

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 31 2015-07-31

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Dr. Peter MacKinnon

An Interview with the President

Essay Motivation

The Write-Site Gives A Great Reason

Plus:

*The Travelling Student & A Giant Banana
GMO Grasshoppers
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 Carla Knipe* 4

Interview with Dr. Peter MacKinnon: *A Wonderful Mission* 7

Articles

Editorial: *Bye-Bye July*..... 3

This Summer's Secret to Essay-Writing Motivation 14

Riding the Storm 15

Columns

Primal Numbers: *GMO Grasshopper?* 10

The Study Dude: *Help! For Writers*..... 11

The Fit Student: *Releasing Exam Anxieties* 16

The Writer's Toolbox: *Editing In Style, Part II* 19

The Mindful Bard: *The Wolfpack*..... 20

Music Review: *Til the Wheels Fall Off* 23

The Travelling Student: *The Giant Banana* 24

In Conversation: *with Marlowe Grey, Part I*..... 25

From Where I Sit: *Their Rules* 27

News and Events

Student Sizzle..... 22

Click of the Wrist 26

AUSU Update 29

Comic

Canadian Travel Advisory 28

***The Voice
Magazine***

www.voicemagazine.org

500 Energy Square
10109 – 106 ST NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3L7

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher
AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief
Karyna Hoch

Managing Editor
Karl Low

Regular Contributors
Hazel Anaka
Christina M. Frey
Barb Godin
Barbara Lehtiniemi
S.D. Livingston
Samantha Stevens
Wanda Waterman

Views and articles presented
here are those of the
contributors and do not
represent the views of AUSU
Student Council

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

For weekly email
reminders as each issue is
posted, fill out the
subscription form [here](#).

The Voice does not share
its subscriber list with
anyone.

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**Bye-Bye July****Karl Low**

This week, in addition to our Minds We Meet feature that brings us an interview with student Carla Knipe (who we soon may be seeing more from as a new writer in *The Voice Magazine*), we are also fortunate to have an interview with none other than the current President of Athabasca University, Dr. Peter MacKinnon. Former student Bethany Tynes managed to get hold of him for a brief interview, where she asks him about everything from what brought him to AU to where he sees it going in future. And of course she tries to get some inklings from him as to what he thinks the recent task force report about AU's sustainability challenges mean for the university.

Also this week, Barbara Lehtiniemi has the scoop on a little publicized contest from AU that's offering students the chance of a free course. The Write Site is having its 10th anniversary this year, and in celebration they're running an essay contest for AU students. The contest hasn't been widely advertised at all, and the only place on AU where you can find reference to it is in the faculty of business. It's not even being listed on the Write Site itself yet. Fortunately for you, Barb dug out the information and we're putting it out so you can all get started on your summer essays.

The end of July also brings us the end of the nomination period for the six vacant seats on AUSU Council. In a strange twist of timing, it's expected that Mr. Harper will also be announcing an election this weekend, and if he does, it'll be the longest campaign period in the history of Canadian federal politics. This extra-long campaign means that the election expense limits are also higher, and since elections Canada refunds campaign spending within those limits, will cost us, as taxpayers, much more. Nearly 25 million dollars more. And that's only if you don't consider that the money they pay the expenses with in the first places is also subsidized by the taxpayers to the tune of 75% of it. This means that, during an election, every dollar donated costs taxpayers \$1.75. Any party that claims Canadians should be taxed less while accepting donations is, therefore, a hypocritical party. Hopefully all Canadians will take this into consideration when deciding both to donate and who to cast their votes for.

This election (the federal one, not the AUSU one) is also going to be a little bit different because the Conservative Party of Canada has decided it will not be participating in the consortium debate, the only debate that gets broadcast on multiple channels in prime-time during the election campaign. Instead, they've decided they'll be going to five (or is it six now?) other debates that are held on single issues. So rather than a potential prime minister having to show that they're capable of handling all their files at once, they can compartmentalize. Recently, the NDP has announced that it won't be participating in any debates that Prime Minister Harper is not present at. This essentially means that Canadians who wanted to see if any of the candidates can actually think on their feet are going to be denied that opportunity due to the political gamesmanship that's going on.

Personally, I'm not impressed. I'm not impressed at any politician who would choose to avoid a debate. After all, the job is essentially to be able to look at the facts, develop a position, hear the concerns of those around you, and be able to craft a policy that satisfies as many as possible. When a politician is unwilling to debate, in any circumstance, they're essentially saying they're not terribly interested in doing the job. Enjoy the read!

MINDS WE MEET



Carla Knipe is an AU student currently living in Calgary, Alberta, although she was born and raised in Castlegar, British Columbia. Carla works part-time for the Calgary Board of Education as a meal supervisor (aka "lunch lady") in an elementary school, a job that she assures us is "a lot more difficult than it looks." Carla is in AU's BA program, majoring in English.

The Voice Magazine recently interviewed Carla via e-mail about school, creativity, and trying to decide what you want to be when you grow up.

Which program are you in at AU? Describe the path that led you there.

I am on the home stretch of completing my BA with a major in English, minor in Humanities (15 credits to go!). This is my second round of university studies; my first round was after high school in a traditional bricks-and-mortar university where I was working toward a combined BA/BEd in Secondary Education. For complicated reasons, I dropped out before finishing, and the combined degree meant that I came away with no qualifications. I ended up marrying

my husband, living overseas, had a son, worked in retail (which is its own kind of education!), then moved my family back to Canada in 2008. I got a lot of life experience but not completing my degree was always a huge weight on my shoulders. After my family got settled in Calgary, I found out that I could transfer and complete my BA through AU and I felt such a sense of hope and confidence for the first time in a long time.

What do you like to do in your leisure time?

I enjoy volunteering. For three years I was on the Board of my community association, including serving as our community newsletter Editor. I recently gave that up though, because it was taking up a lot of time and I needed to concentrate on studying. I still love being our community's Little Free Library steward and I don't want to give that up. I ride my bike, I try to read books that I don't have to read. I have a lot of craft projects that I hope to complete but my university studies take priority.

What happens after you finish your education?

I genuinely don't know. I feel like I'm back in my 20s, trying to decide what I want to be when I grow up.

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

I haven't had one particular person that I could call a mentor, but I am curious and learning has always been important to me. My writer instinct takes bits and pieces from a variety of sources and I mentally file them away

for inspiration. I particularly admire the "everyday heroes" who see a need and try to leave the world in a better place—but who often don't seek out the publicity for doing it. Right now, the women I've "met" on the [AU Student Moms](#) Facebook group are inspiring to me; they are all amazing for juggling what they have to in order to make studying work and do it with such flair!

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

That's a tough question as there are so many! I'd say Temple Grandin. She has taken a huge negative (Autism) and turned it into a massive positive not just for her, but for many others as well. She is also not afraid to be herself.

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

Studying through distance learning is good for me because I can just get on with the work. I don't have to travel to attend classes, I can simply open a book or my laptop. However, the biggest challenge as a parent is trying to find a big chunk of uninterrupted studying time in the midst of everything else. I've discovered there are numerous opportunities for procrastination that present themselves like hey, that laundry needs to be done! I also dislike the fact that opportunities for interaction with other students or instructors are limited. One thing I miss about a face-to-face class setting is a group discussion of a work of literature or debating a concept; you just don't get that in a distance learning setting.

Have you had a time when you wavered about your education?

The shock of dropping out of university the first time around really affected me. I thought I was sure of what I wanted to do and I'd worked toward that goal while even in high school so when that was removed I felt extremely alone and discouraged. I questioned everything, including my intelligence. However, my experience with AU is that it took the isolation I felt in my situation and turned it around for me, so that I become empowered by it.

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

I've just finished [HUMN 360](#), *East Meets West*. It was a course completely out of my comfort zone, and it was not easy but I'm glad I was able to allow myself to challenge my worldview.

Describe the proudest moment (or greatest accomplishment) in your life.

Other than my family, I'd have to say that moving overseas and living in Northern England was pretty huge. I was the only Canadian I knew of in the area and there was quite a bit of culture shock. I definitely learned how to fight my corner!

