

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 14 2015-04-03

### Meeting the Minds

Dr. George Siemens, Part I

### Maghreb Voices

Palm Fronds and Olive Branches

### Tutor Time

It's Not Them, It's Us

*Plus:*

*What I Know for Sure*

*Losing the Long Weekend  
and much more!*



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***The Voice  
Magazine***

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

For weekly email  
reminders as each issue is  
posted, fill out the  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.**



**EDITORIAL****The World Beyond Our Media****Karl Low**

There was a terrorist attack in Tunisia on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Did you know about it? I didn't. However, Wanda Waterman of *The Voice Magazine* did, and went to attend the anti-terrorism rally that happened eleven days later on March 29<sup>th</sup>. She brought back to us an article about how a non-western nation is dealing with, not just one, but a multitude of terrorist activities. Activities that we here in the western world barely get any notice of. She's also brought back pictures of what it was like to be in the rally, a humanizing view of a people who have decided that terrorism will not cow them, and how they are dealing with it not through an array of new laws prohibiting freedom, but rather with a celebration of the country they have and promises of increased tourism in spite of, even because of, the extremist activity.

Reading this article, and realizing that I knew absolutely nothing about this attack beforehand brought how to me just how the media and the terrorists often work hand in hand, both needing and feeding off of each other. A terrorist attack in a nation full of brown people, one of many that's happened over the last several years is hardly any sort of news in the western world anymore. But a single attack in France

captured the headlines for days on end.

In part, it's probably because the closer the victims are to us, the more we're able to identify with them, and the more resonance the story has. The media does not seem to care about the effects of its actions on our social landscape, merely about doing what is required to gain the most eyeballs. Quite simply, the notion of violence in a country with significant poverty is not considered news. That kind of violence is just a normal part of life in those situations, right? And since we're not that poor, it won't affect us, so doesn't matter to us. I have to wonder though, what would happen if the media just decided to stop reporting on any terrorist attack at all? If they decided that journalistic ethics should prohibit them from advertising the terrorists' work.

If that's too depressing, however, this Easter weekend edition of *The Voice Magazine* also has our latest Meeting The Minds. In this issue, we have the first part of a three-part interview with the founder of connectivism, Dr. George Siemens.

And as an AU student, I'm sure most of us have had the experience of waiting tensely for that mark on an assignment or exam to come back. And the frustration that can happen when the tutor doesn't meet the defined service standards. It's bad enough having to wait at all, but then to go past when the standards say you should expect the work can be infuriating. Deanna Roney looks at the issue of Tutor Time this week, and considers it from the other side of the fence.

Finally, I want to make sure to draw everybody's notice to the upcoming AUSU AGM. If you haven't found out already, you can see the full announcement on the AUSU web page, or see the small version in this week's AUSU update. The AGM is the time when all students can have their say into exactly how Council is operating, so it's a great time to get involved if you've got something on your mind. Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl', with a stylized flourish at the end.

# MEETING THE MINDS

## INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



*Dr. George Siemens is the founder of the theory of connectivism in education. Recently, he kindly consented to be interviewed by Marie Well of The Voice Magazine. Dr. Siemens was happy to provide us with very in-depth answers, and so this is the first part of the three-part interview.*

***Marie Well: You are a highly acclaimed researcher, receiving not just one, but two honorary doctorate degrees, if I'm correct. Please tell us about your greatest awards and acclamations.***

Dr. George Siemens: Yes, I received two honorary doctorate degrees.

That is an interesting question. On the one hand, being recognized by institutions in the form of a doctorate is always a significant award and is intended to communicate some impact in the field or work that others may have found valuable. Aside from that, what I have found most satisfying academically is interacting

with students--engaging with students in a number of technologies. Whether it's building personal learning networks through technologies, such as social media, or whether it is teaching and engaging with learners, we are at a point in time at society--or the university--where it is no longer simply what we know that matters, but it is much more relevant that we are working in networks and systems to understand learning needs and challenges.

Admittedly, recognition in the form of a doctorate or an award is nice and appreciated, but in terms of personal satisfaction, I have to say, unequivocally, it has been the time with students and faculty through both less formal and formal interactions.

***Marie Well: You have authored a number of books, including the Handbook of Emerging Technologies for Learning. Please tell us about this particular book and some of the emerging technologies you find most intriguing for the learning environment.***

Dr. George Siemens: Short answer: The intent of the Handbook of Emerging Technologies for Learning was to capture what was happening in technology--in software--what individuals were using on a societal level and how that might impact what we do in a university or higher education setting. Actually, that handbook itself came about initially when I was at the University at Manitoba and asked to do a workshop with Athabasca University's faculty and staff on the different types of technologies that were available. As a result, I started putting together what I wanted to present, it became apparent that there was enough activity here that it was worth trying to turn it into something more substantive. As a result, that's where the idea of the book essentially came about. When I did the workshop with Athabasca, I turned it into a PDF.

The second part of your question focused more specifically on the technologies. In terms of the technologies that I think are most interesting these days, I think I would emphasize any tools or toolsets that broaden or enable the opportunities for people to connect with each other. What I mean by that is that can connect with other; it could be faculty connecting with other faculty or with students, and so on. I'm quite interested in tools and technologies that enable us to better connect with one another. This starts to get at the core nature of the university's role within society. Traditionally, much of what we would have faculty do in a university setting, to simplify, would be to create curriculum, conduct research, and teach students core ideas within the discipline.

Many of these instructional practices were based on direct lecture, and there is nothing wrong with direct lecture; in many cases it can be a good thing. Unfortunately, when you are dealing with complex knowledge domains, it is more valuable to engage in dialogue interaction, and social processes. The intent then with the handbook, and the technologies that I've found to be particularly valuable personally, were to detail those that enabled engagement with others in conversation rather than for those technologies to be primarily be vehicles for pushing content to students. As a result, even now when I look at tools that are interesting, I look for a range of software tools in learning that promote connections, whether they are learning management systems like Moodle or whether it is social media that individuals use, like Twitter or Facebook. More innovative projects such as the Landing at AU lead by Terry Anderson and John, which provide more of a social distributed model of interaction.

My argument has been for over a decade now that if we want to understand the future of the university, what we really have to understand is how society works with information. How is information created? How is it shared? How is it validated? Once you understand the attributes of information, then the argument is, as detailed in a book called *Reinventing Knowledge* by McNealy and Wolverton, society's institutions mirror what a society does with information. As a result, the future of the university is going to look like information looks today, meaning that it is global; it is networked; it is socially developed; it is validated through distributed and social processes; and so on.

***Marie Well: What do you think is the role of technology and media on education?***

Dr. George Siemens: The role of technology in education is to better enable individuals to learn in ways in which they are most comfortable or most capable of learning. It is important to ask, what is technology in the first place? A classroom, for that matter, is a type of technology. If you come into a physical campus, desks are a type of technology. Technology is anything we've created that society uses or finds valuable. When we take that approach, what is technology when you are involved in learning, especially at a distance? It becomes a little bit murkier than it is in just a regular classroom.

Technology, in the early days of distance education, for example, consisted of texts and the mail system. Gutenberg's press, the ability to print books, is a type of technology. The postal service enabled folks like Nelson Mandela to do their learning through distance education. The value of the technology and media we use is that it allows us to expand beyond limitations that we might have otherwise and allows us to connect with people from around the world through anything from mail system to telegraph system.

