

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 36 2015-09-04

## Meeting the Minds

Dr. Mark McCutcheon, Part II

## Living My Learning

The Response, Part II

## September Student Refresh

So Much for Summer

*Plus:*

*Before the Flood*

*New Year, New Mindset*

*and much more!*



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## ***The Voice Magazine***

[www.voicemagazine.org](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

500 Energy Square  
10109 – 106 ST NW  
Edmonton AB  
T5J 3L7  
800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email  
[voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## **Dear Editors;**

I strongly urge that, when the full AUSU council meets on September 9, 2015, a proper election take place to fill all three executive positions on council: President, Vice-President External & Student Affairs (VPEX,) and Vice-President Finance and Administration (VPFA.)

Information currently on the AUSU website suggests that only two of those vacant positions will be filled by a vote of council members. Information provided in an AUSU [press release](#) on May 7, 2015 indicates that Shawna Wasylyshyn assumed the president's role under bylaw 6.2.8.1. That suggests she—or council as a whole—presumed that Ms. Wasylyshyn could assume the office of president for the remainder of Mr. Nixon's term without a proper vote of council.

Council must respect both the spirit and the intent of the bylaws and policies governing AUSU and its council members, and not fall into the trap of cherry-picking a letter of law, however convenient, as justification to commit a wrong action.

Council has the opportunity now to extricate themselves gracefully from this error, and that is by allowing the intended procedure take place: a vote of sitting council to fill the vacant position of President.

To demonstrate the spirit and intent of AUSU bylaws and policies, I refer to the following. (Further insight can be gained by examining the background documents used to develop those bylaws and policies.)

Policy 6.2.1 states: "Council shall elect by vote of council and by secret ballot the Offices of President, Vice-President of External and & Student Affairs (VPEX), Vice-President of Finance and Administration (VPFA), and any other executives (herein referred to as "Officer" or "Office") that council deems necessary, from among the currently elected councillors."

Further, bylaw 6.2.5.1 states: "In the event of a vacancy in an Office of AUSU, Council shall elect a Councillor to the vacant Office immediately or by the next Council meeting."



It is clear from these bylaws that the intent is that the office of President is one voted on by council, and that an election to fill the vacant office is to take place immediately when the office becomes vacant. This has not, thus far, occurred since Mr. Nixon resigned as President on May 6, 2015, leaving the office of President vacant. There is simply no provision for the office of President to be filled without a vote of council.

AUSU council has, in its press release of May 7, 2015, referred to bylaw 6.2.8.1, which states that the duties of VPEX include "accepting the Office of President immediately upon its becoming vacant" despite AUSU policy 2.03.03 which clarifies that the VPEX only assumes the functions of President in the absence of the President. In the case of a President's resignation, the VPEX should have assumed the functions of President only as long as needed to fill the vacancy by a vote of council. There is no expressed intent for the VPEX to seize the office of President on an indefinite basis and to prevent a proper vote of council to fill the vacant position.

There is no precedence for the vacancy to be filled without a vote of council. On the contrary, when a AUSU council president has resigned during their term on previous occasions, a vote of council took place to fill the vacancy. (Such as when AUSU President Barb Rielly resigned the position, among others.) A vote of council is what ought to happen now.

I offer this recommendation constructively, and for the betterment of AUSU, its council, and its members. If a vote to fill the office of President is not held, strife and dissension in AUSU and its council are likely to continue, which will be detrimental to AUSU's members and its mission. If a vote is held, the duly elected council president (which may well turn out to be Ms. Wasylyshyn) can fulfil the duties of their position with the knowledge that they carry the support and confidence of council as well as a legitimate mandate.

A proper vote to fill all three executive council positions is the way to move forward, in the best interests of AUSU and its members. In closing, I will remind council of policy 2.01.03, which states that "councillors' behaviour must inspire confidence in the integrity of the student government." Council must ensure that their actions accomplish this.

Thank you,  
Barb L.

*Inspiring behavior is what we all should shoot for – ED.*

**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 Erronius Funk

Karl Low



Okay, first thing's first. I have to point out that in last week's issue, our election coverage made an error. In it, we claimed that the percentage of students who'd chosen to abstain was the highest of any percentage. This claim was based on the report provided by SimplyVoting, which showed a handy percentage after every vote. In it, the 16.1% of voters they showed abstained was higher than the 12.1% that they put behind the votes of the leading candidate, Colleen Doucette. However, in the rush to get the article put together and the issue out, we failed to note that those percentages were measuring different things.

As it turns out, the abstention percentage was the number of voters. But the vote percentage was of the total number of votes, and since each voter had up to six votes they could cast, the lower percentage was not an accurate total of the voters. This means that even the candidate with the fewest votes received the support of approximately 26% of the voters, which is obviously higher than the 16% who voted to abstain. This just goes to show you what rushing will do, as the article passed through me and the new Executive Director for approval and we both missed it. Unfortunately, nobody

has contacted *The Voice Magazine* yet to tell their story of why they decided it was worth the time to go the voting site and choose to abstain, so perhaps we'll never know.

But getting back to this issue, this week, we have the second, and likely more important, part of Cara Doane's "Living my Learning" piece, as well as the second part of our interview with Associate Professor Mark McCutcheon, where, among other things, he gives us a look behind the curtain of the teaching process. Once again, I can't decide between these two, so I'm featuring them both.

We also have a piece by Deanna Roney, who was inspired by the first part of "Living my Learning", which, if you remember, was inspired by Bethany Tyne's "Course Exam" article. I'm waiting to see just how far we can draw out this chain of inspiration, so hopefully someone else out there will be inspired by Deanna's article and feel the need to submit an article to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org). If that person is you, I'd love to see it!

Beyond that, we also have Barbara Lehtiniemi, who, as September rolls around and summer passes by, uses the opportunity to remind herself and us of the various resources that AU and AUSU make available for students. It's a good little refresher of the support that's available for students, both new and old, at AU.

As always, we don't stop there and have music and film reviews, an interview with director Erik Poppe, Dear Barb look at the difficulties of sending a child to boarding school, and Hazel Anaka's "From Where I Sit" contemplates how to keep her Babas and Borscht from becoming all-consuming while still growing. And that's just some of the content in this week's issue!

Enjoy the read!

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

# MEETING THE MINDS

## INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



*An Associate Professor for AU's Centre of Humanities and Master of Arts in Integrated Studies programs, Dr. Mark McCutcheon teaches a variety of courses on everything from the cultural politics of copyright to Canadian adaptations of Frankenstein, to modern media theory and beyond. He was kind enough to give The Voice Magazine this interview. You can also read the first part [here](#).*

### **What is your particular philosophy on student evaluation?**

I'm sorry, I'm not sure what you mean. Do you mean evaluation of students, as in instructors assessing and marking course work? Or do you mean evaluation by students, as in student evaluations of courses?

If you mean the former, evaluation and assignments have to fit and advance a given course's learning objectives. I teach English and writing, so essays are kind of a big deal in my teaching and marking. But I've also taught hands-on media work, assigning students to make Wikis or produce audio podcasts. I assign process work (like essay proposing, drafting, and writing), performance-of-knowledge work (like exams), and practical work (like media production) as each course requires.

If you mean the latter, I simply wish more students would submit evaluations of their courses and instructors. The response rate when these evaluations are held online is appallingly low and so doesn't give instructors a very representative glimpse of their teaching effectiveness according to students.