Have you given up anything to go to AU? Was it worth it?

When I got the distinct inner nudge to complete my studies through AU, I was starting to lean toward a freelance writing career. I realized that I just didn't have the time or energy to do both well and I realized I had to make the difficult choice between the two. I'm hoping that once I complete my degree, new opportunities will present themselves and all the threads of things that I've done will somehow weave themselves together.

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

AU has been a true pioneer in Canadian education, but I feel its voice has been drowned out of late. It's time for AU to reclaim that voice. I would create opportunities for both AU instructors and students to shape education in Canada. By that I mean, we are all proof that the traditional definition and practice of post secondary education doesn't necessarily work for everyone and there are many creative ways to get to where you want to go. I would like to see AU explore those paths, to speak up more about why AU is a crucial part of

the learning culture in Canada. There is tremendous opportunity right now, I feel, for AU to help change the environment of post-secondary learning, both in Canada and beyond. The dialogue of what learning as a whole means for us living the 21st century, especially now because of technology, needs to open up.

If you could easily acquire one superpower, what would it be?

The ability to not be afraid try new things—and be good at them!

If you were trapped on a tropical island, what 3 things would you bring?

A toothbrush, lots of paper and writing utensils, and a good bed (I'm very practical that way!).

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

I try to be an encourager of others. I love listening to other peoples' stories, because we all have our own unique and interesting story to tell. We are all "doing life" together so I have learned that instead of putting each other down, we'd all do so much better if we would build each other up.

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

I have had a lot of hard knocks in life. I look back and I think, how did I survive all that? I've learned to never, ever give up. There is always a way through the hard stuff, but it's not often quick or easy.

What do you think about e-texts?

I've been lucky that I (fingers crossed!) haven't come across them yet. If I did, I would be extremely unhappy. I don't have an e-reader for my recreational reading and do not intend to get one. To me, print books are still relevant.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

It's been variable. I find that all of them tend to just let the student get on with what they're doing and it's up to the students to seek out that interaction. The tutors I've had so far don't tend to be proactive but some tutors are more engaging than others. I find communication between students and tutors needs to be improved in general; perhaps by use of more discussion forums online, or conference calls, or whatever. I feel more engagement would greatly benefit the educational experience for students.

Where has life taken you so far?

As mentioned before, I lived in Northern England—mostly in a town called Warrington, which is between Manchester and Liverpool—for a dozen years. We didn't get to travel in Europe that much, though, which is something I regret. My husband and I were just starting out so we were always saving up for something. I also had to work weekends so it was hard to take the time off. We are starting to see more of Canada and the US now and I hope that can continue. I'd rather spend money on experiences rather than "stuff."

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

I always have a few books on the go. Among my current ones, *I Am Malala*, by Malala Yousafzai. It was a Christmas present but I'm only just finding the time to get to it. I'm also re-reading *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot. I generally prefer non-fiction over fiction.

Final question: what do you most hope to do or accomplish this summer?

Summers always tend to revolve around activities for my son. But this summer I am making a conscious effort to take some time for some self-care. I bought some of those "colouring books for grownups" which I want to delve into, and I might teach myself some Zentangle (I am a non-drawer so this is something completely new for me.) Maybe I'll finally start working on my family genealogy project.

Interviewing Dr. Peter MacKinnon A Wonderful Mission

Bethany Tynes



Dr. Peter MacKinnon is the interim president of Athabasca University. With a new NDP government and the recent report about AU's financial vulnerability, you can imagine he's a fairly busy guy. Fortunately for *The Voice Magazine*, Bethany Tynes managed to get a few minutes with him to conduct this interview.

Dr. MacKinnon, you have an incredible list of career achievements – would you be able to tell students how you first came to be involved with Athabasca University?

In early 2014, the university had just gone through a search process for a full-term president, and that process was not successful. The board asked me to come to Athabasca as an interim president, and, you know, what really intrigued me about the possibility was the mission of the university as an open university and an online university, but particularly as an open university, it basically said to people "look, whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever your background, university education is possible at Athabasca!" That appealed to me, so I took the job.

Is there anything in particular that you hope to accomplish as AU's Interim President?

Well, naturally, your first focus is to bring about the conditions that will enable a successful search for the next full-term president. So whatever it is that compromised the search the first time, you want to make sure that's addressed. Naturally at a time like this when there are enrollment challenges or other issues, you want to do what you can to help the university. It's a very important and unique institution and you want to do what you can to help the university, so that's really how I see my job.

Are you able to comment on whether there is a presidential search currently underway?

Well I think that certainly a key feature of the sustainability report, for me at least, and I think for the institution, is to get clarity around the circumstances of the university to make progress—particularly with Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education, the ministry responsible for universities and colleges, and to gain sufficient clarity around the stability and the future of the university—to allow the search to go forward. I think we're partly there. The picture is, as yet, incomplete. I think we're making progress and having the kinds of conversations that we need to have. The university board is responsible for conducting the search, but I think we're making progress in creating conditions in which the board can continue the search and identify the next full-term president.

You also briefly mentioned the task force report, and it put forward four main options (refocusing to serve Albertans first, emphasizing efficiencies, federation with another institution, or affiliations with other organizations). Are there any of these that strike you as being particularly good news for AU students?

Well, I think that there's plenty of good news for students. And those options aren't intended to be definitive, final, and exhaustive, but you want to have a disciplined conversation around the future of the university. There are all kinds of rumours, there's all kinds of speculation, there are all kinds of anecdotal comments about what the future holds, but the task force report was intended to provoke the beginning of a disciplined conversation around the future of the university. And that conversation doesn't just take place within the university; it does

take place with government, and potentially with others. But I think there are a lot of things in those options. A careful reading of them—and I think one of the problems is that these reports are not always read before they're commented upon—but, obviously effectiveness and efficiencies, and we're at work on those, but can we do better there? There are limits, of course, but can we do better there?

You know, I think that Alberta and Canada should be more ambitious about the prospects for open, online education. You see that one of the appendices attached to the task force report talks a bit about the Open University in the United Kingdom and about Open Universities Australia. I think Alberta could put forward a more ambitious face to Canada, and Canada to the world, for online, open education. I'd like to see that. I think that it would be great for Athabasca University because we'd be a natural leader there. I think there's tremendous potential, and I hope that we can see progress.

You mentioned working with government; has the recent change of government in Alberta had any impact on this work or the university's future?

It's early to tell, it's early to tell. We have had some encouraging signs of interest and concern, so yes. In terms of the ministry, we continue to work primarily through the public servants in the ministry, and those conversations have started and are, I think, good conversations. So we'll see as time goes by. I would be optimistic about the possibilities of the conversations going forward.

You mentioned working with public service; have you had the opportunity to meet with Minister Sigurdson yet?

I've got a request in to meet with her. As you can imagine, the list of requested meetings is a long list, but I have requested a meeting and I have renewed the request, and I'm hopeful that sometime – who knows, maybe in late July or sometime in August, that there will be the opportunity to sit down with the Minister personally and brief her on the situation. Other people at the university no doubt have opportunities to talk with her as well, and certainly we encourage conversations on the part of all who have channels of communication into the government to utilize them constructively and to urge attention to our circumstances.

Do you anticipate any changes to the post-secondary funding model, or specifically to AU's funding, under the new government?

Well, do I anticipate? I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful because I think that is part of the picture. A careful reading of the task force report would inform readers that this university is quite unique in terms of its funding circumstances, and it has not worked to its advantage. Thirty years ago, more than 80% of the university's operating cost was supported by government, now it's around 30% - obviously something has been happening to our funding. That's the lowest of all public institutions as a percentage of operating cost, the lowest of all public institutions, and lower than two of the five independent institutions. Some of that reflects the demographics, with the out of province students, but my heavens, it's a very, very challenging set of circumstances in which to work, believe me.

One of the options in the report was, essentially, to find efficiencies within the university. The university has done quite a bit of belt-tightening over the past few years – for example, after the 2013 budget cuts, 113 positions were eliminated, and when the etext rollout was originally presented to the board, it projected an annual savings of \$1 million. How realistic is it that sufficient efficiencies can be found to offset the financial challenges the university faces?