More recently, the Internet and the software that is build on top of that, enables us to expand some of the opportunities for improving our ability to connect with one another. As a result, when we talk about the role of technology in education, the big idea for me is that technology can make education today more human.

There is one camp that appears to want to make education more of an autonomous, almost soulless process, where learners could push buttons and jump through hoops. You see with some automated testing software and with courses that are essentially click-through courses with limited interaction.

For me, the experience of technology that I would want to see have, is one that makes learning more profound, more relevant, and more valuable. The reasons we have classrooms is because they were at the time the most effective technology for a society to educate its young people across consistent standards.

Unfortunately, in doing that, there were a few social elements that were lost, often exploratory and creative approach to learning. The model of Plato, of Aristotle and the academy, which was essentially knowledge as a social discourse process, had given away to knowledge as a transfer process with the development of classrooms at least a hundred years ago. Today, as we are starting to see the growth of digital technologies and global connectivity, I'm hoping that the role technology will play educationally going forward is one that will help to rehumanize and resocialize the learning experience so that, if you have thirty people in a class, it is not all thirty people learning the same thing regardless of what they know. Instead, it would likely be thirty people engaged with one another, but each one being able to find and get access to specific knowledge needs that they have.

***Marie Well: What types of media do you include in your courses?***

Dr. George Siemens: It's a range. I use different media for different things. Essentially any technology can be used to communicate with students, though some are better at giving students control. Typically an LMS like say Moodle is used for online learning. It could also be a site like the Landing— giving students opportunity to connect and communicate content with one another. If somebody has a question about how to use a tool, and it is something that could be answered with a tutorial, I'll just pick a piece of software called Jing, record a quick tutorial that tells you to click here, this is what you do there, and so on. Say it is a class or a synchronous session, I used pretty much any tool that allows video and audio, from Google Hangouts to Skype to Adobe Connect to Elluminate, software years ago that came out of Calgary. I certainly use that for sharing information. I also use tools like Delicious which is the social bookmarking service. I've used toolsets such as Ning, which is for group formation. I've used Google Docs, Twitter, Google Plus, and the list goes on. The short view is that I use roughly any technology that allows me to communicate an idea to learners or that allowed me to engage in discussion with learners, whether that discussion is synchronous, in the form of Google Hangouts or Adobe Connect, or whether that interaction happens through asynchronous approaches, such as blogs or Twitter or discussion forums.

It is fascinating because of the number of tools that are available now. Different people you talk to will use a completely different set of tools. Some of the tools available now present academics with this huge intellectual buffet and you can choose the parts that you want. I'll use Skype, and I'll use Twitter, I'll use

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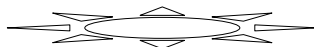
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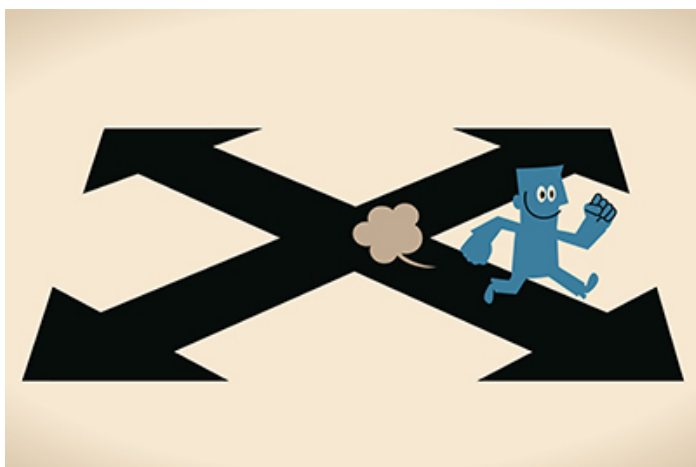


Facebook. Someone else can say, I'll use the Landing, I'll use Adobe Connect, and I'll use Google Plus, or whatever. It is a wonderful time to be in the teaching profession because of the range of opportunities available for the educator to contribute to learning. The other dimension is that students are able to control their learning. For example, one course that I was teaching had every other week a live session, but students decided that that wasn't enough for frequent meetings, so they decided on alternating weeks, to hold their own live discussion so that they could discuss course readings. One of the big opportunities technologically is that there is a control shift. Rather than the faculty member or institution being the primary determinant of what we can and cannot do while we are learning, students are able to create their own spaces to interact on their own terms and have discussions. Even if a faculty member isn't present, they can engage in active learning approaches.



## The Entrepreneur's Path Laptop Millionaire

Marie Well



### Are You A Million-and-One Short of Your First Million? Tips for Narrowing the Gap

Delving deep into the final chapters of *Laptop Millionaire*, by Mark Anastasi, it dawned on me that the practical element of how to implement these multi-million revenue generating strategies is sorely amiss on the pages. I read extensively on affiliate marketing, watched multiple Webinars on affiliate marketing, and dreamt of the day when I'd finally possess the knowledge to take the plunge. Yet, that day resides, shackled, in the imagination, as always.

So, I decided to weather the storm and get my hands dirty with multi-million dollar strategies I humbly ponder but never implement. My goal strikes me as fantastical, but perhaps I might set ablaze a path for making millions for the readership by just hunkering down and setting up accounts.

### Amazon and its Bedfellow, Affiliate Marketing

Holding my breath, I peer at Amazon's associate program Web page, by clicking the link "Become an Affiliate" at the bottom of Amazon's monolithic welcome screen. Immediately, Amazon addresses me with a screen announcing my potential to earn up to 10% commission on products just by adding a link to your communications such as Facebook accounts, blogs (one of which I proudly own), email messages--you name it. Slideshow widgets featuring products are other options for enlivening your Website or blog. The site streamlines your ability to post Facebook and Twitter updates regarding your affiliate products. Your alternatives even extend so far as building your own online affiliate store, featuring Amazon products. Best of all, you make money on every sale without even having to purchase, create, or own the product.

Your return on promoting products includes 4% of the list price for electronics products, 10% for game downloads, 5% for instant video products, 4% for DVD products, or 4% for general products such as books. It reveals that signing up is for free.

I recently started a blog, so I may venture into the affiliate marketing program. However, my blog remains empty to date. Affiliate marketing will be a sure-fire way to monetize the website, if only I could garner some heavy-duty traffic. At least the first steps of the plunge resonate, and the rest await finalization.



### **Interviewing High-Quality and Low-Cost Audio with Callburner**

Recently, I wrote an article on iTunes podcasting. A podcasting neophyte, the learning curve was ominous. Since then, I've overcome many barriers while establishing my first interview subject for the start of April. All of my equipment is now ready for the airwaves.

One of the gems I encountered included software that enables not only podcasters, but also student and professorial researchers, to interview subjects from anywhere around the globe in production quality audio. The skype compatible software callburner has a free month trial and from therein costs \$49 U.S per computer. The beauty of the callburner program resides in its ability to record an incoming and outgoing skype call on two separate audio files. With such division of interviewee/interviewer into two sound clips, editing each clip enables upping of volume on one vocal or lowering on the other, adding vocal effects specific to each voice, and so forth. Adobe Audition or the free Audacity offer convenient audio editing capability. With callburner, the configuration for the two separate audio tracks is as easy as clicking a checkbox. Whenever you open Skype, the call is automatically recorded, unless you specify otherwise in the configuration. Ah, professional interview sound recording software for under \$50 (minus the headset). Try beating both that price and that quality with an external recording device.