### **What pedagogical standpoint is most reflective of your way of teaching?**

Can I quote my official "statement of teaching philosophy"? It's the kind of document that otherwise doesn't circulate too far beyond hiring and promotion committees. You may wonder: what's a "statement of teaching philosophy"? Professional academics keep what's called a "teaching dossier" of courses taught, student evaluations of courses, evidence of teaching effectiveness, and one standard ingredient in the teaching dossier is one's statement of teaching philosophy. So the teaching dossier is an always changing, always growing documentation of and reflection on teaching experience, and it's usually submitted, along with other documentation of professional academic work, when applying to academic jobs, or when applying for promotion and tenure. But it might be worthwhile sharing one's teaching philosophy with students, to give you a peek under the hood of the teaching process, as it were. Also, since you asked. So here's the core excerpt of my statement of teaching philosophy, an approach I think of as "cultivating *Mündigkeit*":

My pedagogy is based on three premises. First, a demonstrated passion for the subject matter, and the assurance to students that their learning matters profoundly to me, are

necessary to inspire students to do their best work. Second, sophisticated thinking develops best through the processes of composing arguments and creating artifacts; and concentration on the process of composition (in writing and other media) produces better, more effective thinkers in the academy, the workplace, and wider social engagements. Third, a responsive, critical attention to current teaching technology developments is indispensable in the classroom and supports the first two premises in practice. ... Combining contextual critique, process-oriented production work, and a commitment to student ideas and interests, my teaching strives to achieve *Mündigkeit*, a German word that combines contrasting senses of apprenticeship and aptitude, training and talent. By designing courses that challenge students' assumptions and abilities, and that speak to their lived cultural experiences, I try to help each student realize her or his own intellectual potential in a balance of curiosity and skepticism, expressiveness and discipline: traits that are all essential in study, work, and citizenship.

The only thing I'd add to this summary of where I'm coming from as a professor at AU is that it is crucial to remain open-minded and non-judgmental about prospective students, their situations, and their research interests. AU has a vital role to play in making university education accessible to people and communities who have not historically been able to access traditional university education: minoritized and marginalized people and peoples in various intersecting contexts. For instance, a now-retired colleague was fond of pointing out that among prison inmates, the tendency to re-offend once released from prison is statistically way lower for inmates who pursue postsecondary education while incarcerated than for those who don't. For another, I have to say I was disappointed—appalled, actually—to see *The Voice Magazine* run an op-ed, a year or so ago, which argued that students who have to do sex work to fund their tuition do not deserve a university education. That's a harsh, unkind argument, and one contrary to AU and its social-justice mission.

### ***What technological shifts would you like to see online education take in the future?***

I have a few thoughts on this. I would like to see more students as well as faculty and staff use the AU Landing more – it may not be perfect but it's an amazing bundle of social media tools. At the same time, I'd like to see AU's course development and teaching processes become more agile and flexible - and AU's programs become more autonomous and self-governing - with respect to technological change in general. That is, whatever technology a course happens to use (like Moodle) or an instructor happens to prefer (like the Landing), I'd like to see AU's teaching practices and principles better able and equipped to adapt to different, changing, and proliferating teaching technologies – and of course to rigorously test them and integrate critical digital literacy in how they're used in online teaching. And correspondingly, faculties, centres, and programs deserve and need genuine autonomy and self-governance to determine what technologies do or do not best serve their teaching, their academic capital, and their students. E-texts can't work for each and every course and program – neither can the controversial "student success centre," aka the "call centre model." Academics and academic programs need to be able to independently and critically assess which teaching technologies best suit their pedagogy and programs – not have these decisions made for them by senior administrators.

And last but not least, as I said above AU needs to make sure prospective students know that, if they want or need to, they can still take AU courses and programs with no technology more advanced than paper and the postal service.

### ***What is your view on social media in the online learning environment?***

I use social media extensively and in a few different ways, and I encourage students to do likewise, but not unexaminedly - I also try to encourage students to approach social media critically, cautiously, skeptically. I also

know everyone has different comfort levels about social media – that goes for me too. I don't use Twitter at all like I use Facebook (with which, like many users, I have a kind of love-hate relationship), or like I use the Landing. I encourage students to at least try AU's social site, and I try to explain—especially for students who aren't comfortable with being public online—that the Landing has highly customizable privacy settings. If you're not comfortable with more people than your instructor seeing your work, the Landing can do that.

I hope this doesn't sound pushy about social media—I'm no cheerleader, I know a lot of the big services are actively complicit with state surveillance and corporate interests, I know they're effectively privatizing a lot of public space. But with some of my colleagues in Learning Design and Development, I share the view that, as an open university, especially, we owe it to our students to teach them how to critically and effectively use emerging tools and technologies of communication and representation, both to augment course learning and as valuable, transferable learning in its own right.

***If you had one piece of advice for online learners, what would it be?***

Can I share two? First: like that student said on the Landing, the achievable course workload is the routinely scheduled and therefore manageable workload. Stick with it for even just a few minutes a day. I've seen students graduate who have spent literally decades completing their program, often in the face of profoundly trying and troubling circumstances – the point is that they stuck with it and saw it through. Second: don't let anyone try to tell you that a degree or credential from AU isn't worthwhile. We're in the top tier of Alberta's comprehensive research universities, along with the U of Alberta, for good reason: quality and accessible university pedagogy, and research excellence.

***If you could wave a magic wand and improve one thing about online education, what would it be?***

All university tuition should be free of charge. (For more on this issue, see <http://www.zerotuitioncanada.org/>.)

***What is your view on interdisciplinary studies for English majors?***

Sure, interdisciplinarity strengthens any area of study – conceptually, theoretically, and contextually - and literary studies are no exception. But get first things first: make sure you figure out the specific *disciplinarity* of English, of literary studies, before trying to integrate it with other inter- or multi-disciplinary interests or approaches. (Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature* and Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory* are two excellent books for learning about the disciplinary character and history of "English".)

***How do you keep abreast of best teaching practices?***

I keep current on issues like these through meetings and conferences with colleagues, especially those in my own discipline and field. Reading current research in my areas of interest also keeps me on top of best teaching practices, because (contrary to some arguments and contrary to some recent developments elsewhere, like "teaching-stream" academic jobs), research and teaching are integrally linked (an argument I make in detail at <https://academicalism.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/the-research-and-teaching-link-worth-strengthening-not-severing/>). The journals I read regularly often include articles and essays on teaching and related professional concerns. I also like to stay in the loop, much as I can, with what my colleagues in the Centre for Distance Education are doing. Some of what's happening there is I think at the forefront of exploring, establishing, and promoting best teaching practices for open postsecondary education.

***What are some of the challenges and highlights to publishing academic literature?***

I love writing and seeing my work reach publication—that's always a highlight, it never gets old. A more recent highlight for me is joining the critical dialogue of public scholarship: seeing what other scholars make of my work. That's a trip through the looking glass, discovering the unexpected ways that others will interpret what



you've written, or will make a big deal of what you thought was a minor detail. Of course, the enduring challenge is to establish an audience. There's a lot of scholarship out there more readily available than ever before—which is great, I strongly advocate for Open Access and most of my articles are openly accessible—but I think that means there's also a lot more "self-promotional" (ugh) work that needs to be done to draw attention to new research publications.