I think that's a great question. Again, we say in the report, we acknowledge that we have, in fact, engaged in incrementalism a lot, and we may be reaching its limits, but at the same time, we shouldn't ignore all the possibilities, and if we can identify other efficiencies in some of our process that will advance sustainability,

great. But there are limits, as you point out, and we asked the question of whether we are getting close to those limits with all that has gone on over the last few years.

Are there any particular areas where you might see a potential for future efficiencies?

You know, I think I'm going to wait for the reports on that. We have asked the deans to lead on the academic side of our processes; we've got deans in whom we've got great confidence, and we want them to lead, in which, on the academic side, in the programs we offer, in the courses that we offer, in the student services that we have, to help us identify the possibilities. I wouldn't want to anticipate what those might be in advance. But we know that over time, some of our courses become dated. Over time, some of our programs need to be adjusted. Have we exhausted the possibilities and the potential there? That remains to be seen and we'll look forward to the leadership of our deans on that.

In terms of the more business side of the organization, I think we'll probably rely on some external assistance to help us, because, sometimes, fresh eyes can see what we don't see. So these processes are underway, and I'm hopeful that they will yield whatever results are out there, but I wouldn't want to judge what those could be in advance.

And were there any options in the report that you feel could be challenging to AU students, or to certain pockets of students? I know the out of province students would obviously be concerned about refocusing to serve Albertans first...

Right. And by the way, I think that would diminish our university. I think the report was clear about that.

So, shifting away from the report, there have been rumours swirling around over the years about the potential for AU to create a distance-based law school. As you are a lawyer and law professor, do you think that that would ever be possible, or something that AU would be able to look at?

I think it's a really intriguing possibility, and we have made some progress already. There are AU faculty members that have been doing some excellent background work on the possibility and it has been greeted positively by General Faculties Council and by the Board, and they are continuing to develop the possibility into a full proposal I believe. I think it's an interesting one, and I think as well that it's one that will require some collaboration between Athabasca and one of the campus-based law schools in Alberta, with U of A or U of C, because there are some things for which we would want our students on site, so a collaborative, blended model, I think would make a lot of sense. It's a possibility, it's moving forward, and we're excited about the potential.

Is there anything else you think students should know about the future of AU?

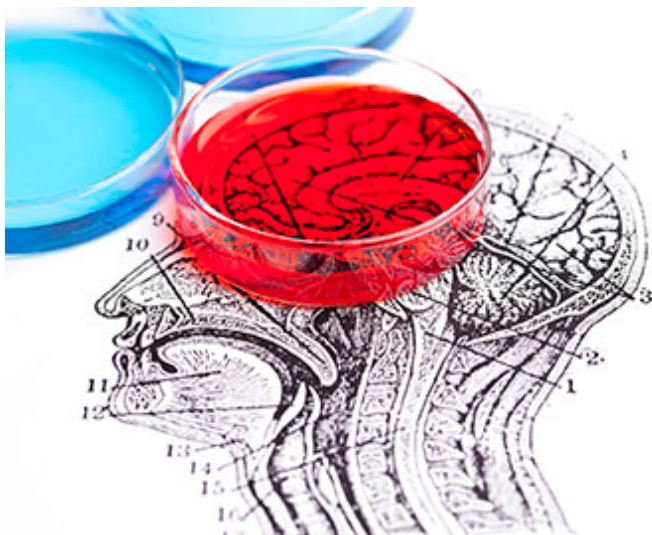
What I emphasize over and over again is that Athabasca University's great strength – its wonderful, unique strength – is its openness. The reality is that Athabasca University makes available education to students who would otherwise find it very difficult or impossible to access. That is a wonderful mission and it is an increasingly important mission; it's important to Alberta and to Canada. Athabasca University has been a pioneer and I believe can continue to be a leader in that sphere. And that makes it a tremendously important Albertan and Canadian institution. That's what I believe, and I believe it passionately.

Bethany Tynes completed her MA in Integrated Studies through AU, and is a Canadian politics junkie.

Primal Numbers

GMO Grasshoppers

S.D. Livingston



Insects might not be popular at the cottage but they're steadily gaining ground in the kitchen. Touted as a low-cost, high-protein solution to feeding the world's growing population, they've even been called the next new superfood. The downside? Genetically modified insects could create a plague of superbugs.

Enjoying bugs as part of your diet, even as a delicacy, is nothing new. The ancient Greeks snacked on insects, and this *National Geographic* [article](#) explains how Paiute Indians hunted for crickets. Insects are a complete source of protein (they provide all of the essential amino acids), and some species even

provide more protein per ounce than popular choices like beef or chicken. They're also a great source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Squeamish about crunching on a fried grasshopper? You can even get your bug protein in the form of powder. And if that's not enough to tempt you, consider some of the facts from The Farmed Insect [site](#). A hundred grams of termite gives you 35.5 grams of iron while the same amount of hamburger offers a paltry 1.9 grams.

"Mini-livestock" farming also uses far less of the planet's precious resources. It takes over 7,500 litres of water to produce 500 grams of beef, while producing the same amount of edible insects requires just five litres of water.

It sounds like a win-win, especially when you consider that there are close to a million known types of living insects, and an estimated 200 million insects per person in the world.

But there's something else to consider, and that's our propensity for tinkering with nature. Genetically modified crops are a hotly debated topic, and many regions have either partial or complete bans on the import or cultivation of GMO foods. For instance, Russia banned the growth of GMOs in 2014 and restricted imports until 2024, and Milan, Rome, and Tuscany are just a few of the regions in Italy that have banned GMO crops.

Yet the GMO push continues, with everything from corn to castor beans having its DNA altered in a lab. Science hasn't brought GMO beef to the table yet, but many of the crops that your bacon or steak are raised on have been genetically modified.

And insects aren't immune to having their genes altered. As *The Atlantic* [reports](#), the company Oxitec has released some 70 million genetically modified mosquitoes into neighbourhoods in the Cayman Islands and Brazil, with Florida their next intended target.

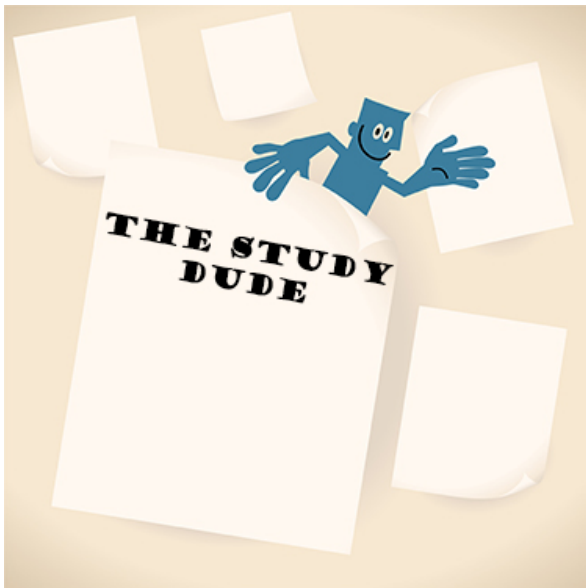
The mosquitoes have been bred with a "kill switch" to make them sterile and prevent the transmission of tropical diseases. A good idea, but there's simply no telling what the unintended consequences might be.

And you can bet that more GMO insects will be created if demand for the creepy crawly crops goes up. Crickets, grasshoppers, cockroaches, and countless other varieties could be bred to grow faster or larger, with more insect-meat to satisfy consumers. They could also, like the Oxitec mosquitoes, be given feed that contains common antibiotics like tetracycline.

That's because, whether it's a cattle farm or a cricket farm, any operation that mass produces thousands or millions of animals in close quarters has to contend with disease, and antibiotics have long been used in animal feed to prevent or combat the problem. And that's helped create antibiotic-resistant superbugs, as this [NPR article](#) explains.

Could insects truly be the superfood of tomorrow? You bet. But there are very real issues of GMO insects in our food chain. So before you reach for that package of chipotle-flavoured cockroaches, check the label. You might just want to choose the organic oak slug instead.