### **Creating CDs and DVDs (of the Month) with Kunaki versus Amazon**

If you are musically gifted or possess an audio or dvd information product you want to sell, Kunaki and Amazon are both two potential product manufacturing and distribution outlets. Delving into Kunaki's Website, I delighted in its low cost for printing, manufacturing, casing, cover inserting (with two panels), cellophane wrapping, free UPC bar code, and 24-hour manufacturing turn-around time. From 80 cents to \$1.75 per unit (which ranges depending on your order size), you reap a profit of your list price minus the 80 cents or so minus 5% of the net leftover amount. So, selling one unit at a list price of \$20 means you make \$20 minus the \$1 charge (\$19) minus 5% (95 cents) of the remaining amount, totaling a net revenue for you of \$18.05.

More outstanding, Kunaki allows you to sell your products on your Web site or Facebook account by providing you with a Kunaki sale page to which you link. Kunaki collects the payment for you and fulfills the order. You establish whether Kunaki pays you by check or paypal on the 15th of each subsequent month.

Kunaki stores other sales options like drop shipping to your Amazon or EBay stores, and provides you with a tracking id. If you want to go as far as having a CD or DVD of the month club, Kunaki will fulfill orders for multiple recipients if you provide them with a list. Each recipient associates with a tracking ID. If you prefer, you can order products for yourself to sell at your own physical location.

Impressive? Well, perhaps it proves wise to consult Amazon's audio downloads and audio manufacturing site for a quick comparison. Right off the bat, we know your market exposure is a thousand-fold with Amazon's behemoth service.

To create a CD through Amazon's Createspace, the cost is a fixed charge of \$4.95 per unit plus a 15% charge on Createspace eStores or a 45% charge for sales on Amazon.com. I've never heard of a Createspace estore, but if you are selling on Amazon an item for \$25, you subtract the \$4.95 plus subtract the 45% from the list price of \$25. Sigh. Yet, you stand to make money, and Amazon does all the work for you, with the exception of artwork design. On Fiverr.com (which I wrote about last week), you can get people to create the artwork for your cover, inserts, and disks for low cost. The good news is that the pricing is the same whether you manufacture a CD or a DVD. Better yet, if you choose the instant download path for your movies, you get paid 50% of the purchase or rental price. It just needs to be at least 6 minutes long. Step aside, Kindle; here comes the future of instant downloads.

## Maghreb Voices

### Palm Fronds and Olive Branches

Wanda Waterman



### The Anti-terrorism Protest at Bardo, Tunisia, 29 March 2015

"How do you defeat terrorism? Don't be terrorized."  
- Salman Rushdie

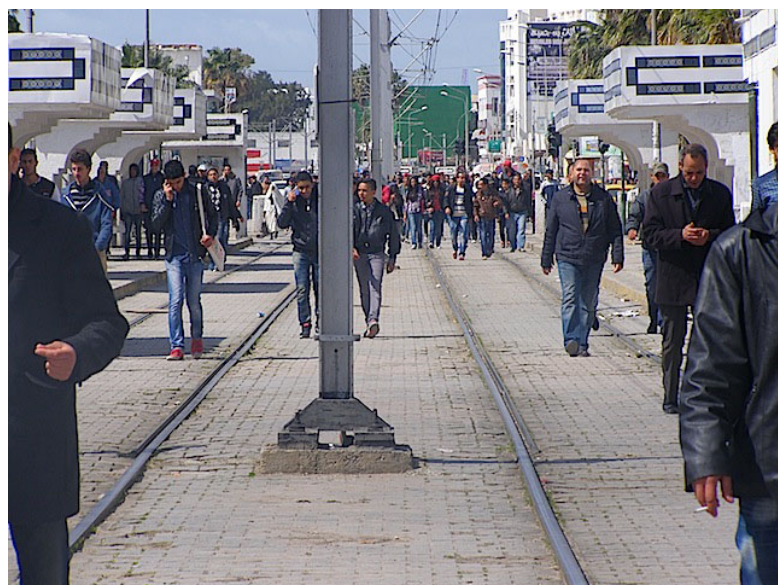
We take a taxi to Denden to meet a friend at an outdoor café before searching for another taxi to take us to Bardo, the site of the March 18 terrorist attack that resulted in the deaths of 23 people—19 of them tourists from Italy, Colombia, Poland, France, Spain, Japan, and Australia—and injuries to many more.

Little do we know that last night in Gafsa, my husband's hometown, Tunisian security forces killed nine members of the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade (a jihadist group alleged to be connected with the

Bardo attack), including its leader, Lokman Abu Sakhra.

Unaware of all this, we're looking forward to the protest. It's a gorgeous, cool, sunny spring day, the kind of weather exiled Canadians adore, sandwiched in as it is between the Maghreb's cold, rainy winter and its summer's sickening heat.

Taxis are cheap in Tunisia and a frequently used means of transport; you can ride for 20 minutes for the equivalent of two or three Canadian dollars, and there are cabs everywhere, night and day. But today the cabs are refusing to go to Bardo because the crowds are making the town unapproachable.



Neither taxis nor the metro are going to Bardo today, and so we walk.



A protestor holds a palm frond, an olive branch, and the Tunisian flag.





*Friends and family members hold photos of victims of extremist violence.*

We try the metro— same thing. And parking in Bardo now is out of the question, so no calling a friend to come get us; no wheels are rolling toward Bardo today. We start walking along the metro tracks. Other pedestrians join us, and the closer we get to Bardo the more crowded the tracks become.

Bardo is heavily guarded by police and special forces, lounging at street entrances and brandishing rifles from the roofs of buildings. We inch our way through the crowd toward the Bardo Museum, the site of the attack and thus the site of the protest. There oodles of people wave flags, wear flags, hold signs, chant, "Tunisia is free! Terrorism out!" and sing the national anthem.

One man holds a palm frond (symbol of victory), an olive branch (symbol of peace), and a Tunisian flag. People hold photos of loved ones murdered by Islamic extremists since the Jasmine Revolution that began at the start of 2011. There are people of all ages, all races, all styles of dress, and all religious and political persuasions.

People are holding signs sporting, "I am Bardo," and other expressions of solidarity. I make a sign that says, "I am Canadian. I am Bardo. I love Tunisia." After this, many people ask to take my photo or to have their photos taken with me. Others thank me sincerely for my support.

Later, on television, we see a news segment in which people the world over express their defiance of the terrorist agenda to destroy the tourist industry on which the Tunisian economy depends. How are these foreigners showing their support? By pledging to visit Tunisia as soon as they can.

The irony is heartening; instead of driving tourists away, the attack has brought more publicity to Tunisia and made her fans more determined to join forces with her against extremism.

All of this has really brought home the existence of two Tunisias. There's the one on the ground—politically polarised and disorganised, apathetic in the face of urgent necessity and passionate in the face of trifles, economically mired, and clouded by a general malaise.

But Tunisia has another reality in the world's eyes, a view of which more Tunisians should be made aware.

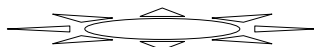
Tunisia has for years been the vanguard of the Arab world in terms of women's rights and freedoms, democratic values, and a commitment to living in peace with different



*Activists perch on columns in the middle of town. The sign, in French, translates as "All united against terrorism."*

cultures and belief systems. Tunisia's was the first revolution of the Arab Spring and it's reputed to be the only Arab Spring country to have made concrete progress toward building a just society. Hard as it is to live here, this nation is a pint-sized hero whose story has been writ large for the benefit of activists and freedom-lovers everywhere.

