

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 41 2015-10-16

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Election 2015: Post-secondary Stances

A Comparison of the Major National Parties

Now Available!

AUSU's new online Award Apps!

Plus:

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We are reaching the end of one of the longest political campaigns in Canada's history, and, as one of the two voters who decided the winner of the provincial election in our riding in Calgary, I would like to stress the importance of your vote, and encourage everyone to exercise her/his democratic right and responsibility.



Also, nearly a decade ago, I wrote an [article](#) for *The Voice*, rebutting another writer, entitled "The Scary Harper Government", in which I tried to show how neo-platonists, and their "noble lies", like Harper, were dangerous to Canadian democracy. While this accomplished little at the time, nearly a decade of Harper government has proven to be even more devastating to democracy in Canada than I had thought. Some evidence to support this view is presented below.

I believe there is now so much well-researched evidence out there to prove that Stephen Harper is arguably the worst prime minister in Canadian history, that I find it difficult to realize that some people are still contemplating voting for his party. However, polls show that many have not contacted this evidence, and/or do not share my bias (which should be fairly obvious).

I know that most students of AU who are contemplating supporting Harper, or are undecided, probably have little time for political reading in addition to their heavy course-loads, so I have attempted to keep sources brief and quickly verifiable.

The first is a downloadable [publication](#) by *The Tyee*, entitled "Stephen Harper, Serial Abuser of Power: The Evidence Compiled" by D. Beers, Tyee staff, and contributors. (34pages). This summarizes some of the most egregious episodes.

Second, is a recent [column](#) by Carol Goar, in the *The Toronto Star*, which details a few of Harper government long-term repercussions.)

Third, is a brief [article](#) by Gerard Monpetit, in *The Huffington Post*, stressing the main reason why the TPP is great for foreign businesses, and very bad for Canadian democracy.

Finally, if you still aren't convinced to vote for anyone but the Harper Conservatives, try [singing along](#) with Tony Turner, a Canadian scientist suspended by Harper for writing and performing "HarperMan", a song in which every mention of Harper deeds has been published and verified in most newspapers long ago. (Apparently, "Steve" isn't so happy with music, when he is the subject, rather than the musician!).

Ron Tebo

So it's safe to say you won't be voting CPC? - 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**A Lack of Vision****Karl Low**

So here we are. The last issue of *The Voice Magazine* before Canada's 42nd general election. I have the luxury of living in a riding that's basically locked down. This means I can vote my choice knowing that the First-Past-The-Post system we have will discard my vote as both unneeded and unheeded.

In some ways that's a good thing. It means I don't have to pay too much attention to the polls to try to game our voting system into getting a more acceptable result. It means that I have the freedom to vote for candidate, or policy, or leader, or color of campaign sign, if I wish, and won't be risking anything by doing so.

However, not everybody's so lucky. If you're one of the many millions who hasn't yet voted and are still looking around to see if there's anything that can finally make up your mind, you're in luck with this week's issue of *The Voice Magazine*. Writer Bethany Tynes has gone through the policies of the four large national parties and has presented us with a quick rundown of what their policies would mean for post-secondary education, something that, as an AU student, you probably care about.

We also have an article by Cara Doane on her response to the various campaign promises of the major parties, and in it, she points out something I've felt as well. This campaign, no matter how long it has been, has seemed to be awfully short on issues of substance.

Instead, we get wrangling on which set of tax plans and government service adjustments do we want to move forward with. We get arguing about whether we should dictate what some women wear so as to stop the men in their life from, uh, dictating what they should wear. (I'm still not sure I understand the point of that concept). We get debates about whether we should accept a trade deal that was negotiated primarily by corporations and kept away from any public scrutiny or consultation. And while I'm not arguing that any of these are unimportant, I've been looking for a larger purpose. A game-changer, if you will. I'm still waiting.

Beyond that though, this issue we start with our interview with student Mistelle Montague. If the name seems familiar, it's probably because you're on the Athabasca University unofficial student facebook group, and you recognize it from the first post you see posted there.

We also have a look at the new AUSU online award application system. Barb Lehtiniemi dug into it and found that while it makes things easier, you're still going to prepare to do it properly, her article will tell you how. Also, Carla Knipe, following up on her story about how having hobbies helps our health, is looking beyond AU for some hobbies you might try yourself, if you were looking for something new to keep you busy. This week, her sights are set on the stars.

Plus, of course, a selection of news, reviews, entertainment, and other stories to keep you amused while you're standing in the voting line.
Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl', is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

MINDS WE MEET



Mistelle Montague is an AU student from British Columbia. Originally from Ontario, Mistelle completed her undergraduate degree through AU and is now in the Masters of Integrated Studies program.

Mistelle is also an administrator of the unofficial Athabasca University Facebook group page. The Voice Magazine recently interview Mistelle by e-mail. Here's what she had to say about school, parenting, and Bob Marley.

First of all, whereabouts do you live? And have you always lived there?