Further to the Open Access thing, a related challenge in academic publishing is that standard author contracts want you to surrender your copyright to the journal publisher. It's not necessary—all they really need is a non-exclusive license—but it's expected, and when you try to negotiate this it's all too common to get a flat refusal to negotiate, or, worse, no response at all. But it's not impossible. Some of my favourite journals, like *English Studies in Canada*, have relatively good Open Access policies, and more seem to be going that way.

***What is your favourite course to teach? Why this particular course?***

I can't say that. That's like saying one of your kids is your favourite, which you're not allowed to say. I like all the courses I teach.

***If you could confer one piece of wisdom on an upcoming student in English, what would it be?***

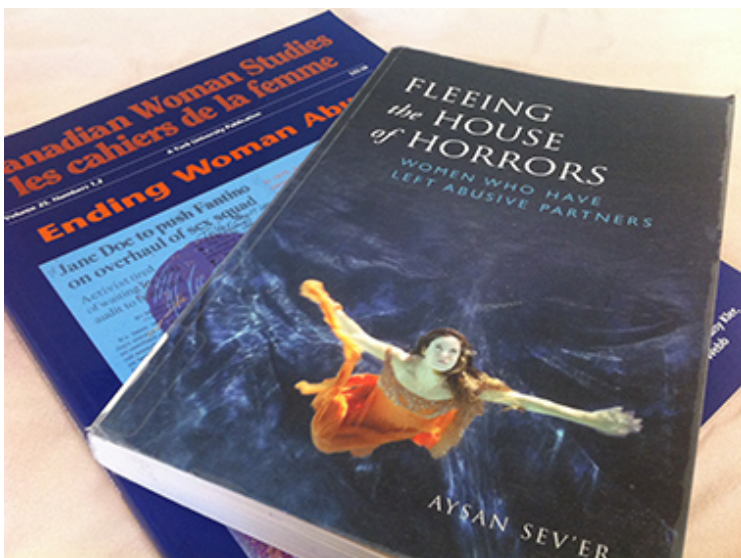
Talk about the writing. To succeed in literary studies means to focus on and talk about the writing of a given literary work, about its form. Don't focus on what a text "says" or what happens in it, focus on how it's put together, how its elements of structure and style make it an effective or successful reading (or viewing, or listening) experience. A literary text isn't a window to look through, it's a tapestry to look at. (For more on this tip, I can't highly enough recommend Jack Lynch's short, excellent, free online guide, *Getting an A on an English Paper*: <https://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/EngPaper/>.)



## Living My Learning

Cara Doane

### A Response to Bethany Tynes' Course Exam of WGST 422



Can you say that statistics have changed your life? Maybe even saved it? Probably not.

But when I took WMST 422 (the precursor to WGST 422, subject of a [recent Course Exam article](#) in *The Voice*), the most important thing I learned wasn't the global prevalence of violence against women. It wasn't the responses of global community and UN to violence against women. And it wasn't the systemic and institutional power structures that allow violence against women to continue. It was the simple, straightforward statistics about violence against women in Canada.

These statistics weren't just about the overall occurrence of violence, but also about when and where certain women experienced abuse—including rates of abuse by age, income, and geographic location. For example, did you know that, [according to Statistics Canada](#),

those aged 15-24 are most likely to be victimized, followed by those 25-34, and the risk continues to decrease with age? The same groups are also more likely to be victims of spousal homicide. And consistently, about 70% of those in abusive situations say they have told someone within the last year.

Statistics helped me make sense of my experiences. They explained that abuse often increases with life changes, like beginning a new job or schooling (as I did) or becoming pregnant (as I did). They predicted that abusers often try to isolate women from their families and friends, frequently by moving long distances (as we did), or controlling access to transportation and communication devices (remember how I mentioned Brent's problem with phones?).

Eventually, I reached a point where I knew that there was nothing I could ever do that would make things good enough for Brent to be happy. I knew that no amount of housekeeping or healthy cooking or changing my behaviour to fit into Brent's mold would ever fix his anger management problems. Sadly, it took years to get to that point, and multiple failed escape attempts before I was successful. In the end, I knew that actually getting out for good would require money, a careful plan, and both personal and physical strength.

And then statistics helped me to stay safe and prepare myself for possibilities that I had once never imagined. Things like the potential that even once I got away from Brent, he could still be dangerous.

The Canadian Women's Foundation, in their Facts About Violence Against Women, notes that "about half (49%) of all female murder victims in Canada are killed by a former or current intimate partner." And violence often escalates after separation: Statistics Canada reports that "in 2009, 17% of Canadians who had contact with an ex-spouse or partner... had been physically or sexually assaulted," and further, that "female victims of spousal homicide were more likely than male victims to be killed by a partner from whom they were separated." In Fleeing the House of Horrors, Aysan Se'ver notes that married women are *nine times* more likely to be killed by their partner than by a stranger, and after separation, even though husbands have less access to their estranged wives, this risk increases *six times*.

*Part of what continues to disturb me is that, in all the years that we were together, there were many times when people had the opportunity to intervene—and didn't.*

Because I had learned about these statistics, I took several precautions when and after I left. And I was lucky: though there were some threats and indications of stalking, and one incident where Brent became physical, eventually these petered out.

Part of what continues to disturb me, though, is that in all the years that we were together, there were many times when people had had the opportunity to intervene—to help me escape the hell—and didn't. Along the way, there were times when people could have stepped in and offered to assist, and it always hurt to wonder why some people had passed up these chances.

Once, for example, Brent answered the door to find a police officer who asked to speak to me. When I came into the living room, the male officer announced, in front of Brent, that my friend Kari was worried about my safety and thought that I was in danger. I had no idea how to respond. The officer looked back and forth from me to Brent, and then said "you don't look like you're in any immediate danger. Is there a chance that your friend might have exaggerated things a little?" And then he rolled his eyes, turned, walked out, and left. Guess how well that went over with Brent?

And many months later, there was one day when I was terrified of what Brent would do, and for the first time, I called the police myself. It took them more than half an hour to arrive, and when they did, the female officer advised me that I had the right to press charges about Brent, but that based on the fact that she couldn't see "any *real* injuries," and couldn't be sure "what had *really* happened," it was highly unlikely that any judge would believe there had been abuse. When I asked her about an emergency protection order, she told me that I would have to go to court and talk to a judge about it. After that, I never bothered to call the police. What good would it do?

But it wasn't only the police who turned a blind eye to our situation. Throughout our time together, there were times we lived in apartments with paper-thin walls, and neighbours could easily have stopped by when Brent was out to ask if I was okay or ask how it was going. There were many times when we were out in public that Brent would scream and throw things at me and strangers would walk by, trying not to look at us. And there were people in his family who were there when he would give me strict orders and physically push me around.

I know that jumping into the middle of a potentially violent situation might not be the best way to help, but neither is turning a blind eye and trying to walk by as if nothing is going on. Family violence, violence against women—it isn't a private or personal matter. It's bad for women, it's bad for their friends and families, and it's bad for our society as a whole (in fact, if you think in monetary terms, spousal violence in Canada comes with an estimated price tag of 7.4 billion dollars per year).