Here's hoping that the sense of hopelessness on the ground can be lifted a little as Tunisians become more keenly aware of how lovingly the world is watching.



## Tutor Time

Deanna Roney



I have noticed lately that lots of students are commenting on assignment turnaround times. According to the Athabasca University Student Standards tutors should have assignments returned in 7-8 business days. How long it actually takes can vary, depending on the course and the tutor. My first course was incredibly fast, I submitted an assignment before I went to bed and had it returned by the time I woke up in the morning. While this was great, it certainly is not common. Recently I have noticed that tutors are returning assignments on the last day, or taking a couple extra days. And it is clear that if you were to look at the AU Facebook page, others are noticing this as well.

While it can be frustrating as a student, waiting for feedback on an assignment, anxiously (obsessively) checking on day #8 to see if the tutor has returned an assignment, it must also be frustrating for the tutor. Sometimes I think we forget that there are real people on the other side of those emails and assignments. Sometimes students may feel like they are only a number to the tutor, that the assignment is not returned because the tutor just, "hasn't gotten around to it." I think, though, that students are also guilty of this, of considering the tutor as just an anonymous entity.

We have all undoubtedly heard about the recent budget issues. Issues which caused a mild (not so mild?) panic among students: what does this mean for us? will I be able to finish my schooling? Perhaps we, or at least I, should have been asking, "What does this mean for the tutors?" After all, without them I would be lost. The tutor will be first in line to be affected by budget cuts as, typically, budget issues mean lay-offs and increased workloads for those left.

I tried to look around the AU website to see if I could find anything which would indicate the approximate student to tutor ratio. While I was unable to find any numbers, I did speak to a tutor; who admittedly, has a higher workload than most. It was cited to me that they had over 200 students spread across 6 courses, on top of also teaching elsewhere, though for argument's sake I am only going to focus on the AU numbers. I think we can all agree that that is a large workload. The type of courses will dictate the amount of time assignments take, or email responses; all I am trying to do is put those numbers in perspective. Let's consider, if half of those students sent an email on the same day, and according to student services, it is a maximum 2 day turn around. If the tutor spent 5 min on each email that would mean spending about 8 hours a day replying to emails. I



understand that some tutors take much less time to answer an email, but I have had tutors send me very long emails back to make sure I am understanding the material, which clearly took much longer than 5 minutes.

If we then take a look at assignments, which student standards say have a maximum turnaround time of 8 days. Consider, again, if half the students then send in assignments on the same day, and the tutor took an hour to mark each, that would mean spending 12 hours a day marking. On top of responding to emails. While emails and assignments are likely staggered, I think we can all agree that that is a lot of work.

I am not advocating that the standards be changed, or students stop asking on the status of assignments/emails. I think keeping communication open with the tutor is very important. I am simply trying to understand things from the tutor's perspective. Maintaining an open line of communication is important. As students, we all want to have thoughtful, helpful, comments on assignments and responses to emails—there is nothing more frustrating than asking a question, waiting 2 days, and getting an email back which does not address the problem. But tutors are only human, which is something we need to remember. I did not realize how tutors were being effected recently within AU.

Students and tutors need to work together. I think communicating is the key, interacting and understanding that they are there to help you, but that you are not the only student. We cannot physically see who else is in the course, do not see a classroom full of eager faces and one lone professor at the front of the room. We do not see when that classroom size is increased due to budget issues, do not see the stress that causes. We cannot see how comments on timeliness can hurt when they are doing the best they can to keep up. Sometimes distance can make us feel like we are alone.

I am guilty of being frustrated when emails or assignments are later than the service standards. Or if I cannot get a hold of my tutor during their hours. However, , if the tutor sends me a quick email to let me know things are running behind, I know not to expect anything for a few days and can work my studies around that: meaning I am not stressed and not emailing asking where my assignment is. Similarly, if students need something marked quickly, communicate that to your tutor. They cannot read your mind, and if you ask, they will likely make the effort to get it back to you. Communication is the simple answer to most of the stress regarding turnaround time.

As a student, I am quick to ask where an assignment is, send another email looking for a reply, or get anxious when I cannot get through on the phone. In the past, however, I have not taken the time to send my tutor positive feedback. I simply assumed they would not want to hear it. After my discussion with a tutor, and learning more about the situation they are in. I thought about why I do not take the time to thank them. I always love getting a final email in a course saying it was a pleasure to have me, or thanking me for my work, it is a nice way to wrap things up. So this time, I took the time to send an email and say thank you, for taking the time to help me work through a course I thought would send me to the loonie bin. They might not all want those emails, might not care, but, someone might. I would hate to stop getting them just because a handful of students disregard them.

I think if we take the time to understand the situation others are in, their stress levels will decrease, and as a result so will ours. We do not need to lower our service standards, but we do need to work together and communicate. If you need something marked quickly, or if things are running behind, it doesn't hurt to let the other party know.

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

## Primal Numbers

### Kissing Canines

S.D. Livingston



Dog slobber. It's one of those things that can divide even the most committed dog lovers. Some would rather kiss a toad than let their dog lick their face, while others gladly let Fido share their spoon or ice-cream cone. From the pro side, a common claim is that a dog's mouth is cleaner than a human's. But is it really? You might be surprised at what science has to say about that.

There are plenty of urban legends about the cleanliness of a dog's mouth. Some attribute special antibacterial properties to a pooch's saliva, while another claims that a dog's mouth is seven times cleaner than a human's. But before you go ahead and let Spot have a bite of that

sandwich, you should probably know that those theories have been scientifically busted.

A dog's mouth, as this [Scienceline article](#) reports, is just as likely to be swarming with "legions of germs" as the typical human mouth. Some are the same bacteria that are found in humans but many are different—meaning that you're introducing a host of foreign bacteria into your mouth by letting your dog get up close and friendly.

Then, of course, there's the question of fecal matter. Even if you've trained your dog to do every silly pet trick seen on David Letterman, odds are good that your canine companion probably hasn't mastered using toilet paper to clean itself after a bathroom break. Which means that it's going to take care of business the old-fashioned way—and potentially pass traces of fecal bacteria along to any human food or faces it's allowed to lick.

Even when your dog is focused on what's in front of it (rather than behind), it could be picking up lots of other unsavory things you probably wouldn't want to slather across your mouth. Things like salmonella, hookworm, and tapeworm, as this [article](#) on Cesar Milan's website explains.

So why, you might wonder, don't we hear about people getting sick from letting their dogs lick their face? For the simple reason that most people's immune systems are healthy enough to fight off the germs and bacteria their pet's mouth might carry. But that doesn't mean it doesn't happen. People with less robust immune systems are at higher risk for problems, and it's probably not a good idea to let your dog lick the hands or faces of very young children, especially since babies and toddlers don't know enough not to put a hand covered in dog slobber into their own mouths.

None of this is to deny the very real health benefits, both emotional and physical, that our canine pets provide. Studies have shown that the simple act of petting a dog can lower blood pressure and reduce anxiety in people. Dogs can also keep you physically active, whether it's a walk around the block or an hour of Frisbee at the park.

But the bottom line is that no matter how clever or adorable your dog might be, its mouth is still a swamp of germs and bacteria that are better kept as far as possible from your own lips. So go ahead, give Spot a smooch if you want. Just remember to keep your toothbrush handy.

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.

## Writer's Toolbox Through a Glass

Christina M. Frey



I recently attended the American Copy Editors Society's national conference, an intense three days of sessions on topics ranging from headline writing to fiction editing to checklists to the history of English spelling to culturally sensitive language. I came away enthusiastic, energized, and ready to take on the world of words, one dictionary entry at a time.

