complete it at all.

But, overall, *Remix Eye Movement* is a delightful descent into the imaginative stirrings of the mind. I can definitely see myself playing this album in the background as I paint on a canvas, or while writing poetry. Truly, this album is for those that crave more than the normal constraints of everyday music.

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

I'd been looking for someone to review new and upcoming music for a few months before Samantha stepped forward. Fortunately for The Voice Magazine she writes well and provides AU Students with an honest look at some of the upcoming and new releases that we get our hands on. This is her first article, originally published back in May of 2014



How Do You Like Those Apples?

Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan



Like a shadow, a Biblical feeling passes over me as I thin apples in my orchard on a bright summer afternoon. I think back to Sunday school and the book of Matthew where it says "every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew, 7:19, New International Version). Apples which emit dusty castings from a small crater on their surface take on an added significance: these are the proverbial 'bad apples', wherein lives a worm. Thinning out the crop puts me in the godlike position of deciding which apple is worthy enough to develop to maturity and which shall meet an ignoble ending as a mouse's lunch among the leaf litter of the

orchard floor. Invariably I think of how sometimes we speak of a person as a 'bad apple'. Yet, compared to us, fruit lives latched into position with no free will whatsoever. We humans inhabit an intermediary realm between our treed selves and our winged selves.

Lucky for me, the apples don't put up much protest as I decide their fates. In human society they'd have lawyers.

Here in the tourist-mecca of a valley I live in, a recent music festival called Boonstock sold 8 000 tickets for a collective celebration of live music. The festivities claimed the life of one woman and sent about 90 others to hospital for issue ranging from dehydration to drug overdose. ("Lynne Tolocka Identified", 2014). Many people in the community have considered the victim to blame for her tragic outcome. At first I was taken aback by what seemed like a lot of folks blaming her. Then I figured I'd write about it and ask 'what about the context?' Social circumstances must have played a role; reality exists in shades of grey, be they an innumerable number or only fifty. If apples could, they'd scream for justice.

We humans often think in black and white terms about our free will and our culturally-determined context. When things go wrong we often blame our environment; when they go right we are self-congratulatory.

Most of our decisions are made taking into account our inner desires as well as our external circumstances. Often in decisive moments of uncertainty our friends and fellow-travellers fill in blank spots in our reasoning. Our better judgement can 'black out' as we are carried away in the flow of a fun time. Rare indeed are the moments when we are so isolated that we make choices without social pressures. Yet, unlike apples, we can walk away at any time.

From a sociological perspective, ideology often shows up wherever the concept of an individual is found. Individuality is created through discipline and self-discipline. The more we are watched, or watch ourselves, the more our selves are placed under a microscope and the more we congeal as definable entities. The incisive social theorist Michel Foucault reminds us that "in a system of discipline, the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient more than the healthy man, the madman and the delinquent more than the normal and the non-delinquent" (Foucault, 1977). In the case of the Boonstock tragedy, the victim's individuality is thrust alone into a spotlight, as though her final hours were a Shakespearean soliloquy. However she envisioned herself as a person, the irony is that those who posthumously define her as the sole cause of her death are proving the degree to which our social selves are often constructed without our intent or consent. Her individuality is proven by the shadow cast over her by her social tree. Just like an apple.

Our selves adjust and are altered by our circumstances, yet we often imagine we are like isolated atoms floating in a social soup. In an idealistic example of individualism a social theorist named Herbert Spencer followed the founder of 'sociologie', August Comte, and prescribed "cerebral hygiene" which involved abstinence from reading other people's ideas and work. Spencer and others of his ilk sought to "free their minds from the 'pollutions' of other writers" (Ritzer in Kendall and Wickham, 1999, see also: Ritzer, 2001). Immurement with one's own ideas purportedly led to alchemical success based on previously-absorbed data and concepts. Interestingly, Spencer coined the term 'survival of the fittest' which Charles Darwin later adopted. It takes quite the ego to wish away social surroundings. This may be at play when my peers critique the events at Boonstock.