***Brent would scream and throw things at me and strangers would walk by, trying not to look at us.***

There are hundreds of reasons why some women choose to stay, and the Ray Rice / Janay Palmer incident that happened about a year ago saw many abuse survivors taking to Twitter to share their stories with

the hashtag #whilstayed. Based on my experience, the most important thing that women in abusive situations need to hear is that people will believe their stories and be willing to help. Just believe them, be there to help if needed, and be patient with them (even when you can't understand why they're staying) until they're at a point they're ready and able to leave.

Years later, I can say that I feel safe and happy. But the many years I spent living in hell I will never get back, and they continue to create challenging repercussions. On the whole, though, I'm incredibly lucky: I have a wonderful life in the world after violence against women.

If learning more about violence against women just isn't a top personal priority for you, that's okay. We don't all have the same interests or inclinations. But I'd also suggest that this is perhaps the best reason why you should consider taking WGST 422. It might not be directly applicable to your future education or employment plans, but if you have the ability to take it, I can think of no other course I would more highly recommend.

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, a full half of the women in this country have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once. Half. Every second woman in Canada. Maybe your learning, your knowledge, your belief, or your support could be what helps one of your friends or family members to escape.

## September Student Refresher

Barbara Lehtiniemi



September marks a fresh new year of studies. Earlier this week, I opened my recently-delivered box of course textbooks with the same excitement I give to Christmas presents.

I've always enjoyed the start of a school year. Learning something new holds endless fascination for me. Starting a new course, and cracking the spine on some new textbooks, gives me a little frisson of excitement.

Although I begin AU courses year round, September still has that ingrained association with a new school year. Perhaps, like Gretchen Rubin says in this [blog post](#) for *Psychology Today*, September is the other January: a chance to start with a fresh slate. For me, that's precisely what September feels like: a fresh start.

Before I rip open the shrink-wrap on my textbooks, I take a few days at the beginning of September to re-orient myself to my AU studies. The process of review helps me to uncover information that I've forgotten and assists me in beginning my studies with a grounded attitude. There's a wealth of information available for AU students, and September is the perfect time for me to invest some time in learning, or re-learning, some AU basics:

**Undergraduate Student Orientation.** While this [orientation](#) is primarily aimed at new and prospective students, after several years of AU study I can benefit from a refresher, too. With modules covering basic how-to's, AU advising and support services, and scholarship information, the orientation's format allows me to quickly scan through information relevant to me. As I noted in an earlier [article](#) for *The Voice*, "The Undergraduate Student Orientation Handbook offers the current student a meaningful review of AU's procedures and services. It also serves as a one-stop student shopping mall, with portals to almost every bit of information an AU student could wish to know." It's a good place to begin my September refresher.

**myAU.** Often, the myAU portal serves solely as a page I have to get through to access my courses. Yet there is a lot more here that is worthy of my attention and it makes sense to review what is available from time to time. Besides the *Student Home* tab, where I access my courses, there are four more tabs to explore: *Student Services*, *Community*, *Library*, and *Student Help*. The *Student Services* tab, for example, serves as a gateway to almost everything I need to know about being a student at AU. Some services that weren't relevant to me on my previous visits to this page, like course extensions, are (unfortunately) relevant now. There are also services listed that I'd forgotten about, such as the AU Store, plus several more I don't recall seeing before, such as the AU Photo ID Card.

**AU Library.** I don't use the library for every course. But when I need research materials, I need to know how to obtain them. Because I use the library's website infrequently, and because the website underwent a major



renovation last year, I find it helpful to reorient myself. I access a recorded [orientation session](#) to re-familiarize myself with AU's library and then browse through some of the many [tutorials](#) on the Get Help page.

**AUSU.** I've evolved as a student in the past year or so. Similarly, the Athabasca University Students' Union has refined what it offers students. As I review the [Services](#) page, I consider whether I'm ready to download a free copy of SmartDraw, begin working on my next AUSU scholarship application, or check out the new mental health service, Student LifeLine.

September is for me, in a way, the other January. It's an opportunity to begin a new year with a fresh outlook, and fresh inspiration. My few days of student refreshing will fuel my motivation for another year of studies at AU. Now, back to work!

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



## Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

### How to Turn Your Topic into a Research Problem

*There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to transform a paper topic into a viable research problem.*

*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.*

The book *The Craft of Research* by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams gives rise to today's Study Dude

article. The book serves as a go-to source for anyone wanting to hone the art of research drafting, especially for crafting a thesis or journal publication.

## The Planning Stages of Your Paper

The more I learn about the benefits of journaling, the more inclined I am to dump ideas onto a piece of paper or a Word document, elaborating on anything that comes to mind. The process of idea dumping can lead to insights, can help structure your essays, can provide essay fodder that you would not have otherwise considered. The benefits of journaling ideas extend beyond merely setting the stage for your next paper.

I also enjoy creating outlines and placing research ideas on cue cards. Whether the research goes into a computer-generated outline or on a cue card—or both—doesn't matter as much as getting the ideas documented. Once I document the ideas, I either cut and paste Word outline entries or sort cue cards until the paper structure magically materializes.

Historically, I focused on outlines or cue cards, but never began journaling ideas or doing an initial free flow of writing. Now, engaging in a free flow writing or journaling project not only enables idea creation and confidence to flow, but also relaxes me. With free flow writing, you can really get into a mindset for idea generation. Not only that, you can also begin the synthesis process well before you outline. The free flow writing or journaling helps you to zero in on what matters, making your research a more manageable, more thoughtful task.

By all means plan your research with as many resources available to you, especially the journaling one.

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams provide lucid advice on how to get your research plan rolling:

- Adjust your topic scope so that you can fit the research and writing into your allotted time frame. Opt for a narrower topic when you have limited time to research.
- Ask yourself an abundance of questions concerning your topic until you find one or two research questions that pique your interest.
- Evaluate what kinds of evidence you'll need to address your question. This evaluation will help focus your research efforts.
- Determine whether you will need primary data (quantitative data, interviews or quotations from actual people, observations) or whether secondary data (data from a journal article) or tertiary data (data from an encyclopaedia or other source that quotes from secondary data). Generally, theses require primary data while undergraduate papers often only require secondary or tertiary data.
- Don't begin writing on your chosen topic until you can confirm that you have enough data to fulfill the word quota of your assignment.
- Your data can include numbers, quotes, facts, or any other type of evidence.
- You may even modify your topic the more research you get, but it is wise to settle on an argument once you have enough data to begin supporting your view.
- Take copious notes. Write lots of reflections. Design outlines. Write out why you disagree with some of your sources. Make summaries of different sources. Jot down your whims and thoughts concerning the data you find. Journal your ideas and questions. All of these exercise, while seemingly innocuous, contribute to the overall quality of your finished work.

### **Let Your Topic Transform into a Research Question**

My thesis topic focused on Suncor's environmental positioning, but, truth be told, I didn't have a well-thought out research question. I posed a number of unstructured questions that needed, well, structure. I needed to create questions that would guide my research with clarity and soundness. I needed to create questions containing targeted keywords to ease the library search process. I needed to create questions that would narrow my search so that the broadness of the topic would not overwhelm me.

On many of my papers, although I received A grades for the majority of them, I resorted to fact dumps where I would accumulate facts and structure them according to topics. From there, I would connect the strings of facts together in a type of argument, although loosely structured. My papers would have been stronger had I formulated a tight research question and research problem at the get-go.