Kidding aside, one of the biggest takeaways for me was a real understanding of the editor's role not just in the written word but in the development of language itself. Instead of "What is an editor?" we should be asking *why* there are editors. And, perhaps even more important, how we can edit with sensitivity to writer, reader, and the larger community.

Cute memes aside, editors aren't only about correcting or even preserving—whether upholding standards of grammar or ensuring the one, true, correct spelling. But neither should we be agents of change, going about shaping or outright creating the future to

further our own notions of language, usage, and social norms.

Our role should be one of reflecting, but not like a mirror, blindly applying what's popular or common or part of the rulebook (yet potentially problematic and distorted). Rather, we need to use existing language and human needs as a guide in making judgment calls that promote clarity, communication, and community. And in this role we reflect in a general way the hundreds of little decisions every writer or language user makes whenever they open their mouth or uncup their pen.

Take, for example, the long-running dispute over the singular *they*. I'm not going to get into the debate here—other than to mention that there's plenty of both historical and present-day support for its use—but its gradual acceptance in everyday writing is a great illustration of the editor's role in language change.

First, readers and writers began recognizing that applying "he" to general contexts was an archaic practice rooted in sexist ideas. But the workarounds were more and more awkward; and now that acceptance of the LGBTQ community is no longer rare, more and more literary types are turning to the singular *they* to write more clearly, concisely, and respectfully. Better still, their editors recognize the need—and allow what was previously frowned upon to stay boldly in the text.

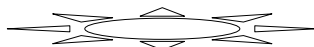
The reason? A singular *they* is a way of avoiding problems like these:

- The archaic and sexist general *he* ("Each student should do his best.")
- The convoluted and clunky workarounds ("Each student should do his/her best.")
- The confusing alternate-swapping ("Each student should do his best. Then she should wait for her grade.")

- The insufficiency of traditional gender labels ("Each student should do his/her best." only refers to male/female genders and may not describe the experience of members of the LGBTQ community)

Cultural sensitivity, clarity, and conciseness—all vital aspects of communication, and all areas an editor must consider even when looking at words as small and nondescript as pronouns. It's an overwhelming responsibility, but an exciting one—and it's one shared by anyone who works with the written or spoken word.

*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](#).*



## Losing the Long Weekend

**Barbara Lehtiniemi**



Are you enjoying your long weekend so far? Me? Not so much.

Long weekends, for me, are a thing of the past. In the transition from employed to self-employed, I seem to have lost the long weekend.

When I worked at a regular 40-hour per week job, weekends were part of the framework of life. Every day had a role, and Saturday and Sunday were the golden days at the end of the Monday to Friday slog. Long weekends meant bonus days: twenty-four hours of "found" time on a Monday or Friday.

My transition from 9-to-5, M-F was mostly unplanned. A move across the province meant leaving one job, and I decided to take a few months off before finding another. Those few months led to a few months more, at which point I decided to do something else entirely.

Losing the structure of a workweek was initially unsettling. On one hand, it's complete freedom, but on the other hand, it invited aimlessness. I needed some structure onto which I could frame up my schedule.

Saturday and Sunday once again became the weekend. Now I know which day to do household chores (Saturday) and which day I can indulge in guilt-free relaxing (Sunday.) The rest of the week is structured somewhat like a workweek. I even plot tasks in my computer's calendar to keep me on track. Monday to Friday is for school work, writing, and income-producing activities. Just like in the old employed days, I look forward to the weekend—and slack off a bit on Friday afternoons. And just like the working drudge I used to be, I sometimes "take work home" on the weekends.

While I restored Saturday and Sunday to my schedule, what I didn't do was factor in long weekends. I simply don't have them. Those statutory holidays that the rest of the province and often most of the country enjoys, I don't get. For me, they're usually just another day of school work and work-work, marked only by the minor annoyance of no postal service.



Being the master of my own schedule I could, of course, just schedule in long weekends. There's nothing to stop me from making every weekend a long weekend—and that is rather tempting.

But I enjoy my schedule, artificial though it may be. I like the rhythm of the workweek and the anticipation of the weekend. Heck, I even like the boss! The best part of being my own employer is that I can usually get whatever time off I need.

The trade-off to my lost long weekends is the ability to be spontaneous. I can take advantage of weather or whim to make the journey to visit family, make time for friends, or indulge in some fun. In the winter, I can ski or snowshoe when conditions are ideal, and in the summer I can walk when the sun is shining (which, in Ontario, usually means weekdays.)

While I've lost the long weekend, being self-employed has benefits that outweigh the occasional Monday or Friday bonus day. So go ahead, enjoy your long weekend. Don't worry about me, working away. It'll all even up down the road.

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

## Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



### AUSU Student Forums

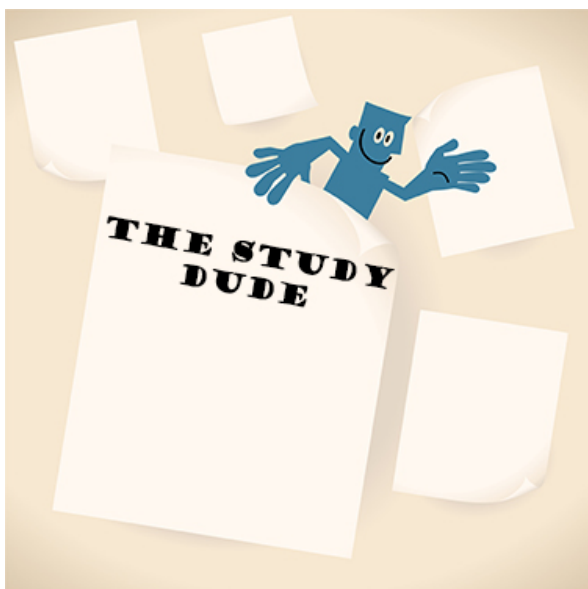
In the General Student Chat forum, user "Crimson Dawn" inquires about AU sororities and fraternities. In the same forum, user "Jternoway" wonders if there are any nerdfighters on the forum. And user "Chasingstars" seeks input on course EDPY 200. Other topics include odd features of the PSYC 435 textbook, the Kootenays, and course ECON 401.

### AthaU Facebook Group

Heather seeks advice on how to approach a research paper for HIST 383 *The Vikings*. Jessica looks for input from other Anthropology students. Alysha wonders if it's possible to request a new tutor. Other postings include redoing assignments, graduation, getting work experience in the HR field, and courses ACCT 253, ENGL 324 and 351, FNCE 401, IDRL 309, and PSYC 289,

### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Check out AU's peer-reviewed Journal of Integrated Studies <http://iamau.ca/1NBO2Ti>."



### Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

*There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to pick a random object, such as a spaceship, and associate it with a blast-off of ideas in your essay.*

*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.*

This week's focus is on a well-researched, entertaining book titled *Stylish Academic Writing* by Helen Sword.

### Give Lively Story-infused Detail

Outstanding scholars, authors, and presenters know the potency of a riveting story. Stories penetrate the human core, like seeds that germinate into delectable fruit. Your life's story consists of tale after tale, of woes, of hardships, of self-revelations, of hope, of inspiration. Your life's story can entertain and enlighten as no one else's before you. I would go as far as to say that your life's story serves to add fruitfulness—succulence—to the fodder of your essay writing.