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.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend Help! For Writers

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to know how to find inspiration for your next paper.

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 article peers into the mindset of the journalistic expert, Roy Peter Clark, in his groundbreaking book *Help! For Writers: 210 Solutions to the Problems Every Writer Faces*.

How to Master Language

My math scores flew off the ceiling at university, but my vocabulary needed work. In junior high school an instructor advised us to not look up words but try to glean their meaning from the text; thus, my dictionary grew cobwebs. Now, I constantly consult my partner, a walking dictionary, on new words and look up words on a frequent basis just to better my vocabulary. Also, I started a new process to build vocabulary, which consists of reading two pages of the dictionary nightly. I also write down words I don't know in the back of the book I'm reading and later look them up. Sometimes, if I feel ambitious, I will make dictionary term cue cards on dictionary.com, which takes about a half hour to an hour, depending on the day.

However, Roy Peter Clark's tactics for honing language skills blew me away:

- Read dictionaries and read lots of books for the sheer enjoyment of it. Such a habit will augment your vocabulary.
- Whenever you entertain a specialist, such as a mechanic, ask him or her about what they do with the aim of gleaning snippets of a specialized vocabulary.
- By stepping out of your comfort zone and using a metaphor, the words in the metaphor can lead to other similar and novel words. For instance, if you use the metaphor of a pyramid, that can lead to other words to sprinkle in your paper, such as pharaoh and tomb. By following a metaphorical path in parts of your writing, you enable a new, energized vocabulary to enliven your writing.
- When you try to capture a specialized vocabulary, consider it jargon if it's from a professional and consider it slang if it's from an outcast.
- When writing an anecdote or story, pay close attention to visual and other sensory details in the environment you wish to capture in writing.
- Pay close attention to the origin of words by buying a dictionary that outlines word origins. Look up words you don't know, and ponder the origins to great length. Your vocabulary will spike in the long run if you keep this practice up.
- When you refer to products, try to use a brand name. Brand names enrich your writing with a unique characteristic. *Ed note: There are some concerns about using brand names, see The Writer's Toolbox: A Company Affair, Parts III and IV.*

What to Do about Clichés

I can't tell you exactly what a cliché is. Some clichés are obvious; others rest on a borderline. I took an IQ test, and I think that somewhere in life, I misinterpreted major clichés. For instance, it took me an eternity to figure out that the expression is "toot your horn" rather than "tout your horn," and I always perplexed over the saying "hit the nail on the head," often inserting a hammer in the wrong place. If ever I try to use a cliché, I tend to get it wrong.

Not knowing the actual meaning of clichés might not burden me in life, but in literature, if you know the rules, you can break them effectively, and breaking them is something that Roy Peter Clark recommends you do.

At university, one professor makes his living off of clichés. He prides himself for his ability to draw almost any cliché out of his arsenal and string together an academic essay that chains cliché after cliché. Somehow he gets published.

Roy Peter Clark sets us straight on how and when to use clichés in our academic writing:

- Try to use only picturesque and sensory-evoking clichés. Avoid the rest.
- Try to present only one cliché per essay.
- Twist the cliché by changing it up or reframing it in the opposite meaning. For instance, the *early bird gets the worm* can become the *early grump gets the worms*.
- Another strategy for changing up a cliché is to take a cliché and write down similar phrases until you find something that stands out.
- Know what the cliché means. Be sure to look up cliché origins
- Google the cliché. If 118,000 search results or less return, then use the cliché. If significantly more search results arise, the cliché staggers with overuse: avoid at all cost.

What to Do If You Hate Your Assignment

When planning assignments, I often chose the most difficult option just to differentiate myself. I once took on an assignment to compare similarities of two different political frames of thought. Our professor stated straightaway that comparing the two would deem a most difficult task and advised us to avoid it and opt instead to contrast the two. I didn't listen, though.

Without ever having written a political science essay, I took on the most challenging option and spent the next month tied to my computer chair making a table of two columns, one column per political point-of-view. With painstaking care, I managed to isolate about nineteen similarities between the two frames of thought. I ended up with the second highest mark in the class, pleased as Obama after a long-winded speech that tenacity pulled me through.

Challenging yourself is one way to make a dull assignment interesting. Another way, I discovered, involves adding a creative component to the assignment. I took speeches, turned them into part art demonstrations and part voice over, and made short films out of them. One professor allowed me to write a script instead of an essay. Beware such assignments, however. I took the smart route with the assignment and made sure almost every sentence cited research. My grade reflected the effort I made in ensuring the creative component cited as much, if not more, than a regular essay.

Our friend, Roy Peter Clark, has some jewel ideas for making your dreaded assignment enjoyable:

- Narrow the lame assignment topic to something that interests you. For instance, if you have to write about mother's day, you might write about "a frat house mother who had no children of her own" (p. 29). Yes, you can narrow the story topic into something compelling.
- Ask your professor if you can transform your assignment into a creative project, whether it manifests into a poem, a song, a play, an artistic piece, a multimedia performance, or live performance, and so forth.
- Brainstorm with friends about ways you can make an assignment fascinating. For instance, if you need to write about war, consider writing about military dogs. (Yes, I just saw the film called Max about a military dog. Neat dog and the premise of a good story.)
- Look up the general subject topic on Google to assess what the first twenty lines or so reveal. These twenty lines will not only help you narrow the topic but also help you find resources and people to interview.
- Keep a portfolio of potential story topics. Anything that piques your interest can be developed into a fascinating story.

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

Clark, Roy Peter. (2011). *Help! For Writers: 210 Solutions to the Problems Every Writer Faces*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

This Summer's Secret to Essay-Writing Motivation

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Would you write an essay if you were offered hundreds of dollars?

If you're like me, you find essay-writing tedious and agonizing. I spend more time avoiding an essay than writing it (I became so proficient at this, it prompted *Essay Avoidance: The Fine Art of Procrastination*, my first article for *The Voice Magazine*.) My loathing for essay-writing is even more astonishing when you consider that I actually *like* writing. Just not essays.

Writing essays for grades is one thing, but what if you could write an essay and earn one free AU course? You can, if you're the winner of the *Write Site's 10th Anniversary Academic Essay Contest*. How's that for motivation?

Athabasca University's Write Site is a resource-rich service for students. The Write Site itself offers many writing tools to assist students with academic writing: writing guides, drills and exercises, and tutorials, for example. Staff at the Write Site can also give you feedback and coaching on your writing before you submit it for grades.

In celebration of 10 years of serving AU students, the Write Site is holding an Academic Essay Writing Contest in conjunction with the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Details were forwarded to AUSU early in July and should be posted on the Write Site soon. Currently, you can find them in the faculty of business website. Here is a summary to get you started.

The prizes. Let's start with the good stuff, to get you motivated! There are two prizes of one paid AU course each. One will be awarded to the winning entry from an undergraduate student, and the other to the winning entry from a graduate student. One runner up in each category (grad or undergrad) will receive a certificate of honourable mention.

Who can enter. Any student registered at AU. One entry per student.

What you have to write. An essay on a topic of academic interest, written in traditional essay format complete with an introduction and a conclusion. You can write an essay just for the contest, but you are permitted to enter an essay that you previously submitted for marks in a course. (Hint: check the comments you received from your tutor on a marked essay and make appropriate revisions before using the essay for the contest.) For undergrad students, the essay should be 800 to 1000 words; for graduate students, 1000 to 1500 words.

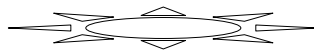
How to enter. Send your essay to the Write Site Coordinator, Linda McCloud-Bondoc by e-mail at lbondoc@athabascau.ca. Entries must be received no later than midnight, September 1, 2015. In the e-mail's subject line, indicate "Write Site 10th Anniversary Contest" and the category you are entering ("undergraduate" or "graduate"; you may not enter both.) Include your essay as an attachment, and put your AU student number in the body of the e-mail. Any missing information will disqualify your entry.

Judging. Just like a real essay, submissions to this contest will be "judged on choice and originality of topic, clarity of expression and thinking, thesis development, organization of ideas, essay structure and style, and adherence to grammar and punctuation conventions." Winners will be notified by September 30, 2015.