My family (husband and two sons) have lived in Ontario most of our lives but just recently made the move to British Columbia—possibly temporarily (possibly not.)

If you work, describe what you do.

I am a domestic Goddess (that counts right?). Basically I spend my days picking up after two little tornados (and one not so little one.)

You are an administrator for the unofficial Athabasca Facebook page. What has that experience been like?

I was truly honored to be asked to take a position as administrator for the group. Since this is so new to me I haven't had much experience with it yet, although I have been an active member of the group for a few years now and really think it is integral to the AU experience. I love being able to interact with other AU students, but most of all I enjoy that I have the ability to help new students navigate through what can be a very intimidating time in their lives.

Describe the path that led you to AU.

Well, this is a loaded question. In short, I had just had my second son and was looking at going back to school (a dream I had for a long time) versus working a minimum wage job and paying for daycare. The latter option left me paying more for child care than I would have made working and so the decision became easy—I needed an education to give myself the opportunity to get a higher paying job in the future. Given that going to a brick and mortar school would have again left me paying for child care, I started searching for distance based schools. AU had everything I was looking for. Namely, I could complete my schooling from home at my own pace, and AU offered a wide variety of courses that I was interested in.

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

Not studying? I'm not sure I understand (LOL).

My husband, kids and I try to get out every day for some fresh air, and we have a Jeep that was built specifically for exploring areas that not many people ever get to see. Now that we are in BC there is a list as long as my arm of things we want to do and see!

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

This would be a toss-up between my children inspiring me to be a good example for them, and my husband's constant encouragement to pursue my dreams of getting a University degree (something I honestly never thought I was capable of.) If it weren't for him I don't think I would have gotten this far in my studies—if I ever started at all. He has been a continuous source of support throughout my education.

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

Bob Marley! Why? Well—why the heck not? Really though, he was an ambassador for peace (among other things.) I love that his songs represent his life experiences—of which he had many unique ones. I would just love to hear what life advice he had to offer.

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

Online learning has been one of the best things that has ever happened to me. Not only do I feel better as a person to be pursuing an education, but it has enabled me to homeschool my children and be there every day to watch them grow.

The downside is that you can feel isolated. There have been many times when I wished I had someone to discuss a topic for a paper with, or just wanted to get out of the house and have some adult conversation. Overall though, the pros definitely outweigh the cons.

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

Definitely! One example comes to mind when I think about this question. During my first semester I was completely overwhelmed. I took on way too much at once and was really doubting everything. I started looking for jobs and other things I might be able to do from home, and I definitely thought that was the end of my life as a student. Although I have had a few moments like that throughout my studies, my first semester was by far the toughest. I think that's what motivates me to help other students get through their first few semesters—it can be so tough!

What was your most memorable AU course?

This is a tough choice—I have learned so much from (almost) every course I have taken. I think my favorite and most engaging course was WGST 422, *Violence Against Women*, but if we are discussing the best overall experience, I think WGST 499, *Final Project*, gave me a unique experience and got me out in the real world. I spent a few months working at the local women's shelter helping to facilitate their art therapy program—it was a really great experience.

If you won \$20 million in a lottery, what would you do with it?

Pay off (part of) my student loans?

I would be lying if I said I had never thought about this. I think of all the good I could do with that much money. I wouldn't want a fancy car or a big house, I would simply want to make a real difference in the lives of those around me. The first thing I would do is make sure all my friends and family were debt free and retired (or were able to pursue something they truly loved,) and then...who knows. I think I would find creative ways to surprise

deserving families with the chance at a new life—whatever that would mean for them. I would probably end up with many letters after my name—I would become a professional student without worrying about how much my student loan payments will be one day.

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

I don't think it's so much what I have given up as it is what my family has sacrificed in order to allow me to pursue my dreams. My children have heard "we don't have the money for that" more times than I can count. They have also had to spend many hours occupying themselves while I sit at the computer reading, writing papers, or studying. Worth it? Well, that remains to be seen. I hope that, by watching me pursue my dreams, my children learn to do the same.

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

I guess first I would need to find exactly what I was supposed to do as President! Then I would take on the student-tutor relationship. After many years at AU I have noticed a decline in the adherence to service standards. It saddens me when students have to wait weeks and have to chase tutors in order to get their grades. I believe this hinders the student experience, and it really plays a role in what each student is getting (or not getting) out of each course. If students are unable to obtain constructive feedback (in a reasonable time frame,) how are they supposed to learn from mistakes, know where they are going right or wrong, and use that feedback for future assignments in the course?

If you could wake up tomorrow with a "superpower", which one would it be?

I'm pretty sure my kids are already convinced I have super powers (shhh!), but if I had to choose one I think reading minds would be awesome. Or maybe the ability to turn invisible!

What is your most prized possession?

I have so many cool things that I love, but my parchments are pretty high on the list. I also have a blanket that my 94 year-old grandmother made with the help of one of my aunts— it's made out of my wedding dress. I love it!