The elegant simplicity of Spencer's idea of splendid isolation from the vicissitudes of society came clear to me the other night. We made a glass terrarium out of an old homebrew carboy and filled it with moss, some that looked Dr. Seussian and some that looked like AstroTurf, as well as some small slugs and Isopods (pill bugs).

Creating a living-yet-enclosed environment was like playing god. And yet, even within this contained ecosystem, the results are unpredictable. Some organisms thrive better than others do and the magic exists in watching things unfold. As humans we are always faced with choices and opportunities yet we have to remember that even amidst a panoply of options there are limits. Forces tug us in various directions and threaten to dash our hopes. Meanwhile there are potentials which we haven't even imagined yet. Unlike an Isopod in a glass terrarium, our translucent walls are mostly imagined. It makes me appreciate the simplicity of an apple's fate, yet also feel fortunate to be a human with choices I can call my own. The victim of Boonstock, like so many young people before and to come, however, will not be able to pass on her lessons learned to future generations.

Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.

Selected by students and myself, this article was a thought-provoking look at a tragedy and how society reacts.



Both Scary and Sad

Who needs a travel alarm clock when she has a smart phone? Who needs a Rolodex, quaint little purse-sized address book, or the five-pound Yellow Pages when everyone who's anyone can be Googled? Who needs two-way radios when everyone and his brother have a cell phone?

These are just some of the thoughts rattling around my head as I look to simplify my life. Bulletin: I'm no early adopter of virtually anything. I'm not a twenty-something. I do love stuff. I hang onto things because they cost good money and someday I may need/use it again. Or so I hope.

And yet I find myself thinking more and more like my minimalist son; who gets rid of stuff often, quickly, dispassionately, and with zero sentimentality.

And yet. There are relapses in my behavior. My Cobra two-way radios got nary a sniff at our recent garage sale, which, incidentally, we're 'holding over' until the town-wide one in early June. I'm planning to pull that piece of merchandise from the table and use them as top quality walkie-talkies when Grady comes to the farm. Guaranteed they'll work better than the toy Mater and Lightning McQueen ones I picked up at someone else's g-sale. What techno-savvy little boy wouldn't want to try those out in the back forty?

You'd think that in this part of rural Alberta, with an aging population, there would still be people who use a land line telephone and want the convenience of several cordless ones to scatter (and lose) around the house. No takers.

Or what about the oh, so lovely cassette tape recorder? Three ring zippered Mead binders? Carving board with scary metal prongs to keep that Christmas turkey from slip-sliding away? B-rate DVD movies? Five piece tapestry Oscar de la Renta luggage set including garment bag?

Let me guess: If you want to tape something you get both sound and visuals if you use your phone? Kids don't use lined refill sheets anymore because everything is digital? Turkey, what turkey—we're planning to be in Mexico, or Phoenix, or parts unknown? Okay, I never should have bought those lousy movies in the first place; even big name stars make stinkers sometimes. We're all getting too old, weak, and in a hurry to *carry* luggage. No wheels? No way. And, besides, what would the conveyor belts and Air Canada baggage tossers do to the lovely fabric? We need indestructible space age stuff these days.

That's also why my sister put her 1980s era World Book Encyclopedia Yearbooks into the free box. I haven't checked but I'd bet my last dollar they're still there. Unlike the army of people who used to go door-to-door (!) selling the twenty-five volume sets to families who wanted to ensure their kids would grow up smart.

Some days it's both a bit scary and sad how things have changed. Other days we try to parlay the nostalgic into cold hard cash, from where I sit.

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

Chosen from student nominations, I picked this article as the best of FWIS because of how it connects us to the personal of Hazel's life, while asking questions that can make us expand our view of our own.

Writer's Toolbox

Whither That Word?

Christina M. Frey



What's in a name—or a word? Would a rose by any other name smell as sweet? To what extent does language influence our perception, and vice versa?

The answer can be found in etymology, the study of the history and origin of words.

“Language is fossil poetry,” wrote Emerson, but etymology's more than just a dry history lesson. Language is a living, breathing thing that influences the way we think as well as the way we speak and write. If studying history offers us an understanding of where we've come from and where we're headed as human beings, then etymology helps us examine how the words we use and choose paint a picture of society—and how changing these words can change our future.