It's not often that students can get a tangible, valuable reward for writing an essay. Perhaps this time you can. With a free AU course up for grabs, it almost pays you to write an essay. For the winning undergraduate entry, the value is almost a dollar per word.

September 1 is coming up quickly, so dust off one of your better essays, or get started on a new one. Don't forget to visit the [Write Site](#) for essay-writing tips. The Write Site's 10th Anniversary Essay Contest might just be the best motivation you'll ever find for writing an essay.

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



Riding the Storm

Deanna Roney



I needed to take a break from the books and get back into the wilderness, surround myself with nature, and lose myself for a while. Lucky for me, my Mom is always ready and willing to head out into the wild, so last week we loaded our kayaks into the back of the truck and headed for a remote lake.

There were a few obstacles which stood in our way, one being that access to this lake was on bush roads: active logging roads which rely on two-way radios for traffic control. While this lake does have a public access campsite and it is not mandatory to carry a two-way radio to access it, it is still recommended, as meeting a logging truck on a narrow dirt road can be dangerous, especially when they don't know you are coming.

We decided to push on regardless, knowing full well that we may have to hit the ditch, but at least they were not large ditches.

When we arrived at the lake we looked down toward the other end to see that the mountains were all but lost in the dark clouds that loomed. Unwilling to turn around, we decided to launch the boats and head toward the storm, knowing the day may be cut short if it blew our way. Pulling the kayaks from the truck we loaded our gear and carried them to the water's edge, dodging little frogs which hopped frantically away at each footstep.

I got into my kayak, securing the spray skirt to protect me from any waves that may break over the bow, and pushed off shore, the feeling of weightlessness overcoming me; I felt peace spread through me as soon as the kayak lifted from the bottom of the lake. We paddled leisurely down the lake, toward the black sky, the sun beaming down on us. The clouds seemed to be keeping pace with us, the blue sky followed us down the lake keeping us basked in sun, while the clouds swirled on either side.

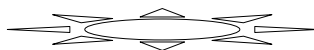
The water level here is higher than it was at this time a couple years ago. Yet, all the other lakes and streams seem to be drying up and desperate for some moisture. We found a small gravel beach to have lunch on, but, as we sat and enjoyed our sandwich and tea, we noticed that the waves were growing and the wind was beginning to pick up. We had only just arrived but already it was time to go.

We launched into the heart of the storm and headed back to the safety of the truck only five kilometers away. The wind whipped the lake, swirling the water, testing our balance and skill. We rode the waves and fought our way through, enjoying every moment of the rollercoaster.

By the time we got back to the bay where the truck was parked the wind had eased, the lake had calmed, and once again the sun broke through. We heard thunder rolling in the distance and could see clouds moving in, but, for now, it was calm.

I thought of my studies: how I had been through a stormy patch, where I had to fight for each unit, assignment, and word. I thought that if I had become stressed out when the storm blew in while we were kayaking on the lake, if I had gotten worried and scared, it would have made the journey back much more difficult. Instead, I enjoyed the ride, I took the opportunity to further test what my boat can handle and took great pleasure in the spray of the waves, the feel of a wave breaking over the side of the boat and submerging my arm. Perhaps, if I were to translate that attitude to my studies, the hard times wouldn't seem so bad. Rather, they would be an opportunity to test my resolve, to see that no obstacle is too great to overcome as long as I have enough will to get there, that getting there with the right attitude will make the journey that much more enjoyable.

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



The Fit Student Releasing Exam Anxieties and Stress

Marie Well



Do exams overwhelm you until your mind turns spacey and your awareness clouds? Do you long for a solution to those stressful nights hammering on the computer, deadlines looming overhead? Do you want to view education as fun and exciting and revel in, not run from, the experience of learning?

If you do, then the book *Performing Under Pressure: The Science of Doing Your Best When it Matters Most* has much to reveal to your sensibilities. In this multipart write-up I aim to capture the best of best strategies for managing pressure situations, as outlined in the book. Already I've implemented a number of the strategies, and they work magnificently at countering some of the negative mental vocalizations we make throughout the day.

Performing Under Pressure towers in the top two best reads on anxiety and stress management I've yet encountered, matched in quality only

by the book *Buddha's Brain*, which I intend to cover in a later article. These books help guarantee you stay at the peak of your mental game, seldom to falter.

At the outset, the book offers great advice, including the view that your natural tendencies of coping with stress and anxiety can alter dramatically with mental training. Everything in the book you can teach yourself, implement, and grow from immediately. In this part of the write-up, I will cover four of the book's key strategies for getting yourself in mental shape for withstanding pressure: confidence, optimism, tenacity, and enthusiasm.

Confidence

Periods of my life marked themselves with high level of confidence, while other times of my life were moments of waning confidence. I used to cycle at top speeds down major thoroughways with no hesitation. I appeared in a documentary film unabashedly. I performed in front of audiences, caught up in the excitement of the moment. These experiences presented moments of high confidence. Yet, as the years passed, my confidence diminished. Everyday fears limited my choices. I developed fears of cycling in traffic and of performing. Yet, the good news, according to Hendrie Weisinger and J. P. Pawliw-Fry, heralds: confidence is malleable.

Weisinger and Pawliw-Fry say that even the best of musicians suffer anxiety when on stage, which confidence can curtail. Assuming a posture, such as holding your arms up to the sky with your chin up, your chest out, and your legs apart, stimulates confidence and can derail any anxiety that may arise such as before a performance or even an exam (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry). Not only that, but visualizing our victories in advance can help improve our performance under pressure; furthermore, relishing small achievements, such as a compliment you might have received, can add to your performance (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry).

Tenacity

The stick-to-it attitude oozes of tenacity. Some people ignite with passion to pursue a task, but, in the end, tenacity determines whether the task will end successfully or not. I held an event for a charity that required a lot of tenacity from a sole organizer. I sprung out of bed at the wee hours of the morning, chomping at the bit to get the work done. When the going got tough, and people around me insisted I quit, I ploughed through, determined to make the event a success. And what a success it was. With the ability to avoid the rounds of negative feedback, I persevered and reached the goal.

Don't we all have moments like that, when our grit determines our fate or lack of therein?

Weisinger and Pawliw-Fry suggest that tenacity builds on our establishing of goals. Dwell on your goals. Savour them. Note behaviours in others you wish to emulate, and make adoption of those behaviours part of your goals (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry). Also, stay in the moment by closing your eyes, regulating your breath to the optimal level, opening your eyes and scanning the visuals of your environment, closing your eyes again, and then listening to the sounds in your environment—these strategies will foster your ability to be in the moment. Lastly, don't see issues as problems; see issues as opportunities to grow.

Optimism

My partner is the eternal optimist. His smile radiates to the moon and back. His eyes twinkle with a light and love that makes others take a second look. The touch of his shoulder sends warm energy vibrating throughout my being. Just sitting in his presence makes me feel content, protected, and loved. Nothing seems to phase his sunny disposition.

When he vacates for professional reasons, my mood drops remarkably. He's like medicine for the hungry soul. When he's gone, I count down the minutes until I can hear his voice on the other end of the phone line. When he returns, suddenly my mood lifts to the highest plateaus it's ever reached in my lifetime. Soaking in his optimism gives me hope for all of my dreams. The days with him mark the greatest moments of my life.

Optimism reaps plenty of rewards, both for the optimist and those around him or her. Optimism is a buffer against anxiety.

Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry say that optimism can stem from harnessing a vocabulary with positive, inspirational words. Tell yourself, "I can pass that exam." Also, appreciate those people and everyday events in your life (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry). Savour them to get the full depth of their wonder. Wake up each morning infused with expectations for positive outcomes. These activities will buffer you against anxiety during your high stress event.

Enthusiasm

My step-father exudes enthusiasm. At sporting events, he claps his hands, cheers brashly, and jumps up and down in excitement. In group dynamics, he often assumes a leadership position as one of the boys, even though he may be forty years older than the rest of the group. He bellows his laughter, talks at high volumes, and flexes his muscles to accentuate his self-claimed role of alpha male. He speeds down the highway with a whoopla, as real men drive fast, according to him.