Please tell us something that few people know about you.

Hmm. There's lots of things to choose from. I make all my own soaps, lotions, and healing balms. I love doing it, and I try to help other people learn how to also.

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

Go to school before you have kids (lol)!

Life can change at any moment, take time to enjoy it even when things seem like they aren't going your way. Appreciate what you have every single day and never lose sight of your dreams.

What do you think about e-texts?

I don't like them. Not at all. I like a print based text—I want to write in it, I want to bring it everywhere I go, and I get migraines from reading too much on screen, so e-texts are horrible for me. My belief is that students should at least be offered the choice and shouldn't be charged the same amount if they aren't receiving a physical book. I also like to use my books for future references, and love that I can display them on my bookshelf—it gives me a sense of accomplishment to know that I have read those and learned a great deal from each of them. In a way, my old text books are a road map of my education.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

I have had a mix of tutor support. I am a big fan of communicating with tutors and think that they can be valuable resources during your studies. I have found some tutors to be very open to this, and others who are less than helpful (always rushing you and not answering questions clearly—a huge pet peeve of mine.)

Where has life taken you so far?

I haven't had a chance to do much traveling in life. I became a mother early on and have been through some incredibly hard financial struggles. I can't remember a time when I wasn't studying even though it's only been 3.5 years since I started. My life has taken me through many challenges and I have found a great deal of enjoyment in spending time with my children and my husband. Now we have opened a new chapter in our lives—we have made many sacrifices to get here and we hope it is worth it in the end.

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

You mean there are books that aren't textbooks? WHAT!?

Does Curious George count?

**Now Available!****AUSU's New Online Awards Applications****Barbara Lehtiniemi**

If you think the AU Student Union's new online process for undergraduate scholarship, award, and bursary applications is going to make this fall's application easier, you're right! But if you think "easier" means you can wait until the deadline of November 1 to begin work on your application, you may be overly optimistic.

Don't wait until the November 1 deadline. The new online application process, which went live in late September, does make it easier than ever to apply for an AUSU award. No longer will students have to print out the application, complete forms by hand, then scan and e-mail their application. However, the new online applications still require the usual advance preparation.

Below is an outline of what steps students can expect to take before reaching for the "submit application" button on the bottom of the online application form:

Identify which scholarships/bursaries you are eligible for. Start at the [Scholarships, Awards & Bursaries](#) page of AUSU's website. Click on each award in the list to open a brief summary of the purpose and eligibility requirements for each award. Applications are being accepted until the November 1 deadline for the Academic Achievement Scholarships (2 x \$1000), Balanced Student Awards (2 x \$1000), AUSU Bursaries (5 x \$1000),

Returning Student Awards (2 x \$1000), and Student Service Awards (2 x \$1000). Applications are accepted year-round for Computer, Travel, or Emergency Bursaries.

Review the application form. Once you've identified which award(s) you're eligible for, click the "apply now" button to open up the application form. Select your chosen award from the drop down list. Carefully read through the detailed application requirements, which are different for each award type.

Perform a "dry run" through the application. Starting with the "Personal Information" section, begin filling out the application. Even though you can't save a partially-completed application, performing a trial run—filling out the required fields and answering the eligibility questions—serves two important purposes. First, filling out each field will help you identify information you need to gather before finalizing your application. Second, the form is dynamic and answers you provide to some questions populate the form with additional fields. Before abandoning your partially-completed application, you may want to print it out to use as reference while you gather the remaining information. (Don't click "submit application" until you're sure your application is fully complete!)

Assemble all your information. Before you attempt to fully complete and submit your application, you'll need everything ready. Gather any information you didn't have during your dry run, and compose any longer answers, such as essay questions (you can compose longer answers in a Word document and later copy the text into the application form.) In addition to the information required on the form itself, most applications require you to upload your AU transcript (instructions to obtain an AU transcript are on the application.) Some scholarship applications may require you to upload a letter of reference, tax information, or other documents—you have to obtain these before preparing your application.

Complete and submit the application form. Pick a time and place in which you can work without distractions. Re-read the application requirements, then carefully fill out all required fields. Upload your (previously saved) AU transcript and any other required documents. Before hitting the "submit application" button, carefully proofread your application—this is your last chance to correct errors. Read and confirm the Declaration of Applicant, then click "Submit Application." You'll receive an email confirmation at the address you provided on the form.

Scholarship applications that are incomplete or improperly completed will be "destroyed upon receipt." To avoid having your efforts wasted, it's advisable for students to spend some time looking over the application and its requirements well in advance of the deadline. Then, once you've gathered all the information and supporting documents required, you can go online to complete and submit the application form. If you have any questions about the application requirements or experience difficulty filling out the online form, contact the AUSU office at admin@ausu.org or 1-855-497-7003, extension 2.

There is over \$10,000 in AUSU awards available in this application period. With its new online award application system, AUSU is making it even easier for you to apply for AUSU scholarships, awards, and bursaries.