For example, the French conquest of Britain a millennium ago transformed the English language, peppering it with French-derived words highlighting the “higher” culture of the conquerors (who can forget the *Ivanhoe* discussion of how *cow* turned into *beef*—similar to the French *boeuf*—when it hit the tables of the nobility?). As Britain expanded its trade outside Europe, words from Southeast Asia and North Africa became embedded in the English language. Even the rise of highbrow-lowbrow culture—as epitomized by William Shakespeare's plays—is reflected in the language; Shakespeare himself invented dozens of words and expressions that we use every day without a thought.

Moving to more modern times, it's not even necessary to look at major cultural shifts—like those surrounding racist and sexist language. Look, for example, at 2013's word of the year, *selfie*. What does this say about current society? Values? How we communicate?

If you want to dig deeper, a fantastic resource is the online [Etymology Dictionary](#), which provides origin information for words (including words with multiple meanings). It's a captivating glimpse of a language that's truly one from many. And if you're a historical fiction writer or enthusiast, take note: besides its ability to help us understand language, the etymology dictionary is also an invaluable resource when you're trying to create authentic settings and dialogue.

For those who are curious about tracking cultural usage shifts, Google's N-gram [viewer](#) can generate usage graphs and charts. It's helpful for comparing changes in popular or prevalent usage, particularly if you fall into the descriptivist grammar camp (the philosophy argues that grammar should describe usage rather than dictate it).

The way we communicate reflects our values and affects the way we act, so etymology provides a particularly interesting glimpse into who we are and what we'll become. Study the past to fix the present to save the future—and think before you speak or write.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor and a lover of great writing. Chat with her on Twitter about all things literary @turntopage2.

Student nominated, this article was selected because of how it explores an area most of us never think about, but that affects how we think.

Health Matters

Katie D'Souza

Preparing for Surgery Naturally



While natural medicine focuses on healing the body through non-invasive methods, sometimes surgery is unavoidable. What you can control, however, is how you treat your body before surgery. Enhancing your nutrition, mental health, and immunity can have significant implications for your post-op health, including quicker healing times, reduced bruising, and lowered risk of post-surgery complications. In this article we'll look at some ways to help your body prepare so that you're at your healthiest on your surgery date.

Think nutrition

Back to the basics, everyone! Impending surgery is a good incentive to do a reality check on your diet. Do you consume the recommended five to seven servings of fruit *and* five to ten servings of vegetables daily? Or do you pass on the lightly dressed salad and settle for a burger and fries? By providing your body with adequate nutrients, you'll give it what it needs to be able to recover from surgery more quickly.

Prior to surgery, you should focus on front-loading certain key nutrients. Vitamin C helps with tissue and collagen repair and also helps prevent infection, so make sure you consume fruit rich in vitamin C (like oranges, apples, and berries). Some surgeons may also recommend additional vitamin C supplementation beginning several weeks before surgery.

Zinc is crucial for strong immunity, which is a factor in the healing process. It can be found in raw pumpkin seeds or organic organ meats; alternately, you can take a multivitamin or zinc supplement containing 15-30 mg zinc.

Protein is also a must for surgery patients. The "building blocks" of protein—called amino acids—are used by the body to make new tissue and muscle, as well as repair damaged tissue. If you're vegetarian or vegan, you'll be happy to know that plant-based proteins are just as effective; see this [Health Matters article](#) for ways to ensure that your plant-based diet contains adequate, whole proteins.

Think homeopathics

Another way to prepare your body for surgery is by supplementation with homeopathic medicine. Because homeopathics work on a minute-dose principle, they are routinely used in babies, children, and in situations where using other natural substances would be contra-indicated (ie., before scheduled surgery).

Arnica helps with pain relief and reduces the potential for bruising or swelling. The recommended dose is two to three pellets (200 ch.) taken sublingually each day for one week before surgery.