While I don't agree with some of these behaviours, I do see the need for me to ramp up my enthusiasm to ward off the anxieties and stressors of everyday life. In the department of enthusiasm, I could learn a great deal from my step-father.

According to Weisinger and Pawliw-Fry, you should try to link your work or studies to a higher purpose, as this fosters enthusiasm and mitigates anxiety. Also, just start acting enthusiastic by clapping your hands at highlight moments, laughing from your belly, letting out a cheer, patting someone on the back, or smiling broadly; the more you act enthusiastic, the more you will naturally feel enthusiastic. You might engage in some enjoyable activity before your presentations or big pressure moment (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry); specifically, activities could include seeing a show, going out for dinner, or reading an entertaining book. Singing, dancing, and walking also inspire creativity—particularly singing or listening to fast-paced music that gets you energized. Lastly, speak enthusiastically by using positive, uplifting, emotional words like "That's brilliant"; speak with energized power in your voice; inflect your voice for emphasis (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry).

All of the above tactics help you energize and enliven your life, serving as buffers against anxiety when your high-pressure performance event, such as an exam, finally comes around.

References

Weisinger, Hendrie, & Pawliw-Fry, J.P. (2015). *Performing Under Pressure: The Science of Doing Your Best When It Matters Most*. New York, NY: Crown Business.

The Writer's Toolbox

Self Editing in Style, Part II

Christina M. Frey



You're ready to edit your book or paper, and you're convinced you need a style sheet to ensure everything's treated consistently throughout the manuscript. You've got your Word document—or notebook—all set, and you're ready to go. But what exactly should you be tracking in your style sheet, and how do you apply it in your manuscript? This week we'll look at the surprisingly broad category of spelling and capitalization. You'll be amazed at the mistakes you didn't know you were making.

What's in a word?

One of the most obvious uses of a style sheet is to ensure you treat words the same way on page 343 as you do on page 11—so you'll want to start off by listing the words your manuscript spells uniquely, or at least that are open to possible inconsistent spelling.

Won't Spell Check take care of that? Not necessarily; you might have unique spelling preferences (Canadian spelling, anyone?), or there might be industry-specific terms you want to use. You might

also have a situation where two alternate spellings are correct, but you have a preference that you want applied consistently—either generally ("doughnut" instead of "donut") or in a particular context ("further" vs. "farther" comes to mind). Spell Check may not mark them as misspelled, but the inconsistency will make your manuscript look poorly edited.

Capitalization factors in here too, since Spell Check rarely points out capitalization preferences. What capitalization rules are you following—or not following? Are there any special rules unique to your book? What about abbreviations? "OK" and "okay" are both, well, okay, but you'll want to choose one and spell it the same way every time it comes up.

Compounds and hyphenation should also be covered—believe me, it's easy to apply hyphenation inconsistently. When in doubt, check your dictionary for your preferred spelling, and get these compounds into your style sheet to keep yourself on track. A caveat, though: hyphenation can be tricky because some compounds are hyphenated before a noun but not after it, at least if you follow US style. Don't apply global changes to anything, and make your individual decisions carefully. When in doubt, ask an editor.

Have you made up words? You'd be surprised how easy it is to slip up and misspell words of your own creation. Foreign words are another must-have in the style sheet. Characters and places we'll cover in more depth in a future installment, but their names should appear on the style sheet's word list too.

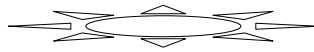
While you don't normally think of numbers as a spelling issue, they fall under the general umbrella here. Are you writing out all numerals under twelve, like *The Voice* does? What about street numbers? How will you style phone numbers—parentheses or periods? Consistency imparts professionalism, and inconsistent numbering tends to create an amateur vibe.

Now What?

You've gotten down your preferred spellings of strange, unique, or easily confused words; the next step is to check that you applied them throughout the book. Word's Find & Replace function is a good way to check alternate spellings against your preferred one. Another program is PerfectIt, a staple for many copyeditors (I couldn't live without it myself). PerfectIt searches your manuscript for words spelled multiple ways and flags each instance, allowing you to easily navigate to check, approve, or change the spelling. While it's not a free program, its Consistency Checker is downloadable on a free trial basis, so if you've got just one manuscript to go through, it's a must-have. If you'll be doing multiple edits or several manuscripts, splurge and buy it—the customizability alone makes it worth its cost.

Next week we'll look at how grammar and punctuation preferences might get worked into a style sheet, and why you'd want something so specific and technical in there. In the meantime, get your manuscript's style sheet started with not-so-basic spelling and capitalization.

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](#).



The Mindful Bard

The Wolfpack

Wanda Waterman



What Happens When Granola Crunchers Can't Get Out of New York

Film: *The Wolfpack*

Director: Crystal Moselle

"Hide away folk family
Or else someone's gonna get ya
(someone's gonna get ya)
Someone's gonna get ya
Hide away folk family
Better hide away
Better hide away ..."
- They Might Be Giants

Oscar Angulo is a Peruvian who met his American wife, Susanne, while he was working as a tour guide in Macchu Pichu and she was living the life of a carefree bohemian. He had just converted to Hare Krishna. After they married he tried to imitate his god by having ten children, but Susanne could only have seven. He gave them all Sanskrit names: the six boys, Mukunda, Narayana, Govinda, Bhagavan, Krisna (Glenn), and Jagadesh (Eddie), and their sister Visnu.

Oscar is, by his own description, a rebel, a rugged individualist, an anti-establishment counterculture hero, a maverick, an enlightened being, a leash for lesser minds. A god.

By what looks like an unbelievable stroke of luck, his wife is a licensed teacher and so New York actually pays her to teach her own kids. (This may have more to say about the government's jaded acceptance of the shocking incompetence of New York schools than about the generosity of the state's social safety net, however.)

Thus, Oscar is handed the luxury of choosing whether or not to work. He decides that not working will be his personal act of protest, and so he sits alone in his room every day, watching television, drinking a little more each day, and refusing to let his wife or children out of their 16th-story four-bedroom apartment in a New York City housing project. It's like the Lady of Shalott lives in a high-rise, but she's a guy and there are six of her.

The boys keep themselves busy, by, among other things, re-enacting scenes from *Reservoir Dogs* for a home movie. They dress in dapper suits and shades and carry fake handmade pistols. They put a tremendous amount of work into these productions, from transcribing the entire script to copying even subtle gestures, and they act out every scene with an infectious enthusiasm.

One of the boys points out that movies often portray a "shy, lonely kid," like himself. Such solitaires are heroes within a culture that values individualism above community, and this has been for him a means of affirming his personal identity even in the tight confines of the "wolfpack."

Director Crystal Moselle met the boys by accident and spent a lot of time with them, not knowing for a full year that they had spent the first fourteen years of their family life locked up. She says in an interview with *Variety*:

"They started revealing little stories to me, and then Mukunda told me he had escaped the house once in a Michael Myers mask. That made me ask, 'Why would you have to do that?' It made me realize the story was more complex than I thought."

15-year-old Mukunda became the family's Rosa Parks when he donned the mask and began walking around the neighborhood--until someone called the police (it is New York, after all). When the police arrived, they were ready to take Mukunda back to his home, but he asked them to take him to a hospital instead. They took him to a ward for teens with psychological disturbances, and that was the beginning of his slow acclimatisation to the real world. It wasn't long after he was sent home that his brothers began their own little escapes.

Now that the boys are "out" some people think they ought to go to school, because that's supposed to be on the spectrum of normalcy. They want these creative, vibrant human beings, who've learned how to get along under extraordinary adversity, to join the ranks of morose teens who sit silently together while messaging each other on their smart phones in an English that's even more daft than the English they speak, in a place where teachers turn their weary eyes away from soul-crushing bullying and sometimes don't even bother to teach.

"Over my dead body," says Mukunda. "They won't make me go to a real school." Is he internalising Daddy's ideology or simply facing a grim reality?