(Don't forget to also check out the Student Awards [page](#) at Athabasca University for other student awards!)

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



The Mindful Bard *Insomnia*

Wanda Waterman

Come, Sleep, and With Thy Sweet Deceiving...

Album: *Insomnia*

Artist: Aurora Orchestra

Conductor: Nicholas Collon

"Come, Sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving
Lock me in delight awhile;
Let some pleasing [dreams] beguile
All my fancies; that from thence [I may feel] an influence
All my powers of care bereaving."
- John Fletcher

What does it mean that several concept albums with nighty-night themes have just appeared? At least three classical, two pop, and one world album about night, dreams, sleep, or lack of it, have just been released for your listening pleasure. Just last week I recommended Max Richter's *From Sleep*, and this week the most mindfully engaging album around is *Insomnia*. Coincidence?

In my piece on Richter's work I suggested that far from being an expression of a desire to escape the nightmare of the postmodern landscape, music in honour of night and sleep—or, in this case, sleeplessness—might be an expression of a universal need for a repose that evades us (if we don't evade it ourselves). Perhaps the prevalence of this theme in recent recordings proves the need is more deep-seated than previously supposed.

From Sleep had the explicit purpose of being a kind of highbrow sleep aid. *Insomnia* is a little different, as the title suggests, being a complex of ideas, thoughts, sounds, and words grouped around the idea of insomnia, arranged so as to present a multidimensional way of looking at and experiencing the torture of unwanted wakefulness.

Tenor Allan Clayton is divine throughout; I don't know if I've ever heard the Beatles' "Blackbird" (included here for thematic and not just aesthetic reasons) so expertly and yet so lovingly interpreted, complete with masterful whistling. And how he can keep to the relentless tyranny of the metronome while sounding so at ease and uncontrived is beyond my understanding.

I'm just plebeian enough to be put off when I hear the grandiosity of a classical voice taking on pop and folk, but this arrangement and presentation is something completely different. A bit of a lilt, a gentle pulse, and an audible gasp each time he starts whistling are the cat's meow.

A number of critics have dissed this album for being too vague a concept, but I don't think they really listened. Every detail of this project was clearly chosen to integrate with an idea that can only be expressed in poetry, music, or both.

The centrepiece of the album is Benjamin Britten's *Nocturne* for tenor and chamber orchestra, composed in 1958, which couches poetry by Shakespeare, Shelley, Tennyson, and more within the most stirring musical contexts. (If you're trying to avoid having nightmares when you do finally nod off, don't listen to the lines from "The Kraken" by

Tennyson, about a great, sleeping, underwater beast.)

The nightbirds motif doesn't just appear in "Blackbird." Brett Dean's *Pastoral Symphony*, dating from 2000, juxtaposes birdsongs and an increasingly anxious orchestral soundscape, making a distinct statement about the natural world as we are ceasing to know it. (This piece has the right dissonance to evoke that feeling you get when you wake at three in the morning in that weird mental space where all your aspirations and achievements suddenly look absurd and ridiculous. If only the right people were listening.)

The metronome, oddly, is like an extra player on the album, appearing in nearly every track like the relentless ticking of a grandfather clock. One track, *Poems Symphonique for 100 Metronomes* by Gyorgy Ligeti, puts the metronome centre stage (in the live performance audience members activate metronomes around the hall), and it sounds like the horsemen of the apocalypse— if there a hundred of them.

The Aurora Orchestra, established in Great Britain in 2005, has a reputation for well-crafted orchestral theatre involving collaborations across different artistic platforms. They've endeared themselves to the Mindful Bard not only by their music, but by their pursuit of accessibility; their Learning and Participation programme strives to help young people develop musical skills and eclecticism. May it ever be.

Insomnia manifests five of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It provides respite from a cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.☐
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.☐
- It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.☐

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.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Lindsey seeks input on whether to take PHIL 231 or PHIL 252. Kelly looks for suggestions on courses suitable for challenge credit. Sarah wonders why AU tuition fees can't be paid through online banking. Other posts include course evaluations, tutor support, and courses ADMN 232, HIST 353, and WGST 422.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Demand for AU's flexibility rising even through tough economy ~ AU VP Pamela Walsh in #CalgaryHerald Interview <http://ow.ly/TkfY0>."

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "Are you an #AthaU student that does volunteer work? Apply for our Student Service Award! DEADLINE NOV 1. <http://bit.ly/1GIWJhi>."

@AU_Press tweets: "How is dependency on oil affecting the health of democracy in Canada? <http://www.aupressblog.ca/2015/10/08/oil-and-de>."

Election 2015: The Post-Secondary Stances

Bethany Tynes



Post-secondary education is a responsibility that the federal government has delegated to the provinces. Colleges and universities are created and regulated through provincial legislation and ministries. And yet, the federal government still has a role to play, particularly with regard to the nationwide Canada Student Loans program. The four major national political parties in Canada (the Conservatives, Liberals, NDP, and Greens) have now all released their final campaign platforms. So which party puts forward the best offerings with regard to post-secondary education? That probably depends on your age, income level, and beliefs about post-secondary.