Finding a viable research question can make a world of difference for a student's paper or thesis. A structured research question can make your paper stand out in the crowd of student submissions, and who doesn't want

to make the grade with writing assignments? Before drafting your next paper, ensure that your research question solidifies your focus with the following advice from the book *The Craft of Research*:

- Avoid selecting a topic, accumulating facts, and dumping all the facts under different categories. No-one wants to read a fact dump. Instead, compose some sort of question that solves a cared-about problem.
- If you have a problem or question that only you care about at the outset, it could lead to some ingenious findings, but ultimately, you want that question or problem to be something the reader cares about as well.
- Pick a topic that interests you. This makes for a good starting point. Jot down every topic that interests you. If you are stuck for a topic, go to the Reader's Guide of Periodical Literature, encyclopaedias, blogs, and Wikipedia for inspiration.
- Pretend you want your topic specific enough that you can become the resident expert on it.
- "A topic is probably too broad if you can state it in four or five words" (p. 39).
- When selecting topic, use complicated nouns (nominalizations) that were once verbs, such as "description" for "describe" and "development" for "developed."
- Turn your topic into a claim by changing the nouns that were once verbs (the nominalizations) back into verbs. For example, the topic "The *contribution* of the military in the DC-3 *development* over the early years of commercial aviation" becomes the claim, "in the early years of commercial aviation, the military *contributed* to the way the DC-3 *developed*."
- Turn your claim into a question by emphasizing "how" and "why" questions.
- Ask questions about the composition or parts of something and how they fit together. Ask questions about categories your topic fits into and how the categories are similar or dissimilar to one another. Ask questions that tend to answer "what if" speculations. Ask questions that build on questions asked in other articles. Ask questions that pose disagreement with other sources.
- Don't ask questions that just result in a fact dump (for instance, answering when did World War II begin and who started it). If you can look up a fact and thereby answer your question, then you are on the wrong track. Don't ask simple factual or a "who cares?" question like what was Hitler's dog's name.

### **Let Your Research Question Transform into a Research Problem**

When you write about a research problem, you surely don't want to replicate other researcher's findings. Whenever you bypass replicating other people's research problems, perhaps you have lucked out on a proverbial "gap."

I know what a gap in a tooth is (as I had one that my dentist sealed over with some white enamel), but what is a gap in the research? Is it some heinous omission that we instantly pick up on or is a gap something more subtle, more insidious? Most importantly, how do you find a gap in the literature? Do you cross-examine an article, read it backwards and then forwards until you solve the puzzle (some authors do recommend you read your writing backwards to zero in on spelling and grammar errors). These are questions that remain unanswered for me today, but each book I read brings me closer to figuring out what exactly a gap is.

Maybe simply creating something unique means you've filled the gap. But how unique does it need to be? Can you just address some minor point already addressed in other research, but in a new way? Maybe a gap represents something not addressed before, something you add to and extend, something you alter, even something you discredit, all of which potentially culminates into your very own fabrication.

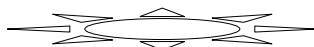
Filling the gap remains a big part of the conundrum of crafting your research problem. Familiarize yourself with what it means to create a research problem--and what it means to fill a gap with a research problem--with the advice of Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams:

- If you aren't armed with a research problem at the outset, don't be concerned. Try to find a research problem as soon as possible.
- Pose your question and ask teachers and friends why they would or wouldn't find your research question compelling.
- Look at last few pages of a research article to determine whether they suggest there is a gap in the literature, or an unanswered question, that you can address in the form of a research problem.
- Think of ways you can extend an argument presented in a paper, thereby filling the gap.
- Examine your articles for anything you disagree with, contradictions, loose ends--gaps--that you can work on as part of a research problem.
- Examine your articles for points in which the authors bicker with one another's point of view. Their contentions may expose a gap for you to go on.
- Formulate a research problem in the following format: "I am studying/working on\_\_\_\_ because I want to find out who/what/when/where/whether/why/how\_\_\_\_ in order to help my reader understand\_\_\_\_"(p. 47). The first part is the claim. The part that follows immediately after "because" provides, of course, the reason. The final part that follows "in order to help my reader understand" answers the so what question.

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

Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., & Williams, Joseph M. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.



## New Year, New Mindset

**Carla Knipe**



For students, September is a time for goal setting and looking ahead at all the work that needs to be accomplished. But September is also a great time for students to assess how they feel about their progress, both in terms of academic as well as life goals. One way to evaluate this is by the concept of "mindset." Some might dismiss the concept of mindset as just another psychological fad, but an increasing body of research and evidence points to how mindset can have a tangible and lasting impact on an individual's inner growth and pathway to success.

According to [Mindset Online](#) the definition of mindset is quite simple. The idea of the power of positive self-talk and attitude has perhaps always been around in a vague form, but, during the 1980s, psychologist and researcher Carol Dweck of Stanford University began researching



whether intelligence was the only marker of success, and whether one's attitude toward success and failure had a bearing on learning. The concept of mindset grew out of her research.

Dweck categorized mindset into two types, fixed and growth. A fixed mindset views abilities as innate and unchangeable and is based on talent or IQ alone, whereas a growth mindset believes that basic abilities can be developed through hard work and by fostering a sense of resilience to push through difficulties. This research originally targeted elementary and junior high classrooms, and found that, unlike students who were resigned to their inadequacy—those who said "I'm not smart enough," or "I just can't do math," (examples of a fixed mindset)—those who responded to the challenges with more effort-based strategies (such as spending more time on the subject with a positive attitude toward learning) had greater success with the course work. The research found this created a shift that spilled over into a healthier overall attitude toward life in general. The principles of mindset have been incorporated into parenting, sports psychology, addictions counselling, research into learning disabilities, and other areas.

The resulting shift in approach to the psychology of learning ties in with other new research investigating how the brain functions, especially in terms of neuroplasticity. Medical advances are showing that thoughts literally affect the neural pathways of the brain. Learning creates new connections within the brain and existing connections become stronger. Neuropsychology is also discovering that the brain continues to grow new neurons over a lifetime and responds to the stimulation of learning no matter the person's age.

I first learned about the concept of mindset last year when I read Carol Dweck's book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Since then, I've tried to adopt more of a growth mindset. Along the way, I've learned a few things that have helped me, especially when they are applied to the solitary journey of distance learning.

First, I've learned that inner voice is important. Just as the awareness of breath is essential to the practice of yoga, the practice of mindset is reliant on what you say to yourself, how you say it, and how you talk back to any negativity. The reaction to setbacks, such as not doing well on an essay or exam, becomes paramount as to whether you adopt a fixed or growth mindset. The attitude that you adopt toward criticism, such as a tutor's comments on a paper, is also key to a growth mindset.

Second, mindset is all about choice. If you feel stuck, try to take a step back from a situation and look at what you need to do to move forward. Try to break down the steps into manageable chunks; even the smallest baby steps mean progress. But, just realizing that you have a choice in how to deal with things can give an amazing sense of empowerment to reframe a negative situation and regain some control.

Third, in terms of goal setting, asking some poignant questions of yourself can also give you a much different perspective and get you beyond the usual fixed-mindset response. Giving honest answers to questions such as: How can I change how I feel about where I am right now? What tools could help me do that? How can I take some risks that would help stretch me? How can I reduce feeling stressed and pressured? How could I change my response to what life throws at me—both positive and negative? Am I open to asking for help from others? These questions can lead to new breakthroughs for those times when you think a way out is impossible.