The mother, Susanne, is a tragic heroine, someone who aimed for the stars but fell crashing to earth. Almost as constricted as the boys, she was able to leave the house on occasion because of medical emergencies. She endured physical and mental abuse at the hands of her husband and devoted her entire life to raising and educating her boys while having no friends, no contact with her family, and no time for her personal interests.

This was the smart, young, flower-child that had grown up on a farm, received a university degree, and toured

South America. Even now she seems utterly *normal*. Even the way she defends the decision to keep the boys at home to teach them sounds so sane and is exactly why I, and many other parents during this era, chose to educate our children at home. Yes, it's true that public schools don't provide healthy socialisation, and it's true that New York is a dangerous place. But all this sugar-coats the wackiness of this home, which she doesn't seem ready to face.

Her great regret is that her children hadn't had the green fields that she'd grown up with. The thought of it brings her to tears. "But it didn't happen," she says sadly, as if she'd expected it to "just happen."

She is clearly a wonderful person, so it's hard to dismiss her as a helpless doormat. Also, her sons are so loving and respectful when they speak of her that you can only love her more and try to think of ways to help her. The director became close friends with Susanne while the movie was being made, and one can clearly see why.

Despite all this, the ending suggests that love really does cover a multitude of sins. Amen.

The Wolfpack manifests seven 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's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

This article owes much to the indispensable research assistance of Bill Waterman.

Wanda also writes the blog [The Mindful Bard](#): The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AUSU Student Forums

In the Business and Administration course discussion forum, neomonkey has found out that his tutor is on vacation for over a month – the one he wants to do his exam in.

AthaU Facebook Group

Danielle wants to know what people's favorite and least favorite courses are, and why. Shannon asks about the timing for taking extensions, and Carla is looking for information on courses beyond AU such as Lynda.com

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: " Grouped Study Courses for #GrandPrairieRegionalCollege now updated. Deadline is still Aug 1 <http://ow.ly/Q2S37> ^HS." And retweets from Michael Shouldice:

come work with me at @AthabascaU Great entry level position:

<http://careers.athabascau.ca/jobs.php?reqid=2105>

Music Review

Til the Wheels Fall Off

Samantha Stevens



EP: *Till the Wheels Fall Off*

Artist: Shane Martin

I'll be honest, I am not a country fan. The genre has never really captured my attention or inspired me the way other musical genres have. But, despite the lack of country songs in my playlist, I have to admit that I did enjoy Shane Martin's latest EP, *Till the Wheels Fall Off*.

Shane began his music career in Minnesota and has played at some of the top music festivals in the US. He has played a stunning 175 live shows throughout the country, and doesn't appear to be slowing down.

Shane's music contains the typical sounds of country music: basic lyrics, light singing, twangy guitar, and

steady drums. His songs focus on life in the United States mid-West and his own personal experiences.

The seven tracks on the EP give listeners a wonderful sample of Shane's amazing, laid-back voice and ability to invoke feelings of sentimentality in his music. However, I did find that the songs were very repetitious. The chorus of each song seemed to be the main auditory focal point with little emphasis given to the main lyrics. I feel that this is a major weakness of Shane's music because it makes it easy for listeners to zone out and not give the music the deep regard that an EP should be given.

"I Am What I Am" is the opening, and best, track of the album. Although the chorus is still repeated frequently and louder than the rest of the lyrics, I do like how the song introduces listeners to Shane's history as a musician and his journey from his first guitar to being on the road and playing all over the US.

"Whatever Floats Your Boat" is light and funny with great words of wisdom. The music is generic with the same repetition, but the lyrics remind you to be true to yourself and do what gives your life meaning. In a way, the song provides support to those who may have broken from tradition, or refuse to live their life according to someone else's wishes.

"Georgia Peach" is a great example of Shane's potential and versatility. The track is still a country song, but there are elements of 80s and 90s soft rock. The soft rock inspiration is evident in the way the guitar is softly played in higher notes and combined with lightly tapped drums. I really enjoyed this hidden gem of a song.

Overall, I did enjoy Shane's *Till the Wheels Fall Off*, especially how the songs were inspired by real life experiences, but the over-repetition of the chorus in the songs prevented me from being entertained by the music. However, keep in mind that country music isn't really the typical genre that I listen to. So if you're a fan of it, or are looking for music to relax to, then I highly recommend checking out Shane's latest EP.

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

The Travelling Student The Giant Banana

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. This is the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program. In the last issue we settled down in Crescent Head, Australia for the night with hours of driving ahead of us the next day.

We woke up the next day with the sunrise and went for a quick morning swim. The area had transformed from the black night to sun reflecting off the water, and a handful of tourists had arrived to take photographs of the stunning view. After a few minutes I found a picnic table on the shore where I set up my laptop.

As Dylan swam I flipped through my e-commerce textbook, sipping on a cappuccino. Strangely, my regular drink (a plain black coffee) isn't available at 90% of stores in Australia. With a strong Italian influence, Australia has developed a distinct coffee culture. In the big cities coffee carts can be spotted downtown offering a variety of espresso drinks, including Australia's signature espresso drink the 'flat white' (now available at your local big chain coffee shop).

If you're in one of the many rural towns across Australia you'll find the best place to get coffee (aside from making it yourself) is the local bakery, but the main attraction at any Australian bakery is the meat pies. Next to vegemite, meat pies are the most iconic Australian cuisine. According to my unofficial guide, Dylan, even the smallest of Australian towns has bakery with meat pies.

I ordered an exceptionally good 'brekkie pie', at Crescent Head bakery which consisted of bacon, cheese, and eggs, best served with tomato sauce (which in fact tastes different from ketchup).

After breakfast, I packed my textbook and Dylan, his Casio camera. We started down the highway toward Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The time passed quickly, listening to music and watching the changing scenery as we drove. By the time we made it to Coffs Harbour, another 140km north, the air had become noticeably more humid. While the change was likely slow, the giant Banana (one of [Australia's many giant things](#)) at Coffs Harbour got me thinking about the fact that we'd entered a more tropical region of the country.

While summers are hot in the south, the north has only two seasons, and both are hot: the dry season and the wet season. I later found out that most sane people avoid the very north of Australia (our final destination) in the wet season, due to the intense heat and humidity.

We pulled up to the big banana at Coffs Harbour to park. Beside the banana was a building containing a restaurant, café, and information booth. A good combination since Dylan wanted to find a beach and I was in need of another cappuccino. As I waited for my order I fired up my laptop to stop in at my second home at my.athabascau.ca.

In Conversation

With Marlowe Grey, Part I

Wanda Waterman



Marlowe Grey is an alternative band based in Brooklyn, known for passionate vocal expression, sensitive soundscapes, and meticulous songwriting. They've just released "Sugar Plum Fairy," a preview track from their EP, Midnight in Brooklyn, which will be released this fall. The band will be following the EP with an LP in the next year.

Says the band's singer, songwriter, and guitarist Anthony John Pietro the song's title refers to old Beatles bootlegs in which John Lennon would start his takes by saying "sugar plum fairy, sugar plum fairy," instead of the traditional "one-two, one-two."

Recently Pietro took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about the role of music in his life, inspiring moments, and what it's like to share a studio with giant crickets.

The Role of Music

Music has been *the* reason I'm still active in modern society [laughter]. Good records and songs literally transitioned me on through and into adulthood. As a kid, I would steal records from the grown-ups to listen to at night over and over again.

I would sit in my parents' car after they got out with just the radio on, listening to Billy Joel's *The Stranger* or *Year of the Cat* by Al Stewart. The Beatles, of course, Led Zeppelin, even freaking Air Supply or the Bee Gees. I can't possibly count the number of times a great song literally stopped me in my tracks so I could hear it.

How I Learned to Work For What I Wanted

To be honest, I'm a working-class son born to an off-the-boat Italian immigrant father, and I didn't know about his hard times because he worked so hard to make sure our childhood was easier than his. But that also meant that I was no stranger to working for the things I wanted to do or be good at. So I'm an all-self-taught musician and trained by ear. I've have had my hands dirty and callused through practice, practice, practice.

Biggest influence? Clearly my father was, and still is, my biggest influence in every way. He passed away last year and that sucked hard. Yet he's still teaching me to appreciate things daily.