The Conservative Party of Canada notes that when "parents begin saving for their future education," children get "the best possible start in life." As such, the

Conservative Party plans to help families prepare for post-secondary education by enhancing their current Registered Education Savings Plans program. If re-elected, the Conservative Party pledges to "double the enhanced grant for middle-income families from 10 cents to 20 cents per dollar on the first \$500 contributed each year," and "double the enhanced grant for lower-income families from 20 cents to 40 cents per dollar on the first \$500 contributed each year."

The Conservatives report that 2.59 million children were assisted by government RESP programs in 2014, of whom 900,000 were from low- and middle-income families – which, incidentally, appears to imply that 1.69 million, or 65%, of the children assisted by this program are already from high-income families. Of course, this promise only impacts the next generation of post-secondary students, rather than those currently taking courses or managing student debt.

The Liberal Party of Canada, concerned that "rising costs have made post-secondary education increasingly out of reach," puts forward a wider array of promises in their platform. They plan to increase both the number of students eligible for the non-repayable grants, as well as the amount of the grants. "We will increase the maximum Canada Student Grant for low-income students to \$3,000 per year for full-time students, and to \$1,800 per year for part-time students," and "we will increase the income thresholds for eligibility, giving more Canadian students access," they pledge. This will result in Liberals increasing funding to the program by "\$750 million per year, rising to \$900 million per year by 2019/20."

The Liberals would also increase the amount of income graduates can earn before being required to begin repaying their student loans. By "changing the income thresholds in the Repayment Assistance Plan," the Liberals would "pay the interest on student loans until graduates begin to earn sufficient incomes to take over their own payments and repay their own loans."

The New Democratic Party platform on post-secondary is also surprisingly short, considering that the party has long been seen as an ardent supporter of access to education for all people. The NDP platform discusses how students, for too long, have "have mortgaged their future in student loans" in order to afford post-secondary education. Only two solutions, however, are put forward, both of which are fairly moderate. The NDP's main promise regarding post-secondary is to "make education more accessible and affordable by phasing out interest on all federal student loans" over the course of the next seven years.

The NDP also commits to increase funding to the Canada Student Grants program by \$250 million over four years, and to focus this funding "on helping low-income and Indigenous students, as well as students living with disabilities." While increases to non-repayable student funding are certainly something that improves student access, the amount of this pledge seems particularly limited when it's contrasted against the \$750 million per year pledged by the Liberals to the same program.

The Green Party of Canada offers by far the most radical solution. Green Party would begin by "abolishing tuition fees for students without adequate financial means," increasing funding for First Nations students, "implementing a debt forgiveness program" to eliminate all "existing or future student federal debt above \$10,000," and abolishing interest on new student loans.

And that's just how they'd start. The Green Party cites the example of many European countries by noting that

many of the world's most successful economies have proven that expanding the public education system to include post-secondary increases prosperity, equality, productivity, and economic competitiveness... Through consultation and collaboration with provincial governments and universities and colleges, by 2020 we will abolish tuition fees for post-secondary education and skills training for Canadians, guaranteeing that income is never a barrier for qualified students.

This plan certainly entitles the Greens to proclaim that they will "SLASH CANADA'S STUDENT DEBT TODAY, AND ABOLISH TUITION FEES FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES" [emphasis original].

So which party puts forward the best post-secondary promises? The Green Party certainly offers the highest-value promises for post-secondary students. But if you are planning have a comfortable income and are planning to save for your children's education, then the Conservatives could help you build your savings with enhanced RESPs. And if you already have student loans, the Liberals could help you qualify for Repayment Assistance, or the NDP could remove interest from your loans.

Check out each party's platform. See what they have to say about what's important to you. Then, on Monday, Oct. 19, help choose the Canada (and Canadian post-secondary system) that you want to see – VOTE!

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

The Fit Student

How to Study and Live Stress Free

Marie Well



Do you ever wonder if you are the only person on the planet with the continual worries and ruminations you face? Do you fret throughout the day, first thing in the morning, last thing at night, and sometimes experience anxiety to boot? When your mind wanders, do you worry about the past or the future?

If you do any of these things, don't worry: because everyone tends to worry when their mind wanders. In the book *Stress-Free Living* by the world-renowned Mayo clinic, Amit Sood tells us that when our minds aren't focused on something external, they are instead focused on past ruminations and future worries. As humans in a fallen world, as the Christian bible refers to this realm, we all harbor guilt, pain, fear, and worry. Worse than that, our minds belabor these worries and ruminations at any time when our thoughts aren't preoccupied with an external focus. It generally doesn't feel great to be a mind-wandering human, unless, that is, we learn

how to control our minds.

In this multipart write-up, I hope to encapsulate some of the gems in the Mayo Clinic book to help you cope with both everyday living and the periodic excruciating exams of online university.