Bellis perennis is a homeopathic remedy used to help prepare for surgery involving the trunk, like abdominal surgery or heart surgery; it's not helpful for surgery involving other areas of the body, however (limbs, brain, etc.). The recommended dose is three pellets (200 ch), taken sublingually each day for one week before surgery.

Finally, *Hypericum perforatum* helps prevent nerve damage and associated nerve pain and trauma during surgery. The recommended dose is three pellets (200 ch.) taken sublingually each day for one week before surgery.

Think mind-body connection

Yes, impending surgery can weigh on your mind. But there are ways to lessen this mental burden without supplementation (which is often contraindicated for surgery patients).

First, engage in meditation. Harvard University's Mind-Body Institute has shown that five minutes of deep, conscious breathing has the ability to “reset” your nervous system, letting the parasympathetic branch of your nervous system—which promotes feelings of relaxation and calms alpha wave production in the brain—take over. If anxiety over surgery is keeping you awake at night, try meditating for a few minutes; you'll notice your sleep patterns beginning to change for the better.

Second, think practical; prepare for surgery by eliminating possible post-surgery stressors. Wrap up projects at work and inform your employer (or your clients, if you're self-employed) of your surgeon's recommendation for duration of recovery before returning to work. Get your time off in place now, and err on the side of caution so you don't end up forcing your body to jump back before it's ready. Depending on your health concerns and the estimated post-surgery recovery time frame, you may also want to get some pre-cooked meals in the freezer to ease your post-op burden. If you know you'll be confined to bed rest—or are concerned that your activity level may be compromised—line up help; ask family members or friends to lend you a hand with meals, cooking, cleaning, babysitting, or whatever else you might need. Knowing you've got solid plans in place for adequate post-op care can help put your mind at rest.

Watch your supplements

One last caution: natural supplements are powerful, so make sure that you inform your surgeon of **all** vitamins, supplements, and formulas you're taking—not just prescription pharmaceuticals. Some supplements or over-the-counter medicines might be contraindicated with drugs you'll need to take post-surgery. Others might create complications during surgery or during the healing process. For example, supplements like omega-3 fish oil and turmeric (curcumin) have a mild blood-thinning effect; even though they're otherwise beneficial for health maintenance and disease prevention, you should discontinue their use about one week prior to your scheduled surgery to reduce any risk of complications. When in doubt, ask your surgeon and/or your natural health care provider. Hiding information of this nature can be detrimental to your health and recovery.

Impending surgery can be stressful, but preparing yourself physically, emotionally, and practically will increase the likelihood that it will all go well and that you will have what you need to bounce back more quickly after surgery. In the next installment of this two-part series, we'll look at natural ways to help you heal better after your surgery has been completed.

Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices in Ontario.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.

This student nominated article was chosen as an example of the best of the advice type articles that The Voice Magazine publishes, with direct and practical advice in an area where, though nearly everyone might use it, either for themselves or a relative, you rarely see presented.

Efficiency vs. Atrophy: Is the Chair Our Greatest Health Risk?

Tamra Ross



It took a NASA doctor to figure out that the key to good health is all about how we leverage gravity.

Most North Americans are conditioned to view gravity as the enemy. We visualize its disfiguring effects on our aging bodies: sagging skin, breasts, and other dangly parts; drooping eyelids and flapping jowls; stooped shoulders and slumped posture. Our aversion gravity is evident in our cultural devotion to furnishings designed to free us from the rigors of the constant tug toward the center of the earth: from form-fitting office chairs to reclining, plush Barcaloungers, we spend a fortune on furniture that accommodates our need to relax into a moulded cocoon of full-body support for most of the day. Whether we're watching TV, studying, or performing exacting work on an office computer, our bodies are as limp and free from exertion as if we were sleeping.

As we age, we increasingly adjust our environments to spare our bodies any unnecessary physical stress; we raise the washer and dryer so we don't have to bend and reach inside; two storey homes are traded in for bungalows to rid ourselves of stairs; we navigate the grocery store in a scooter to make sure our hearts and leg muscles aren't over-taxed; we can even purchase salad spinners and pepper grinders that use batteries to avoid having to use the smallest fraction of muscle strength for these everyday tasks. Products to make our lives easier are in constant demand.