From Micro to Macro

I love the experience and process of creating from micro (a song lyric or part) to the macro (a finished album). For one, sitting with a guitar, rolling tape, and just letting melody and energy channel into some moody sketch

that usually becomes a Marlowe Grey song. Then taking that song to the band and adding or jamming on layers to breathe more life into that melodic, mostly structured, sketch. Then, finally, putting a cap on that sketch via a completed and mastered song and getting to sit back with a glass of wine or beer and just listen to it. And, each experience is so similar and so totally different, which is exciting because it's always kind of comfortable and yet new.

Hitchcock's *The Crickets*

I had the pleasure of being able to stay at our producer's studio when he was away in Europe a few years ago, and I found his secret stash. He doesn't smoke weed much (nor do I), but he had some and it was like 4:00 a.m.

So I smoked some and decided I was going to try to write some songs in the studio and see what I could come up with creatively. Because it was a basement and it was the middle of summer, there were these giant crickets there. Every now and again one would be hopping around in the middle of the floor on the carpet while I was rolling tape. You can imagine what being in a dark studio at 4:00 a.m. and high as kite might be like for me ... I swear to this day, those crickets were coming to get me!

(To be continued)

Click of the Wrist

To Beer

To beer or not to beer? It's hardly surprising that International Beer Day (August 7) falls around the dog days of summer, when the need for refreshment is at its greatest. Grab a cold one from the fridge and celebrate with this week's links!

A Taste for the Weird

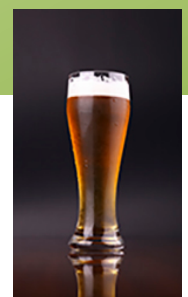
If craft breweries no longer excite you, don't worry—there's a whole new beer frontier to be explored. *mental_floss* showcases a few of the strangest beers you've never heard of, including one served inside a taxidermied animal (really!) and one made from barley grown on the International Space Station.

Mythbusters

Is stout actually heavier? Why is lager less expensive than other types of beer? And what's the deal with the two-step Guinness pour? *Paste* magazine takes on the myths.

The Old-Fashioned Way

Want to try beer like they made it in the old days—the *very* old days? A group of archaeologists from University of Chicago used a 5,000-year-old recipe and ancient brewing methods to create an authentic, and definitely old-fashioned, beverage. Unfortunately its vinegary taste was "too sour for the 21st century," they said.





Their Rules

In Alberta, charities and societies have grown to rely on the proceeds of gaming to fund special projects, programming, operating costs, and other approved expenditures. Those proceeds may come through a provincial grant program or more directly through working casinos or satellite bingos. As Festival Coordinator, working for a society that now has two years of community programming under its belt since incorporation, I am in the throes of applying for our casino eligibility.

The scary, sad part is that if our application is approved, it will be about three years before our turn comes. Then the time between the first and second casino will be another two or three years. The system is far from perfect.

Another big irritant for many groups is that geography determines which casino you are assigned. Back in the day, groups loved getting Fort McMurray because the money was big. Like with satellite bingo, the money is pooled and split between the participating groups who worked in a particular time period. The Camrose casino is one of the smallest and the one we would be assigned to. An Edmonton group can walk away with \$80,000 from a city casino, while the payout from Camrose might be only a quarter of that.


And so it was that I spent two days and nights in Camrose this week as one of five volunteers for the church-run casino. I thought it would be a good learning experience, and, also, who couldn't use some good karma? As someone who can count on one hand the times she's been in a casino, everything was new. My role was cashier, so I was stationed in a 'cage' with two other volunteers and the paid coordinator. This man was hired by the church to lead us, step by step, through the myriad details involved in the process. The security procedures and checks and balances that ensure no funny business occurs, by either casino employees or volunteers from the community, are quite impressive.

We were allowed electronics like smart phones and tablets but the Wi-Fi was patchy. The big no-no would be attempting to take photos. A TV had been installed but I found the location in the room (above my head near the ceiling) didn't really encourage viewing. The other volunteers had a much better room at their disposal. Because this is not a busy casino we were encouraged to take breaks as long as the two-person minimum in the cage was satisfied. The meals available at the restaurant/lounge were excellent.

I came equipped with Donna Tartt's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Gold Finch* in hand. Despite the distractions of conversation and stopping to convert chips into cash I was able to finish that incredible book.

No one anticipates that the government will be changing how casinos are assigned or money is shared. So in an environment where the house usually wins, we're prepared to play by their rules, from where I sit.

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



Travel Advice and Advisory Update for Canadians in Tunisia

Dear Canadians,

You are receiving this message because you are registered with the Government of Canada's Registration of Canadians Abroad service. We would like to remind you to exercise a high degree of caution due to the risk of civil unrest and the heightened threat of terrorism in the region. Please share the following important information with other Canadian nationals in your area.

1. Stay away from touristy spots if there are a lot of palefaces. Hang with the Arabs— they're not on the hit lists unless they're famous. If a Western tourist approaches you to talk, run like the wind.
2. If you're sitting in an outdoor café and the tables around you start emptying, drink up, pay for your coffee, and go for a walk.
3. Girls, don't remove your bikini tops on the beach even if they're full of sand. You'll be bombarded with marriage proposals, all totally heartfelt and sincere.
4. Wealthy cougars looking for easy action must remember that everything has its price. In Tunisia this price might be everything you own.
5. If you attend a public demonstration, don't carry signs that say things like "I am Canadian— Be My Friend" or "Salafists Need Love, Too."
6. Feminists, don't remove your tops at public demonstrations even if the spirit moves you. You'll be bombarded with marriage proposals, all totally heartfelt and sincere.
7. Do not indulge any of your lame Canadian fantasies about bringing peace to the Middle East. It's just not going to happen, and we don't want to have to come and try to rescue your sorry ass. Stay away from the military zones. Period.

Services consulaires/ Consular services

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



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

AUSU By-Election

The deadline to submit a nomination for the 2015 AUSU By-election is **July 31, 2015 at 11:59pm MST**.

The official candidates will be announced by **August 5, 2015**. The campaign period for the candidates will run **August 5 to August 24, 2015**. Stay tuned to our [website](#) for more information about the election, or check out our [2015 by-election forum](#) to post questions for the candidates once they are announced!

The voting period will run August 21 to August 24, 2015. The ballots will be emailed to AUSU members.

For more information visit the AUSU website at <http://www.ausu.org/council/elections.php>

Please direct any inquiries to cro@ausu.org.



IMPORTANT DATES

- July 31: Last day for Nomination for By-election
- Aug 5- 24: AUSU By-election campaign period
- Aug 10: Last day to register for courses starting Sept 1
- Aug 21-24: General Election Voting Period
- Sept 9: AUSU Council Meeting
- Sept 10: Last day to register for courses starting Oct 1

AUSU Emergency Bursary

Did you know that AUSU has an **Emergency Bursary** to help members pay for course extensions and supplemental exams during times of financial need?

<http://www.ausu.org/services/scholarships.php>

Free Smart Draw Subscription

AUSU provides members with a free Smart Draw subscription! Smart draw allows users to create a wide range of charts, diagrams and other business graphics that can be dropped in to Microsoft Word or Excel files, which can help students with their assignments for AU classes!

<http://www.ausu.org/services/smartdraw.php>

Free Lynda.com Subscription



Lynda.com offers professional online training videos and courses for everything from photo editing with Adobe Photoshop to creating a WordPress page.

AUSU members can sign up for a Lynda.com membership valued at \$397 for FREE!

<http://www.ausu.org/services/lynda.php>

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

500 Energy Square - 10109 – 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7
Ph: 855.497.7003 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Publisher | Athabasca University Students' Union |
| Editor-In-Chief | Karyna Hoch |
| Managing Editor | Karl Low |

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, Barbara Lehtiniemi, S.D. Livingston,
Wanda Waterman, Barb Godin, Christina Frey,
Samantha Stevens

www.voicemagazine.org

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

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

To receive a weekly email announcing each issue, subscribe [here](#). *The Voice* does not share its subscriber list.

© 2014 by *The Voice Magazine*