Hum While Showering

I wondered why I get so stressed when I bathe. I now realize that leisurely bathing leads to mind wandering. When my mind wanders, I often think of worries and stressors that trigger alarm bells.

I used to spend hours reading multiple books while in the tub, but then I would start worrying about getting the book wet or losing my page. As a result, I formed into a worrywart while sitting in the tub. Believe it or not, I would get so stressed that I would forget whether or not I had just shampooed or cream rinsed my hair. In other words, I would start to panic.

As a poorly thought avoidance strategy, I started to shower instead. A brief shower allowed me to keep my thoughts from wandering, and so, temporarily, my avoidance behavior was rewarded. But what that means is that I'm still fearful of bathing.

But, Amit Sood says to stay in the moment when you shower: hum when you shower and notice the feel of the water. Notice the smell of the soap. By being in the moment, you train your thoughts to avoid the automatic worries and ruminations. Don't try planning your day's activities while showering, as planning often leads to mind wandering, which leads to counterproductive worries. Instead, focus your thoughts on being in the present.

Greet Your Loved Ones with Joy

Every day when I get together with my loved one, I feel a burst of joy. Just seeing his sweet face and gorgeous smile as he comes to rescue me from the vagaries of the world fills me with utter happiness. I hardly contain my excitement at seeing him. I gush with love, with kind words, with the desire to hug him and never let go, every time I open the door to greet him. I grieve each time we part, and begin countdown to when I get to see him again. The times I have had with him have been the happiest times of my life. No one has treated me with the kindness he treats me with on a daily basis.

I have no qualms with gushing love at every sighting of my true love, but some of us might need help with greeting loved ones with joy. Amit Sood calls on you (on page 71) to greet your loved one as if it is the first time in a long time since your last meeting. Savor the moment you meet and the time together as if your loved one has returned from a long separation, say to a foreign country. During that greeting and time spent together, be sure to shower your loved one with compassion, respect, acceptance, appreciation, validation, and empowerment.

Don't Judge

I never knew the value of not judging others until I started practicing it. And—wow! Not judging others gives me more happiness and inner peace than ever before. I feel so liberated by the act of not judging others that I wonder how this treasure trove action hasn't become a mainstay in everyone's life. By not judging, I feel so elated, so connected with myself and with others, true to my most inward nature. I feel like I'm the major benefactor of my positive behavior, although I know that others benefit, too. How could anyone live a life of judgment when it feels heavenly to abandon all criticisms of others? Try being patient and easy on others, nonjudgmental, for a day, and you'll notice a lightheaded, blissful feeling.

Amit Sood says to never look toward other people's shortcomings. When we judge others, they shy away from us and become defensive. In judging others, we don't connect with them on a healthy level. Don't try to change people or instruct them to improve. If we accept others, they will feel more compelled to make improvements. Besides, when we don't judge others, we tend to feel judged less ourselves.

Kindness

I like to give a lot more attention and affection to others than they tend to like to receive. At work, I used to say hello and broadly smile at anyone and everyone who passed by my desk. Often, people would start to ignore me by the fifth hello. One of my stepparents ignores me after the first hello. One hello is more than she can handle in a day. But, I genuinely love giving people attention and affection.

Amit Sood talks about the four A's of kindness, which we should all develop and nurture: attention, appreciation, admiration, and affection. When you respond to people with these emphases, you let them know that they are special. In letting them know they are special, you bolster self-esteem and confidence. In doing so, they will more likely see what is special in you. Everyone wins when we give positive affirmations to others.

The Election of the Middle Class

Cara Doane



Canada's longest election campaign in history is (finally) in its final days. And if you've followed any of the campaigns or debates that have taken place, chances are, you've heard a lot about the middle class. I sure have. In the beginning of August, National Post writers had already heard so much about the middle class that the Post's Full Briefing newsletter "[Debate Night Drinking Game](#)" suggested viewers of the Maclean's debate "take a drink when any leader mentions the words 'middle class.'"

While I'm glad that Canadian politicians, and particularly the Liberal and New Democratic parties,

are focused on moving benefits from the wealthiest people in Canada to people of more moderate means, I find this heavy focus on the middle class to be a challenge when it comes to casting my ballot.

Because I am not one of those who struggles with middle class issues. I am Canada's hidden poverty problem. I am the working poor.

In my entire adult life, I have never seen the right side of the LICO – the Low Income Cut Off, which Statistics Canada defines as the threshold "below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family." That's a complicated way of saying that those of us below the LICO spend the vast majority, if not all, of our money on things that are necessary, and have little, if any, left for things that are extra.

Over the past ten years, I've worked incredibly hard as full-time parent, first while trapped in an abusive relationship, and subsequently, while on my own. I have worked hard to be able to finish my post-secondary credentials. I've worked hard at my full-time employment, which I've been lucky has been fairly flexible around my children's schedules. And I've worked hard as a volunteer for social services organizations that aim to make my corner of the world a better place.