Clearly there is a notion that sparing our bodies any undue stress will preserve us for a longer, healthier, more comfortable old age. Yet, 1 out of 5 Canadians (mostly women) suffers chronic pain ([CBC](#)), four out of five experience back pain at some point in their lives ([Chatelaine](#)), one in four Canadians (and one in ten children) are obese ([Obesity Network](#)), and heart disease, stroke, and diabetes (all preventable) account for more than 28% of all deaths in the country. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada pulled no punches in 2013, with its new campaign, stating that most Canadians will spend the last 10 years of their lives battling preventable sickness and disease ([Make Health Last](#)). Clearly, all our efforts to improve our quality of life are failing miserably.

Dr. Vernikos' findings are that we're doing it wrong. Gravity is not the enemy. It's a necessity. Without it, our bodies soften, slump, and atrophy. This makes intuitive sense: in a fully supported, sleep-ready position, it's no surprise that our metabolisms slow down, inflammation increases, and digestion is sluggish. Our bodies are designed to reduce consumption when we're at rest.

As Director of NASA's life sciences division, Vernikos was tasked with studying the degenerative effects of long space flights on NASA astronauts, but it was NASA veteran John Glenn who noted that these effects were strikingly similar to the degeneration of old age that he was studying as part of a national commission on aging. Yet, Vernikos discovered that 77 year-old Glenn fared no better or worse after a long space mission than astronauts half his age. Clearly, age itself was not a contributing factor; the effects of prolonged inactivity cause rapid degeneration in people of all ages.

Vernikos' revolutionary finding is that the average North American's sedentary lifestyle is producing effects strikingly similar to those experienced by astronauts. By sitting for hours on end in a fully-supported position we're mimicking the effects of low gravity, and relaxing ourselves into an early grave. Astronauts recover because they resume an active lifestyle once back on terra firma, but most of us don't, and suffer the consequences.

This makes sense to me: many years ago I was suffering from a back injury sustained during moving. I failed to follow the standard advice about lifting, and twisted my back sharply while wrangling a heavy box into the back seat of a 2-door car. Two days later I was incapacitated by pain and learned that I'd badly crushed a disc. Going forward, I assiduously followed the advice of fitness instructors and doctors to sit out any exercises that might stress my back. After a couple of years my efforts led to a spine like a limp noodle, slumped posture, and chronic back pain. But when I decided to stop babying my back and took up weight lifting, focusing on lifts that used my back muscles (using moderate weights and carefully watching my form to avoid injury), my back pain was resolved in a matter of weeks. I've gotten lazy about working out since then and I'm back to square one, but at least I know why. It's not my body that's weak: it's my lifestyle. As Dr. Vernikos notes: "Astronauts, chosen on the basis of being the healthiest and the fittest—of possessing the 'right stuff'—are transformed by the lack of gravity in space into the likes of seniors thirty or forty years older" (Vernikos). Can it really be that simple?

Some may scoff, citing the preponderance of self-promoting scientists who espouse miracle cures for everything from cancer to leaking bladders, but Vernikos is far from a lone voice on this issue; cancer specialist David Agus ([The End of Illness, 2012](#)) blames excessive sitting for a variety of cancers and other medical conditions linked to chronic inflammation (he compares extended sitting to smoking in terms of the risk to human health), and The World Health Organisation has made the reduction of physical inactivity its number 3 target for improving global health ([WHO](#)).

This may not come as a surprise to most people, but what's new in Vernikos' and Agus' findings is the discovery that excessive sitting is dangerous even for people who work out on a regular basis: hiking on the weekend or visiting the gym a few times a week simply cannot counteract the damaging effects of spending too much time in a chair at a stretch.