The concept of mindset is not an easy fix to every life situation. However, it is one psychological tool that just might be one aspect of your success this year. It's definitely worth a try!

*Carla Knipe is an AU English Major who lives and writes in Calgary, Alberta.*

## Music Review

### Before the Flood

Samantha Stevens



**Band:** Before the Flood

**Album:** *Hole in the Sky*

Sometimes I come across a band that writes such astounding lyrics that I can't help but love their music. Before the Flood is capable of writing lyrics that not only captivate listeners, but come from deep in the heart as the stories they write are universally human. As an added bonus, these songs are set to the most beautiful music that blurs the lines between traditional music genres.

Formed in 2005 in Southern Ontario, *Hole in the Sky* is Before the Flood's second album. Often compared to bands like Wilco or The Shins, I find that they also remind me of The Trews, The Tragically Hip, Blue Rodeo, and even The Smashing Pumpkins. Given the bands that they remind me of, I find that there is something very Canadian about their sound, creating a familiar warm and

comforting feeling that I find often comes from listening to Canadian musicians. What I mean by this is that I find Canadian musicians often create music that is as at home in a kitchen party as it is in a large stadium or on an album. Personally, this is a quality that I love about Canadian music and musicians.

*Hole in the Sky* is a magnificently arranged album. With each track being so incredibly unique I truly believe that there is a song on this album for everyone. Each song on their latest album is distinct and unique, and at times their music is distinctly folk or country, other times rock is the dominant sound, then sometimes jazz elements are added creating a unique exotic feeling. That being said, I found it hard to really like every track on this album, and I would recommend those interested in checking them out to preview each song before investing in the entire album.

The two songs that I really enjoyed were "Your Only Day" and "An Island". "Your Only Day" has slightly darker lyrics, but the music that they are set to is what captivates me. The singing is echoey and faded, creating an ethereal quality to the sound. It first creates images of lazy waves, beaches, and surfing, then, as the song reaches the chorus, the inclusion of the violin gives the music a stronger, earthy vibe, and an image of a wide-swept cottage on the edge of that beach emerges with dark clouds closing in overhead. The ability of the musicians to use the lyrics and tones of the song to create such a strong feeling is amazing.

"An Island" starts off light and lazy and I expected the vocals to be similar to that in "Your Only Day". Instead, I was startled to hear that the singing is slightly heavier—with only a subtle echo effect. As an added treat, the female back-up vocals that join in for the chorus create a dimension to the song that I don't feel is in the other tracks on this album. The strong but muted guitar and drums feel like they can carry the heart of the listener along on the sound to someplace magical, a feeling that is reinforced by the even lighter, and almost magical, tones of the song's conclusion. "An Island" makes me think that if music could ever capture the essence of flying on the wind, it would sound like this song.

If you are interested in checking out *Hole in the Sky*, the album can be previewed and downloaded on iTunes.

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



## The Mindful Bard Sequoia

Wanda Waterman

### Death Row in Ego's Prison

Film: [Sequoia](#)

Director: Andy Landen

"It's not the number of lives that it's important to save— it's the amount of life."

- Doka quote, from *Sequoia*

Reilly, the lead character in *Sequoia*, takes it for granted that things should go her way, so she's pissed off when they don't. Strangely, at the same time she expects *nothing* will go her way, so she's skeptical and rejecting when it does.

For example, when the cute guy she sits with on the bus reciprocates her interest, all she can do is insult him. And her first move after being diagnosed with terminal cancer is not to start drinking carrot juice but rather to start smoking. Oh, and planning her suicide. In an apt

manifestation of narcissism, she immediately starts videotaping the entire process.

The film blackens the fine line between euthanasia and suicide, providing lots of confusion so you're forced to test your own hypotheses. But, in the end, her choice is clearly suicide, if only because it's fueled by a desire for vengeance—just another abusive module in the dysfunctional family system.

This family—divorced parents, underachieving, self-absorbed mother, alcoholic father, depressed sister, and highly mockable future stepfather—is totally emotionally fused, each member unable to escape the pull of painful connections and doomed to constantly feed each other's pain with verbal abuse, manipulation, guilt trips, and substance abuse.

Reilly's mom's fiancé, Steve, is described as a psychologist, but in one scene it's suggested that he's not *really* (he may simply have studied just enough psychology to use it against people) and it's this suggestion we should take seriously, because no professional would be allowed to express these kinds of views and still retain a license to practice.

For one thing, he hasn't heard the commonly known dictum that one must always take a suicide threat seriously, even if it comes from a drama queen like Reilly. Not only that, but he actually holds the children responsible for their mother's lack of career success and personal development, a reversal of the criticism once waged against shrinks who appeared to blame every psychological maladaptation on the mother. Steve approaches the truth when he suggests that Reilly is simply trying to control them with her drama, but misses it when he suggests they avoid their human responsibility by ignoring her threats.

Play this "professional's" stupidity and egotism against the wisdom and authentic emotion of Oscar, Reilly's unemployed father, and you see the writer's point.

But everyone in the family is just as shockingly lackadaisical as Steve in response to Reilly's suicide announcement, except, ironically, for her alcoholic dad, the only one who reacts with the appropriate fear, shock, and deep pain. The others are so caught up in themselves they can't think outside the boxes of their own egos. (Students of relational psychology would do well to study the relational dynamics here and try to puzzle out which characters—and which relationships—are healthy, which not, and why. )

In spite of her personal doomsday scenario, while on the bus to the Sequoia National Forest Reilly reaches out to a handsome young Christian with the apt moniker Ogden Clarke, who quickly sees her as a personal call for compassionate response. But Reilly's a crazy maker, constantly hurling insults, disdain, and double messages, and nobody suffers from that worse than the people who try to help her.

Ogden, representing the compassionate being reaching out in response to the animal with its foot caught in the trap, lets himself get bitten in an effort to release her. You can see why— she's very pretty, entertainingly witty in spite of having a terrible personality, and is looking for one last fling, while Ogden is open-minded about his sexual abstinence. But there's another dimension to his altruism which suggests an outpouring of generosity from a deep inward reservoir of love—a love that arrives from another source.

It seems as if the Biblical references in the film—most from the Book of Psalms—are the only hope for Reilly, nature and loving human connections opening a window into a world that will allow her to transcend the muck of family dysfunction and a wounded self and embrace a sacred mystery that she can't, for all of her efforts, simply mock out of existence.

If Reilly lacks personality, she makes up for it in good taste; she's chosen a beautiful place to die—the gorgeous Sequoia National Forest, a large stand of redwoods that have been around since ancient Rome, Ghengis Khan, the Black Plague, and the American Civil War.

And *voilà*, deep down inside Reilly's thorny exterior is someone who loves life and can accept it on its own terms, which means accepting that her life must end at the same time as recognising her own responsibility for seeing it out with her eyes open.

*Sequoia* manifests six of The Mindful Bard's **criteria** for films well worth seeing.

- It stimulates my mind.
- It provides respite from a cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful art endeavor.
- 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.