But despite all of my hard work, I am no further ahead now than I was ten years ago, except in terms of education and experience. My financial situation is worse, because the small raises I've achieved at work do not come near balancing out the tens of thousands of dollars of student loan debt I've incurred. Believing that hard work and a good education will secure your future is, in my experience, about as reasonable as believing that eating an apple a day will prevent you from necessitating the services of a physician in perpetuity.

So as I go to the ballot-box this coming Monday, I'm faced with a number of candidates who all say they want to make life more fair for Canadians. At the same time, however, the parties these candidates belong to are all focusing on solving the problems of people whose income level I can only hope to one day attain.

I believe that to build a better Canada, our government needs to be committed to the best interests of all Canadians. Whichever party forms government after October 19th needs to remember that it is not only the middle class that they serve – but also those of us whose hope and hard work has not yet enabled us to cross the poverty line.

Council Connection

S.D. Livingston



Between following the federal election and watching the Blue Jays rally to an incredible win, it's a wonder anybody's getting any work done these days. But the AUSU council was on track at their regular meeting on October 13, and here are a few of the highlights.

One of the first items on the agenda dealt with the committee that's going to recommend whether or not council should conduct a forensic audit. In order to get students involved and know what they think, the committee's terms of reference called for at least two members from outside council. The call went out for volunteers but after 10 days only a single student had expressed any interest. That's a little surprising, given that it's student money we're talking about, but, on the plus side, council changed the terms of reference to a minimum of one outside member. The committee now has an engaged AU student on board and can get started. Watch for updates on the issue [here](#).

Student involvement affected another item on the agenda—the Awards Committee. Currently, membership on the committee is restricted to AUSU councillors. A proposed change would have seen the committee made up of "a majority membership of AUSU Councillors and up to two members from outside of Council." But as councillor Kim Newsome pointed out, there could be serious privacy concerns with that, since committee members see the confidential financial details of students who apply for awards.

Another concern is that, while councillors have formal requirements for things like privacy policies and computer requirements, students would also need to feel confident that any non-council committee members would be subject to the same rigorous guidelines. Especially when it comes to handling sensitive personal data. For now, Awards Committee membership will stay limited to councillors, but the question of non-council members has become an action item for more study.

Still on the topic of money, council voted to approve the 2015/2016 budget—but not without some interesting debate that highlighted the digital vs. paper dilemma faced by both council and AU alike.

If you've ever used one of the popular AUSU planners, you'll know it's an incredibly useful thing. Typically, the planners are so popular that students start asking for them weeks before their old planners run out. However, council didn't include funding for the planners in the new budget, and it's easy to see why. All that awesomeness came at a cost—roughly \$45,000 each year.

In comparison, a non-custom planner for students would be about one-third of that cost. And as council president Shawna Wasylyshyn pointed out, some of the features of the hard-copy planner are now available in the new AUSU app.

The interesting thing about this topic is that the budget discussion came shortly before a debate about whether council should finalize and release its statement on e-texts. As AU students know, the university's transition to e-texts has been met with plenty of valid objections, including concerns about just how well people understand and retain text in digital format. AU has since decided to put their e-text project on hold.

It's easy to see how the same dilemma confronts both council and the university. On the one hand, paper textbooks and planners are proven to be effective, reliable, and popular. But they're also a lot more expensive

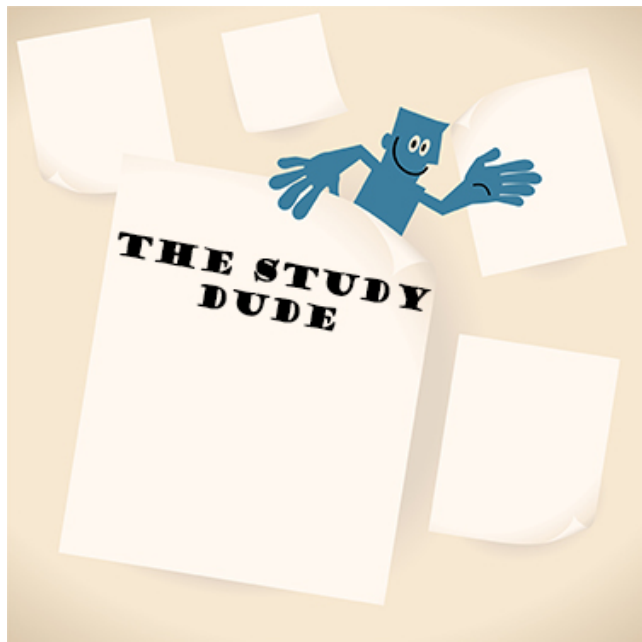
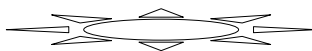
than the digital ones. Trying to balance those cost savings with what's best for students will no doubt continue to present tough choices.