What's new in Vernikos' and Agus' findings is the discovery that excessive sitting is dangerous even for people who work out on a regular basis: hiking on the weekend or visiting the gym a few times a week simply cannot counteract the damaging effects

Consider that many of us now spend 7 to 8 hours a day in a chair (or car seat, etc.) at work all day, more time sitting to study, and we spend our relaxation hours on the sofa or in theatre seats. Adding it all up, you might be shocked to realize how many hours you sit at a stretch without standing or crossing the room. But wait – you may argue – office jobs have been commonplace for decades, well before the spike in the rate of diabetes and obesity, and television has been popular since the 40s. This is true, but we have to recognize how much these activities have changed in the last 10 to 20 years. The popularization of email is less than 20 years old and many offices didn't incorporate networking and paperless technologies until the last decade. Prior to the start of the millennium, office workers were much more active: a typical day required multiple trips to the copy or printer room, walking documents down the hall to be signed, dashing to the boss's office to take dictation, and numerous (sometimes strenuous) sojourns to the file room. Today, all of these tasks can be completed without leaving your chair. TV remote controls have been around longer, but until PVRs came into popular use (just in

the last few years), we had to contend with commercials, which allowed us a few minutes to get off the couch and do something. Tellingly, you can now purchase a sofa with an in-arm cup holder to accommodate larger drinks so you don't have to make a trip to the kitchen all evening.

There is no question that we're more sedentary than ever before, but knowing this doesn't solve the practical problem of how to counteract the damage caused by too much chair time. As Vernikos asserts, "people are more likely to preserve in a lifestyle change if they understand *why* what they do matters ... [as opposed to being told] *what* to do" (Vernikos). In the spirit of that sentiment, next week I will summarize some of Vernikos' findings about how sitting affects our bodies, and strategies for overcoming the cycle of atrophy.

Vernikos, Joan Ph.D., *Sitting Kills, Moving Heals: How simply everyday movement will prevent pain, illness, and early death – and exercise alone won't.*, Quill Driver Books, 2011

This student nominated article was selected because of how it so applies to AU Students. Unfortunately, the second part of the article was never submitted.



My Special Sister

Barb Godin



My sister, Marion, is mentally ill! There I said it! The worst part is that I can't do anything to help her. I thought I would be able to listen to her ramblings and not get angry with her as everyone else in the family has. I managed to do it for a time, convincing myself this really isn't that bad. After all, she is lonely and needs someone to talk to. This is the least I can do for her. Unfortunately, I burn out. Marion's children and grandchildren don't speak to her any more, as she has accused all of them of stealing from her. In fact, she has managed to alienate almost every family member and friend she has ever had, and will not accept help from anyone. Out of sheer

frustration even social workers and caseworkers have "closed the book" on Marion. I often wonder how long she will be able to go on before she meets with a tragic end.

Marion lives in a small, dilapidated apartment in Hamilton, Ontario with her two cats, Lucky Loo and Miss Meowie. With the exception of cat hair everywhere, her apartment is fairly clean and orderly. However, Marion cannot see the hair because her eyesight is so bad. I have suggested she go to an optician to get her eyes checked numerous times, but she refuses, claiming she had her eyes checked years ago and the doctor said she has no lenses in her eyes, so there is nothing they can do for her. Weird! Yet I still I offer to take her to the optician, "No, Barb, I told you there is nothing they can do for me," she says, frustration screaming through her tight jaw and glazed eyes. I decided I'd better just let it go.

Marion spends most of the day without her dentures because they don't fit properly. I offer to take her to the dentist. "No, Barb, the dentist said there is nothing more he can do for me." I sigh with exasperation, wondering why someone would not want to try to help themselves

Marion weighs 80 pounds and looks weak and frail although she professes that she eats all the time. I ask what she eats. "The same things you eat." I know she can't be eating very much, but I am too fearful to say anything as I can feel her rage, simmering just below the surface, ready to erupt without notice. I don't want to be on the receiving end of her angry, paranoid behaviour again. An incident that occurred a month ago is still fresh in my mind. I was startled awake when my telephone rang at midnight. A police officer introduced himself asking if I was Marion Campbell's sister. Apparently they had received a complaint from Marion that I was harassing her. I proceed to describe in detail Marion's mental health issues. The Officer replied "Well that explains a lot." Following this event I was apprehensive to even call Marion in case she decided to press charges against me; after all, it's her word against mine. However a few days later Marion called, speaking to me as if nothing had happened. I ask her why she called the police. She said she didn't call the police. When I insist that she did call the police, she said that it must have been a seizure that made her do it. She blames her all erratic behaviour on her "seizures."