Your stories and the stories you accumulate about others beg—no, plead and bargain—to be disclosed. Why should you warehouse a lifetime of exclusive experiences and perceptions, either belonging to yourself or others, never to be shared, when you can appropriate these tidbits into your academic writing?

Daniel Pink and Malcolm Gladwell, two bestselling authors, pose stories and anecdotes as indispensable writing tools. You should, too.

Providing more detail in the art of storytelling in academic writing, Helen Sword delights the senses with the following secrets of effective writing:

- Implement oodles of examples into your writing, especially when offsetting difficult, abstract concepts. This charges your writing with concrete, supplementary illustrations. For instance, you could conjure up a telling example at the beginning of each major section or chapter to add clarity to what follows. As another example, follow-up every sentence spewing abstract nouns with a "for example" component.
- Anecdotes, which are true stories, tantalize best when couched in tales of real people. Create funny, satirical, strange, or concrete anecdotes. These stories could last from two sentences to multiple paragraphs, and are especially digestible in presentations.
- Try out similes, metaphors, personification, and other figures of speech; transform an abstract idea into a human-like persona, aching to gain our undivided attention. If you use one main metaphor, apply it and vary it often. Expand your similes and metaphors into analogies, where you liken the abstract subject of your sentence with something concrete.
- Experiment with allusions, which are "device[s] used by stylish authors [. . .] to link abstract concepts with stories and images already familiar to most readers" (p. 106). *Romeo and Juliet* and the Wicked Witch of the West serve as two allusions, as do biblical references, like Noah's Ark or the Exodus.

However, some readers baffle over allusions they've never been formally introduced to. You should ensure your allusions remain understandable to those unaware.

- Proffer copious illustrations in your presentations and non-print documents. The graphics should add supplementary insights and serve not as useless appendages to your text.
- Here is the best idea of all: "Start a file of anecdotes—mini-stories of no more than a few sentences of paragraphs long—that relate to your research area" (p. 109). String these anecdotes into your writing and presentations at any opportunity. Open your essay with an anecdote.
- If you lack an arsenal of anecdotes, try firing off a fictional story. Commence your tale with words such as "hypothetically, speaking", "suppose...", and "imagine...".

### Seek Out Creativity

Not more than two hours ago, I entertained myself with a book called *Borrowing Brilliance* which contends that creativity poses as nothing more, nothing less, than old ideas rehashed, recombined, and regurgitated. The point-of-view mystified me, especially given the countless tomes I read espousing that creativity is sheer, blissful, esoteric originality.

Sword (2012) struggles to make a case for strategies to inspire creativity. Yet, the strategies posed seemed to have a disconnect to the real world. Despite this, Sword's own writing is clever and inviting, a nod to her own ability to creatively write.

In lieu of Sword's enticing literary style, I present her tactics for enhancing creativity in your own writing:

- Read anything—and everything—under the sun. Charge your writing with anecdotes or analogies pertaining to books you read outside your discipline.
- Nuzzle into some free-writing, where, uninhibited, you write without stopping for long periods of time. Once the exercise completes, move on to polishing your creation.
- Create audio recordings or mind maps of your stories and ideas for (structural) implementation into your writing projects.
- Write poetry about your subject of research. Perhaps include a poignant verse in your essay introduction.
- Venture onto Google images or some other image repository, choose an image, and ponder ways it could relate to your research. Free-write on how the image is analogous to your research and perhaps incorporate salient aspects of the analogy into your paper.
- And for the clincher: seek top writers in your field, analyze their writing, and mimic their tactics.

### Story Continued

Sword stresses the significance of stories to the point where abstract concepts take on human-like, personable qualities. Implementing personification, metaphors, and other literary devices in otherwise sombre essays certainly arouses my curiosity and should yours. Why? Abstract ideas and jargonitis can meet, head-on, in gripping stories, making for an engaging plot in an otherwise dull drivel of academic thought.

Sword's (2012) techniques for evoking cinematic qualities into an otherwise dry and dreary essay are as follows:

- Use rhythm, assonance, alliteration, and other musical literary devices for engaging the senses.
- The researcher's story bursts forth with the researcher as the main character and the research question as the problem to overcome. Make this story exciting in your thesis account. Insert the researcher's story in "a public lecture, a student seminar, a grant application, a book preface, or the

opening chapter of a PhD thesis" (p. 90). Provide ample examples of how the research has changed lives, not only of the researcher, but of the subjects or the world in general.

- Like a camera, pan and pivot to different story lines to make the research more engaging. For instance, the tales from opponents of your views rev up the antagonistic element. These opponents could include scholars theoretically positioned against your views or a nagging colleague who discredits your academic stance.
- Some academics venture as far as to "merge into" their object of study. These academics take on the characteristics of the object of study, assuming the object's identity.
- Assign flaws and strengths, dreams and ambitions, obstacles and enemies, to your abstract ideas. Make the abstractions characters in their own right.
- Place the context of your research in a setting. Settings provide concrete imagery that appeals to the senses. The setting can appear in the title or at the start of your essay, for instance.
- Play around with point-of-view such that the POV shifts from the researcher's to another expert's to the subject's, and so forth.

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

Sword, Helen. (2012). *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Click of the Wrist

## The Small Stuff

**It's all about the details, they say. Whether you're a long-time miniaturist or want to take a walk on the small side, this week's links explore a few interpretations of a micro-sized world.**

### Elgin Park

Artist Michael Paul Smith has turned his model car collection into a fascinating model making hobby, constructing a midcentury American town (buildings, accessories, and even scaled-down dirt and gravel) and photographing the buildings and cars with real-life backgrounds. Forced perspective photography makes it seem all of one piece. His Flickr photo stream makes it easy to forget time in Elgin Park.

### Strange Worlds

After Matthew Albanese spilled paprika and decided it looked like a Martian landscape, he began creating Strange Worlds, which matches detailed landscape dioramas (from the ground right up to the sky overhead!) with camera work. He wants to "[trick] the eye," he says, and his realistic depictions of everything from tropical scenes to tornadoes on the plains do just that.

### Little People Project

What happens when micro-sized people meet the human-sized world? UK artist Slinkachu takes tiny plastic figures and places them in urban settings. Their interaction with the human-made and the natural side of real-sized city living is whimsical and clever.





## In Conversation with The Winter Brave, Part I

Wanda Waterman

### Moving Past Emotion



"Songwriting in general is a very cathartic experience for me. Writing lyrics especially helps in moving past emotions or personal problems."

- Jake Scarpino of The Winter Brave

The Winter Brave is an alternative rock duo based in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The world sat up and took notice in 2013 when Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters dropped their name during "Ask Me Anything" on Reddit.com. The new single, "As You Once Were," from their soon-to-be-released EP, *The Hand You Never Seem to Lend*, is a spirited rock anthem with deliciously retro musical elements.

Recently duo members Sam and Jake took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about childhood influences, their songwriting process, and the new EP.

### Which elements in your childhood and early years pointed you toward music? Toward rock and blues in particular?

Our parents, even though they're not musicians themselves, always had music playing on the stereo all day while we were growing up. Our uncle played in bands and got us our first guitar and bass when we were about 10. After an initial love affair with The Beatles we both got into lots of 90's alternative, namely Nirvana, Oasis, and Third Eye Blind. Growing up in the 90's probably had a lot to do with getting us interested in rock.

### How are you preparing musically for the new EP?

Since we've moved down to a duo, rehearsals have become slightly barer in the sense that we can't get exactly the sound that we want with just the two of us. We've reallocated some rehearsal time into demoing because it's easier to flesh out something when we're not restricted to only two instruments at a time. Most of the new songs have gone through two or three demos to get to where they are now.