*Many thanks for the research assistance of Bill Waterman.*

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



## In Conversation

With Director, Erik Poppe

Wanda Waterman



Norwegian Erik Poppe started his career as a photojournalist, covering war zones in several different countries before deciding to direct films. Many elements in his latest feature, *A Thousand Times Good Night*, the story of a photojournalist torn between career and family, are autobiographical (he admits that some lines in the movie came from his own children). He recently took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about the personal life experiences that lead him to create *A Thousand Times Good Night*.

**early years pointed you toward film and photography? Toward documenting human pain and tragedy?**

For me, covering conflict was a personal form of protest and a need to test my own courage. I've always been interested in photography and conflicts abroad. I was raised in Portugal during the dictatorship in the sixties and have been fascinated by conflicts and the topic of refugees since.

At the same time, it was the intoxication of knowing to what extent I was able to control my own fear.

I also feared the flat, bland life people lead at home, and so off I went, again and again, heading for new places, new conflicts.

**What is it about your character and background that made it possible for you to direct a film like *A Thousand Times Good Night*?**

My early career as a print and photographic journalist came to an end in the mid-eighties when I was a war photographer in various parts of the world. This was a life I myself had chosen, and it was one I was always eager to go back to.

All the trips I made, all the assignments I undertook, were fueled by a desire to draw people's attention to what war is and to increase their understanding of it.

I was captivated by the notion of using the camera to show people the "nitty gritty" of life. On numerous occasions, I represented the only voice the victims had.

I wanted to tell my readers all over the world. "This is what you should be concerned about. This is what you should be engaged with."

I wanted to get people by the throat on a Saturday morning when they saw my pictures on the front page.

I thought of my camera not only as a witness, but as a mighty weapon in the struggle for our common humanity, and as providing testimony of a greater truth. To an outsider, it can seem foolish to move around in a war zone

armed only with a camera when everyone else has guns. But oddly enough, I felt safe behind my camera despite all this.

The first weeks after I got back to Norway were always an enormous challenge. I saw sheltered lives and spoiled individuals everywhere, and it riled me. It was a sheltered, rosy vision of life that was a constant reminder that my job had been in vain, or wasn't yet done. I wanted to go back in order to take even stronger pictures and scream to the rafters with my camera, to wake up from the doze here in Norway, or wherever the hell you are. *Part of the world is in flames right now, and these people are being ripped to shreds!* Finally, I crashed and burned.

Too late, I realised that this life exacts a price. In my case, it wasn't first and foremost post-traumatic stress disorder that floored me, but a virulent infection I'd contracted that put me in Ullevål Hospital. In quarantine, I had time to think through the past few years. I had an awakening, but it came too late.

I had a strong relationship with the woman with whom I shared my life, but it couldn't sustain the choices I'd made. I loved this person very much, but my ego was bigger than my love. Fortunately, we didn't have children, but even though we were grown up people, the wounds were raw and open.

*(To be continued.)*

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



## The Travelling Student Vagabond Memories

**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 issue we arrived in Byron's Bay, a beautiful beach city at the northern most part of the province of New South Wales (Australia).*

I sat watching the surfers swim out into the bay and take their turns riding the waves. Every once in a while a skilled surfer would catch a good wave and manage to stay afloat for what seemed like a lifetime. As I sat on the edge of my seat (a beachside rock), watching, I hardly noticed Dylan had received a call.

"We're good to go"

"What's that?" I replied

"My Dad's mate is out of town but we have the thumbs up to park the RV."

"Awesome!"

We drove up a small winding hill which was surprisingly close to the beach. Driving up a winding hill in a manual, multi-ton vehicle can be either exhilarating or terrifying. If at any point you come to a complete stop (which we

did) you have the pleasure of shifting back into first gear. On our first try the RV began rolling backwards. Dylan slammed on the brakes, which was followed by a loud crash! Luckily it was just some dishes being rattled around in the back. After the small mishap we drove through a gate onto the property.

What was most surprising was the magnificence of the house itself. It looked like the kind of place a modest executive might buy. Not a McMansion, but I could tell no cost had been spared in either quality or location. It was a bit ironic being led there by Dylan, who looked like an Australian vagabond.

With the family out on vacation I wouldn't get a tour of the stunningly beautiful home, but we did have access to an outdoor (warm water) shower, a grand luxury when you're living on the road.

After a quick dinner, I took some time out to do a bit of reading and write an article for *The Voice*. While I wanted to share my adventures in Australia, I was still telling the story of my travels in Quebec. As time had passed my memories had matured, some details being forgotten, but others taking on a more symbolic importance. Of course, I remembered the obvious stuff—key places and people—but, looking back, it's always interesting to see the small things we remember. A morning coffee completely ordinary yet so perfect as to take a permanent place in our memory, or the particular way the waves hit the sea wall on Wakki Beach.

After some routine reminiscing while writing, I packed up and readied myself for a night on the town. As the sun set bats came out in the hundreds—maybe even thousands—high above us, making a sort of constant buzzing sonar sort of sound.

As we made our way to the main street I tried to push back the reoccurring thought that we had over ten hours of driving ahead of us the next day.

## Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

### AUSU Student Forums

The forums slipped into a late-summer lull after the whirl of by-election posts. In the English course discussion forum, Amy seeks study tips on the ENGL 423 exam. And in the Business and Administration course forum, discussion continued on course ACCT 355.

### AthaU Facebook Group

Rachel seeks input on taking Spanish courses at AU. Rosy asks for study tips for the FREN 375 exams. Michelle is planning ahead and wonders when she needs to have all her marks in order to graduate in 2016.

Other posts include ordering parchment frames from the AU store, waiting for final marks, and courses EDUC 406, ENSC 200 and LGST 369.

### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "#AU Student Extension! Sep 8 entry deadline to win free course with #WriteSite 10th Anniversary #EssayWritingContest <http://ow.ly/Rw4x0>." @AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "Our new Student Lifeline Mental Health & Wellness program is now LIVE! <http://bit.ly/1JKuKZb> #AthaU #wellness."



## The Value in a Degree

Deanna Roney



Last week there was an article recounting a very personal experience with WGST 422. It made me stop and think about how courses have changed my life. How has my degree changed the way I perceive the world around me; how has it changed the way I look at myself?

A liberal arts degree does not lead to a promised and stable job; this is a reality I have been forced to face time and time again when I get questioned on what I will do when I am done. However, perhaps there is a bit more value to this degree than the potential money it will make me. My courses have ranged in topic but my main concentrations are my Major, English, my Minor, Women's Studies, and my unofficial other minor, Philosophy. These courses have changed the way I view the world and myself within it.

The value in a degree does not lie only within how you will make money with it. The value, for myself, lays within how I view my world and myself. I see ways in which society has influenced my motivations and thoughts for specific actions. I can see now that what I thought was my choice was subconsciously influenced from what is deemed "acceptable" by society. Pursuing an education for reasons other than profit seemed rebellious; deciding that I do not value the opinion of a stranger seemed like a daring decision.

I started to pay attention to the small things I said, what were these every day, common use, things saying? Were they degrading to someone, to a group, am I adding to the oppression of someone by saying these things? By laughing at jokes, even the ones I did not find funny, just to "fit in"? I realized through my education that by doing these things—these seemingly harmless things—I was contributing to the problem. My education gave me the courage to take a stand, to question those that continue to say these things that seem so innocent yet can be so damaging.