I live in a different city, so we communicate mostly through telephone conversations and the occasional letter. Lately the conversations have consisted mainly of Marion incessantly complaining to me about how awful her children treat her and that they never call or visit. I know this is not true and that her children have tried and tried with her, but she is mean and verbally abusive to them. If I attempt to remind her of what she has said and done to them, her response is always the same, "No, Barb, that's not the way it is." She proceeds to tell me her version of the events, as she has rationalized them in her mentally ill mind.

She is crippled with osteoporosis as a result of the medications she has taken over the years. Marion is convinced the osteoporosis is because of a car accident she was involved in when she was sixteen years old, and also from falling on the cement floor in her apartment. I've repeatedly suggested we look into assisted living, but Marion says she has always lived by herself and she is perfectly fine. Again I remind her of her recent, numerous falls, and the fact that she cannot leave her apartment by herself because she is so unsteady. Her response is the same each time; she will be fine if only the pain would get better and if she could stop sleeping all day.

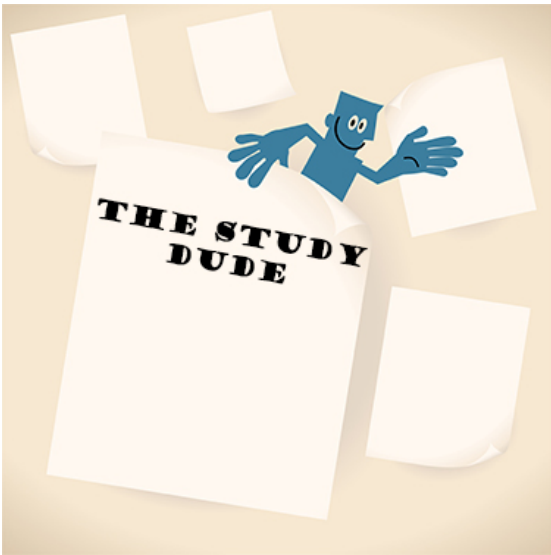
In spite of all her issues, she still asks my husband if he has any friends for her to date!

Some days I get so tired of hearing about how everything that happens to her is someone else's fault that I try to clarify the way things really are in the hopes that she will finally see the light, but she only becomes furious and swears at me or hangs up the phone and the cycle continues.

What a sad, tortured life. And, unfortunately, there is nothing in the world anyone can do for her. If I have learned anything through this situation it is that no matter how hard we try, there are some things in life we just have to accept.

Barbara Godin is a graduate of AU and writes the "Dear Barb" column. She lives in London, Ontario with her husband, two dogs, and one cat.

A step out of the box for our advice columnist, Barb Godin, the personal connection she brings to bear made this a favourite both with students and myself.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

Studying from a distance often means studying alone. Without any other students to serve as examples or help, just figuring out the best ways to learn the material can be a task in itself. As The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the advice you need to help make your learning easier.

There is nothing more that the Study Dude wants than to see you whip off A+ after A+, make it into graduate school, and become a professor. I made it all the way through graduate school, myself, but stopped short at the PhD. So, what went wrong?

Well, in these articles, I'll show you lessons learned on how to study with the hope to groom you for your greatest performance ever! 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 Coles Notes Study Skills Study Guide (2012).

Highlighting

The Study Dude had a troubling quirk of not wanting to miss a detail. This meant I highlighted almost the entire page, for page after page, of readings, then typed up and memorized every highlighted tidbit. While it worked marvellously for a lighter course load, when the clinch came on in full-time graduate studies, I yearned for a better method. To make sure that you don't shoo the Study Dude away when it comes to exam time, here are some tips on how to highlight.