### Who writes the songs? And how is it gone about?

We have the wonderful privilege of having two songwriters in our duo. Writing can go a couple of different ways, but in general it's a very collaborative process. Sometimes one of us will write all the parts of a song and the other will change up the feel to bring it somewhere completely different. Other times one of us will come up with a part and show it to the other, who'll write the next part. We both enjoy being able to work with one another and feel that our songs benefit from being made collaboratively.

### What was your most beneficial educational experience? What or who in your training had the most—and best—influence on you, as musicians, composers, and human beings?

We both shared a vocal coach who was absolutely a huge influence on us as musicians. The best thing she did was to destroy any ego or resistance to criticism. As a musician, you need someone to tell it as it is and light a fire under you. She was great at keeping our asses in line and keeping us focused.

*(to be continued)*

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 The Rising Sun of Hawaii

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 the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program. In the last part, I landed in Honolulu and spent the day on Waikiki Beach.*

Still being on west coast time I got up bright and early at 5:30am. Predictably the first thing on my mind was coffee. Also predictably, I found myself at Starbucks, laptop in hand, drinking my morning coffee. While I'm a big fan of exploring local businesses when travelling, I also find it interesting to see how global franchises differ

around the world. The differences can tell you a lot about a place. Aside from the special Hawaiian themed roast you'll notice the menu is in both English and Japanese.

The Japanese influence can be felt throughout Honolulu with lots of high-end Japanese people, and businesses catering to them. Honolulu is, quite literally, a place where east meets west. At grocery stores in the Waikiki area warm food can be found split down the middle—one side Asian food and the other American style.

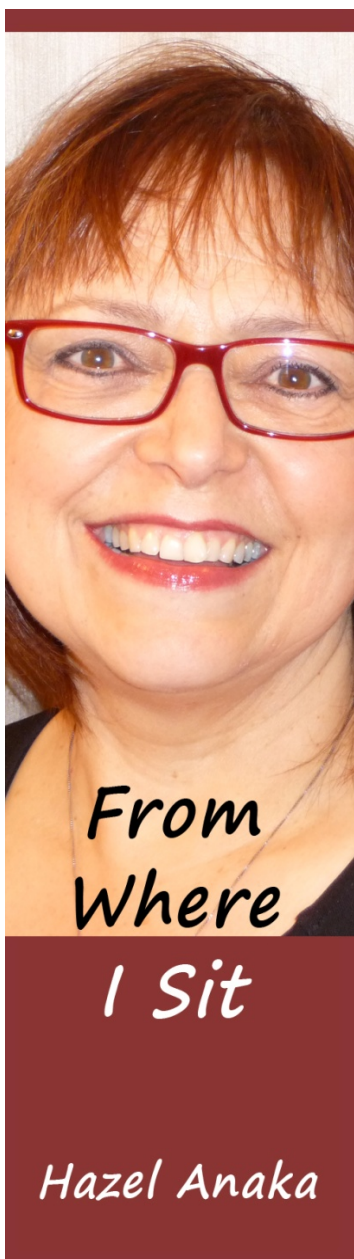
The Asian foods aren't your usual North American Chinese food, but instead are popular dishes most of which I've never had. I ended up trying a few different rice rolls, which were cheaper and healthier than their American counter-parts. A more 'Hawaiian' localization is the cup of pineapple served with every McDonald's meal (But don't get your hopes up. The pineapple, as I found out, is canned).

In addition to being the place where east meets west, Hawaii is also the perfect middle point between Sydney and Toronto. It allows you to split the flight and split the time getting used to the time difference. Despite this, Matt landed in Honolulu tired and jet-legged. I couldn't blame him, a few days ago he had no idea he'd be in Hawaii. So after meeting Matt and getting settled in I found myself back on Waikiki Beach.

Waking up the next day we knew we had to make the best of it. While we couldn't hope to see everything on Oahu Island, we could get out of Waikiki Beach for the day. Directly beside Waikiki Beachside Hostel is a moped rental shop called *Adventure on Two Wheels*. They offer three models, Basic, Sport, and Deluxe, with prices ranging from \$30-\$50 a day.

The attendant gave us a map and helped us decide what we wanted to see. He asked if we were in the mood for something "vacationy" or something more adventurous. We opted for adventure. Our destination was Maunawili Falls. We'd take the scenic route staying along the beachside for most of our drive and briefly stopping at beautiful Waimanalo Beach.

With our day planned out we hit the road on our new deluxe mopeds.



## What I Know For Sure

On the last page of every issue of *O* magazine, Oprah has a column entitled 'What I Know for Sure.' In those few words she summarizes the life lesson that supports the theme of that issue.

Some recent topics included: 1. "The only thing you shouldn't miss is what matters to you." 2. "What daring, brave, unconventional, adventurous, aspiring, and inspiring dream can you behold?" 3. "Am I having a good time? Am I doing what I really want? What does fun look like?" 4. "Our internal space has to be given the same level of respect and diligent attention as the external." 5. Freedom is "to wake up at dawn and *decide* what to do with the day."

As with all things Oprah this is big. Big concepts, big aspirations, big challenges. Ever the marketer she's also captured them in a book by the same name.

Because I'm not the big thinker, big success Oprah is, my own list is more simple, more observational, more tongue-in-cheek. Here, in no particular order are some things I know for sure:

1.) No matter how warm, beautiful, promising March first appears, she is at heart a scheming harriidan who will wallop us (at least once) into accepting her supremacy as a bi-polar weather goddess.

2.) Having just binge-watched season three of 'House of Cards,' it becomes apparent that it's not easy (or perhaps possible) to sustain the calibre and edge-of-your-seat intrigue of the early writing. It's better than a lot of what passes for entertainment out there but overall it wasn't as good, in my opinion as the previous two seasons. I'd blame myself for being distracted while watching, but all thirteen episodes, no, not my fault.

3.) If you can't attend your church Joel Osteen's TV ministry may provide a reasonable alternative. His message is faith based but also sounds like something

a success coach would advise a client. A recent sermon to a full church that seats 16,000 people warned that what we say has the power to affect our lives, whether the words are positive and loving, or fearful and destructive. He says that having worries and doubts or negative thoughts is natural. It's when we give voice to those thoughts that they really begin to hurt us.

4.) I'm reminded that I prefer people with humility. It's wonderful to be successful—financially, academically, or vocationally— as a cook, a mother, a carpenter, a whatever. Better yet if the accomplishment is accompanied by modesty. I'm turned off by arrogance and self-promotion. True talent will be self-evident. It doesn't require a tickertape parade to get our attention. *Everyone* had a first day, first job, first mistakes. To forget that and harshly judge others further back on the continuum that connects us all is unfair and possibly cruel. We owe it to those behind us to mentor not minimize.

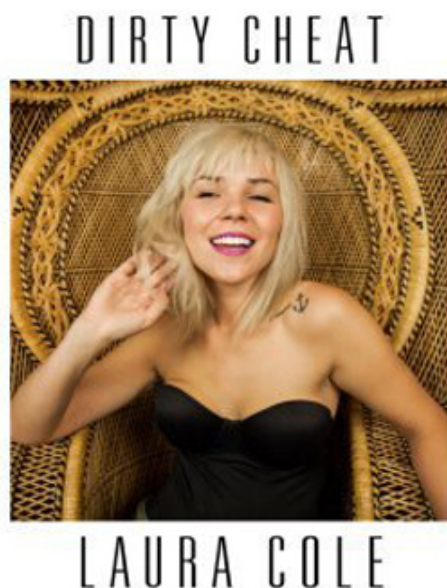
That, my lovelies, is what I know for sure, today, from where I sit.