The value in my degree is not in the potential profit it will make me. But it is in the way it has changed me. Education is about more than learning a skill or task, it is about growing as a person. I have learned about the history of the country aside from the rewritten history we are taught in secondary school. There is a rich history that goes beyond the Roman and Greek histories. I have been shown that there are still factors at work in society that are unsettling and yet are hidden from a majority of people. Everyday things which seem commonplace, which should be more disturbing than they are, such as using women's bodies to sell hamburgers. The effect of these things, a slanted history or objectification of women in advertising, is more extensive than I had ever thought—before I started my degree.

The value in a degree is far more powerful than the money it will make. Though, of course, I hope to apply it in a way that I can sustain a living from it while still pursuing something I love. The real value, though, is immeasurable by profit.

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





## Setting Boundaries

Though the temptation is to close the door and my mind to festival work, I'm not indulging in that. I invested some money in clear plastic totes and storage solutions so that the growing inventory of festival stuff can be sorted and stored more easily. Not only will this corral and protect the items but it should stop the 'creep' into my personal space. Being able to see and find what I need when I need it should save time and frustration. One day I'm gathering props for a TV appearance; another day I'm prepping lanyards for volunteers or designing florals for the event.

So, with supplies spread across my living room, in the garage, in my studio, and in the basement, this sorting is taking some time and ingenuity. This fall I'm also forcing Hilary to sell the bins, supplies, and Christmas trees that she and her partner acquired during their event planning days. I'm no longer willing to offer warehouse space. That means that after their stuff is gone, I'll actually be able to stack the see-through bins in one designated area.

Besides this extra job I've assigned myself, there is plenty of other post-event work needing attention. I've got databases to create and/or update, financial records to enter, reports to submit to governments, new grants to apply for. I also want to get a jumpstart on my report to Town Council. I intend to include stats and guest book comments to bring the report and presentation to life. Another fun job is compiling a scrapbook of press clippings and ads that document our promotion plan. Last year I wrote a personalized message in more than one hundred twenty-five Christmas cards.

After harvest I intend to begin meeting with people and companies (including a platinum sponsor and a radio station) who want to play a bigger role in the festival next year. It's also not too early to nail down a band, caterer, food concessions, and theme for 2016. There are debriefing meetings to call and a volunteer wind-up to host next week.

In between this craziness, I'm trying to get my life back. I performed a marriage this weekend and fielded other inquiries. I finally got the sink of dishes done and umpteen loads of laundry washed. I'm tidying as I go. I need to schedule an oil change for the Venza and do some serious grocery shopping for the long harvest days ahead.

Today I began reading the ten or twelve Edmonton Journals plus local weeklies that have piled up in the last week or two. Unfortunately, I can't give the Duffy trial, campaign coverage, or comics the attention they deserve. Let's hope I didn't miss a funeral.

I love the challenge and adrenaline rush of putting together a successful event of this scope and magnitude. I'm even getting better at setting boundaries and keeping work where it belongs. Now I just need to use the restaurant and theatre gift certificates getting old in my wallet, from where I sit.

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



Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## All a-Board!

Dear Barb:

*I moved away from home for university when I was 18 and now I'm in my final year. I have three younger siblings in high school and grade school. My father passed away a few years ago after a lengthy illness and my mother has raised us pretty well on her own. When I was home during the summer break, my mother told me she is sending my 16 year old sister to private boarding school. I really don't think she should do this as I found it very difficult when I went away to university and I was two years older. My sister is very attached to her siblings and I think she would have a hard time adjusting to being away from home at such a young age. She will only be coming home for an occasional weekend. When I told my mother how I feel, she said this is a great opportunity for Shannon. We all inherited money from our grandfather, so the money is not an issue. I suggested mom send her to private day school, rather than boarding school. Basically my mom told me to mind my own business. My sister seems excited one minute and apprehensive the next, but she doesn't show her apprehension to our mom. Maybe she doesn't want to disappoint mom. When I try to talk to her about it, she closes up. I think this is a big mistake and my mom is going to regret it. Should I keep trying to change her mind or just let it be? Help, Melissa.*

Hi Melissa:

Sending a child to boarding school requires a lot of serious thought and consideration, which hopefully your mother has done. Boarding schools offer residents continuous educational opportunities, as well as a variety of valuable experiences. Has anyone else in the family gone to boarding school, or is this something totally new for your family? You can find pros and cons to both experiences, but I think a lot of it depends on the personality of the child and her interactions within the family. For many children it is very traumatic to leave their home and family and for these children it's not a good option. They may become homesick or possibly depressed. For others, it provides the stimulation they require to develop into a well-rounded person. I really believe you have to trust your mother on this and see how it turns out. You may be right and your sister may end up coming home after one semester. Keep the lines of communication open with her, as she may need someone to talk to when she becomes homesick—an inevitable part of going away to boarding school. As well, this transition will be difficult for your mother, as your sister is quite young to be leaving home. Things will turn out as they should.

Thanks for your question Melissa.

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.



# DISFUNCTIONAL LOVE LANGUAGES...

... FOR SNOBS

GIFTING



Someone gave this to me. It's gauche, it's ghastly... Here, YOU take it!

QUALITY TIME



I've been snubbing her for three weeks now, and I think it's finally doing her some good.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION



I couldn't reach any of my friends—so then I thought of you.

ACTS OF SERVICE



please, let me do you a favour and take these awful clothes to the Sally Ann.

PHYSICAL TOUCH



I kissed everyone at the party on both cheeks—and never touched a single cheek!

BRA-VO!

BY WANDA WATERMAN





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## IMPORTANT DATES

- Sept 9: AUSU Council Meeting
- Sept 10: Last day to register for courses starting Oct 1
- Oct 10: Last day to register in courses starting Nov 1



## AUSU Student Lifeline Launch

AUSU's new **Student Lifeline Mental Health & Wellness program** launched on September 1!

**Student LifeLine** is completely confidential and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can access the program any time you need professional support for maintaining a healthy balance between school, work, and everyday life.

### Student LifeLine includes:

- confidential consultations (*by phone, online, and by mobile app, 24/7*)
- counselling (*in-person, by video, or by phone with 3000+ counsellors across Canada*)
- community referrals
- resources (*information and educational materials such as articles, booklets, & CDs*)
- online tools (*such as self-assessments, toolkits, blogs, and more*)
- mobile app

**Website:** [www.lifeworks.com](http://www.lifeworks.com)

**Username:** AUSU

**Password:** wellness

**Phone:** 1.877.418.1537

For more information, visit our website [here](http://www.lifeworks.com).

## Get out the Vote!

AUSU has partnered with AUGSA and CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Students' Associations for the 2015 "**Get out the Vote**" Campaign! We believe that the best way to make a difference is to ensure we dramatically enhance voter participation amongst students. By **pledging your vote**, you help give AUSU and CASA a stronger voice with the national government, which in turn helps us to advocate on your behalf.

Learn more about **Get out the Vote** and **pledge your vote** [here](http://www.getoutthevote.ca)!



## Free Lynda.com Subscription

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

<http://www.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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Views and articles presented here are those of the contributors and do not represent the views of AUSU Student Council

## THE VOICE

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

<b>Publisher</b>	Athabasca University Students' Union
<b>Editor-In-Chief</b>	Karyna Hoch
<b>Managing Editor</b>	Karl Low

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

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