- Read the paragraph in full and then go back, aiming to highlight the main idea (every paragraph should have one)—again, only once the entire paragraph is fully read. Do this for each successive paragraph.
- Don't feel obligated to highlight entire sentences. Sometimes, just a few poignant words in a sentence, here or there, will capture the main point.
- Don't use multiple color highlighters as this just proves confusing when it comes time to transfer your highlights to a computer.

(Coles Notes, 2012)

Brown-Nosing

Admittedly, the Study Dude was a big brown-noser throughout school—often assuming the role of teacher's pet ever since grade three. While this may seem contemptible to most, Coles Notes highlights courteous behavior toward the instructor as essential to success.

For example, not only will courtesy impact your grades now (especially for participation), but later in your academic career or job search, you will oftentimes find these professors lending you a hand with reference letters. Sound decent? Here is what Coles Notes say about making friends with your instructor:

- Always be polite, courteous, and respectful to your instructor.
- Always give honest reasons for missed assignments or exams—your instructor will typically know when you are telling the truth or not and will respect you that much more for coming up with an honest answer.
- If there is conflict that arises between you and your instructor, continue to be nothing less than polite and courteous, while considering—and taking responsibility for—what it is that you might have done wrong in the matter.

(Coles Notes, 2012)

(But the Study Dude refuses to believe you did wrong anyway, so that's not important)

Note Taking

Sometimes the Study Dude uses brilliant self-made shorthand in note taking, such as using symbols such as "+" for "and" and "=" for "in conclusion". Also, I underline key points and put additional thoughts in the margin—all while documenting every word the instructor says almost verbatim. However, when it comes time to review the notes, my eyes glaze over at endless pages of large scrawl that even I have trouble reading.

So, what is the solution? While taking actual (albeit obsolete) shorthand courses could work miracles in note taking, it can take more than a year to learn shorthand in enough detail to use. Coles Notes, on the other hand, has some ideas, as documented below, but the Study Dude remains on the quest to find you a better solution. Here are some of the ideas in the book:

- Don't record every word your instructor says verbatim. Paraphrase.
- Create a system for shorthand note taking, such as abbreviating proper names once they are introduced, using symbols such as "+", "=", "-", "w/o" for "without", or "b/c" for "because".
- Indent segments to show hierarchy of thought wherever applicable.
- Do the readings that relate to the lecture prior to the class so that you will know the structure and content in better detail.
- Take lots of notes on the readings prior to the class, too, as this will fine tune your ears and allow you more time to find patterns and make connections between points.
- Leave out almost everything but the nouns and verbs (omitting items such as prepositions such as "to" and "from" and articles such as "the" and "an".)
- Document the main ideas and leave spaces to fill in detail later on when you return to your notes for further study.

(Coles Notes, 2012)

- Use the "!" or some other symbol in the margins to denote important points (that will likely be on tests) (This one is not in the book, but the study dude relied heavily on it.)

After reading Coles Notes on the topic of note taking, I'm hesitant to try out the ideas in the book. You see, I don't want to miss documenting a single thing the instructor says.

Quite frankly, I am phobic of paraphrasing—especially of getting so lost in thought on what to paraphrase next that I miss out on the main idea. It seems the above method requires you to do the readings in advance in order to be on your toes enough to paraphrase, all while making instant connections and seeing instant patterns. What about if you haven't done the readings? If the lectures and the readings aren't in sync?

Well, while Coles Notes are pretty sound, the above system leaves me a little leery about switching to this method out for good.

Later on in the Study Dude series, we will look at a more hearty method for taking notes, as outlined by Stefanie Weisman in her book *The Secrets of Top Students: Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Acing High School and College*.

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

Coles Notes. (2012). *Study skills: Study guide*. Mississauga, Ontario: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd.

Another first for 2014, The Study Dude has been providing us with looks at different study aids for nearly six months now, so I thought it only fitting that the very first one we bring out as showing The Best of The Voice

Comic

Wanda Waterman



The quintessential Chazz. This one narrowly beat out the very first comic The Voice Magazine published in 2014, and that's because students said they liked Chazz. And then immediately had to clarify they meant the comic, not Chazz himself. I don't blame them.

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