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

## Music Review

### Dirty Cheat

Samantha Stevens



**Artist:** Laura Cole

**Album:** Dirty Cheat

There is something about Jazz and R&B influenced music that I find so raw and intense. And I find that these genres are the best at giving a voice to some of the most intense emotions. Laura Cole's music is no exception. In her first all original album, *Dirty Cheat*, the songs are powerful and passionate, and are a reflection of Laura's real life experiences with love and heartbreak.

Born into a musical family, Laura grew up in Ancaster, Ontario. Drawing from classic jazz inspirations like Etta James, Amy Winehouse, Aretha Franklin, and Billie Holiday, Laura has played at several venues in Ontario, including the Lula Lounge in Toronto.

Each track has the typical elements found in the jazz and R&B genres. The strong female vocals are very much the centrepiece, combined with muted drums that are led by the lead guitar. Additional instruments are added to the songs as needed to create the needed atmosphere. In that regard, Laura doesn't bring anything new to the genre, but I really enjoyed her music all the same.

If I had to pick one track that stood out to me on this album it would have to be "On My Own". The song begins with a beautifully rumbling bass guitar that leads the music down a path very different from the rest of the album. At times, there is a bit of a funk influence, but I think that is what makes this track appealing, and Laura's singing is perfectly timed with the steady rhythm. Given the title, it strikes me that this song is extraordinarily clever, as I feel that it draws attention to the fact the Laura seems to march to the beat of her own drum.

"Let It Roll" is very different from the remainder of the album, as it has a very subtle country influence. Dominated by the vocals from the very beginning of the track, the singing is complimented by softer music and a slower beat, lending the feel of an emotional ballad. However, I do find that the repetition of the lyrics tend to be tiresome by the end of it.

"Dirty Cheat" is the final track on the album. The saying "leave them in tears" comes to mind when I listen to this song. The strong lyrics perfectly suit Laura's equally potent voice, and she makes sure that long after you've listened to the album you will always remember her. The rhythm reminds me of songs like "Mustang Sally" with its in-your-face tough beats.

Overall, I enjoyed this album and was happy to hear that there are musicians still courageous enough to tackle such a potent and emotionally-driven sound like this, and pull it off with class.

The nine track album was released in August 21st last year and is available for streaming or purchase on Laura's [bandcamp page](#) and on iTunes.

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





Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## Easter Questions

**Dear Barb:**

***I am in my late thirties and Easter has got me thinking about life and what I can do to become a more spiritual person. My family never attended Church or had any religious affiliations. Recently I've been trying to find a way to live a more spiritually, fulfilling life. I don't want to attend traditional Churches as I find them phoney and money grabbing. I've been looking for books to read and there seems to be a lot out there and I'm not sure where to begin. Do you have suggestions on how or where I could initiate a change in my life? I just need some direction, thanks Kyle.***

Hi Kyle:

Often as we approach our thirties we begin to think about how we want to live our lives and question our purpose and the direction we want for our lives. As you know there are a plethora of books on the subject of spiritual enlightenment and discovering ways to live a more peaceful life. Some popular authors I would recommend are Dr. Wayne Dyer, Louise May, Don Miguel and Dr. Robert Puff. A good place to start is with Dr. Robert Puff, he has several eBooks available on Amazon or Kobo for \$0.99 each. His books include a complete approach to spiritual health which includes the mind, body and soul. Also Dr. Wayne Dyer has been writing about living a spiritually rewarding life for over thirty years and has written several bestsellers. Dr. Dyer's book "The Shift: Taking your life from Ambition to Meaning" may be a good starting point to assist you on your journey. As well, there are numerous non-denominational churches that focus on living a spiritually gratifying life. Check online for non-denominational churches

in your area and try out few. Don't give up if you don't feel comfortable at the first one you attended, try a few others. I hope this information is helpful. Thanks Kyle, enjoy!!

**Dear Barb:**

***My parents have an Easter egg hunt every year for their grandchildren. They live on a farm and have a large area for the hunt. It always starts out as fun, but ends up with tears and tantrums. My nieces and nephews range in age from three years old up to teenagers. My children are three and seven. The older ones find all the treats and the younger ones are left with a mostly empty basket. My mom has extra chocolates that she gives the younger children, but that doesn't always appease them as most of the fun is supposed to be finding the treats. I think my parents should not include the older kids in this hunt, what do you think? Christine.***

Hi Christine:

Easter egg hunts should be fun times and be geared towards the younger children. Perhaps your parents could have a cut off age of twelve years old for the Easter egg hunt. Clearly your parents want to include their older grandchildren and they should, therefore they could have a special chocolate bunny or a small basket of treats for the teenagers. Twelve years old is a good cut off point as frequently teenagers feel they are too old for Easter egg hunts but they still want the treats. I'm pretty sure this should level out the playing field and prevent a lot of tears and tantrums. Thanks Christine, happy hunting!

Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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.



**AUSU**  
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS' UNION

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## AUSU's AGM & April Council Meeting

AUSU will be holding this year's Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, April 21, 2015 at 5:30pm MST.

The AGM is a great opportunity to attend an AUSU council meeting, take part in discussions, and vote on agenda items. The AUSU Annual Report is also presented at the AGM which reviews some of the projects that AUSU Council has completed over the past year and provides financial information for the last fiscal year. Please go to <http://www.ausu.org/> for the official notice and agenda.

All members are welcome to attend and take part. To receive call in information, please RSVP with our office by email [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org), by phone 1-855-497-7003, or through the chat feature on our website [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org).

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## Great AU Finds Online

**Am I Ready? Counselling Assessments** – A series of review modules to test your skill in a variety of subjects. 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 help you choose an occupation. For links, see: [http://counselling.athabascau.ca/assess\\_yourself.php](http://counselling.athabascau.ca/assess_yourself.php)

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## AUSU Featured Groups & Clubs

Group Name: **Athabasca University Faculty of Science and Technology**

Where: **Facebook**

Members: 275 Likes

About: Posts related to the FST and its students

Activity: Regular posts each week or every two weeks.

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## IMPORTANT DATES

- April 3-6: Easter Weekend – AU & AUSU closed
- April 10: Last day to register for courses starting May 1
- April 21: AGM & AUSU Council Meeting
- April 30: Last day to extend courses ending May 30
- May 8: Last business day to register for courses starting June 1



### 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:*

## Increased Productivity

The following three video is essential for new students because distance education can be daunting. Setting small, reachable goals and learning how to boost productivity with time management are keys to a successful start.

Firstly, there is a short (just over 11 minutes) video about managing your time by Todd Dewett called Managing Your Time.

Secondly, if you are interested in a course about productivity and managing time, you could watch Enhancing Your Productivity, by Dave Crenshaw. This course discusses

1. Your most valuable activities
2. Building up coworkers
3. Having focus

Lastly, there is a course called Achieving Your Goals, by Dave Crenshaw, that explains how to set measurable and achievable goals.

***Have you signed up for lynda? It's free for AUSU members. To learn more, check out [ausu.org/services/lynda.php](http://ausu.org/services/lynda.php)***

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

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## THE VOICE

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

Contact *The Voice* at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org).

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