Eventually the budget passed with a vote of 7 ayes, 1 nay, and 1 abstention. It's worth mentioning that the nay vote and abstention centred on the issue of whether the budget should include funds for a weekend working meeting that would gather councillors in one location. The rationale is that the travel costs will pay off in the added efficiency of a face-to-face meeting. Not every councillor was convinced, but the budget passed with that item intact. It was generally agreed, though, that with a full AUSU election coming up soon, any decision on holding a working meeting should be up to the new slate of councillors getting started on their two-year term.

And finally, the president's report noted that the "Get Out the Vote" campaign has seen more than 800 AU students pledge to vote in the upcoming federal election. That's a higher number than from the university of Lehtbridge, and from all across the country. That's good news for making sure that student voices are heard, no matter which party you support.

So cast your ballot and get back to cheering for the team everyone's getting behind. Go Jays!

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 **How to Write Like a Philosopher**

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to start your writing with a clincher and end with a bang.

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 Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* by Eric Hayot teaches you how to write with the sophistication of a philosopher, or, more generally, a humanities major.

Structure Paragraphs and Papers with Hayot's Uneven U

Once, in undergraduate studies, I wrote a brilliant commentary on a news program, so brilliant that the instructor requested to read it out loud to his classes. He assigned me an A-, so my terms for him reading it involved upping my grade to a solid A. He declined my request and read two dull papers as a substitute. The reason why I didn't receive an A had everything to do with my conclusion. I wrapped up an otherwise brilliant essay with a silly, incomplete conclusion.

I needed the magic elixir for writing a compelling conclusion. In all of my time as an undergraduate and then a graduate student, writing a compelling conclusion seemed a perplexing proposition. If the conclusion doesn't add anything new, it seemed only common sense that a conclusion should rehash or summarize what went before. Thus, drafting conclusions seemed a banal process.

Yet, Eric Hayot illuminates how writing the conclusion of anything from a paper to a book to a paragraph can make something new and exciting. In fact, ending with a highlight is the aim of a good conclusion. Here's Hayot's advice for concluding your paragraph or essay:

- In general, what is termed a level 5 sentence is the most theoretical of all the levels, often including a solution. A level 4 sentence is the next most theoretical, after the five, and often contains a problem. The level of theory, or abstraction, lessens down the numbers until you get to level 1, which is raw data. Level 2 is descriptive while level three is a summary that often includes an example.
- On a structural level, a paragraph should start with a level 4 sentence, which presents a problem in an abstract matter. After the level 4, the paragraph should work toward a level 1 sentence in the middle, including raw data. Finally, the paragraph sentences should climb upward until they end with a bang: a level 5 abstract or theoretical solution. This high to low back up to high forms a lopsided "U".
- By opening with a level 4 theoretical or abstract problem, you can move toward closing with a level 5 theoretical solution, thereby creating surprise and novel information in the final sentence of each paragraph or component. In short, the paragraph opens with a problem and by the end of the paragraph, closes with a solution. Surprise!
- When structuring not only your paragraphs, but entire sections or the entire book, structure it so that you start with a level 4 component (theoretical, presenting a problem) and work your way down to a level one (raw data) and then back up to level 5 (theoretical, presenting the solution). For example, the chapters in a section would start with a level 4 chapter, work downward to a level 1 chapter, and then conclude with a level 5 chapter.
- With a book, make each chapter form the lopsided "U" (level 4 on down to level 1 up to level 5). Within each chapter, even the subsequent paragraphs should form a "U".

Three Transitions that Will Make Your Paper Flow

Transitions. How do we master these structural necessities without them becoming redundant or sounding forced?

In a past Study Dude article, Joshua Schimel suggested that we take a keyword from the last part of the sentence and begin the next sentence with a synonym for that word. He also entertained other ideas for creating continuity, but this idea seemed quite intriguing for someone never before overtly exposed to that strategy.

When I was in graduate studies, a co-worker at an academic society advised me to add more transitions to my writing. Her suggestion was to include the common transitional words, such as "therefore", "thus", "consequently", and so forth. This suggestion seemed to miss the point of transitions: transitions need to be varied and interesting onto themselves. There needed to be a way to include transitions that didn't draw from a conjunctive adverb at every paragraph start.

Eric Hayot provides three suggestions for structuring your writing with a variety of transitions:

- One way to include transition is to use transitional words, such as "for example", "in other words", "in summation" and so forth. Punctuation marks such as the paragraph return, a semicolon, colon, or comma can also serve as transitional points.
- Another transitional structure is the x/y format, where x/y is a sentence. The x can refer to the material that came before the x/y sentence. The y alludes to what is coming next. The x typically can be a subordinate clause that rehashes something already discussed to lead nicely into the next y territory.
- Words like "now", "here", "there", "then" and so forth are called deictic markers and they fix the reader into a location or time in the text. In other words, they can ground the reader in the context of the matter by giving some sort of locality or temporality.
- The last transitional method Hayot discusses involves what are called lexical transitions. These transitions take keywords from the last paragraph (often from the last sentence) and use synonyms, antonyms, or cognates of the word in the next paragraph to create a kind of continuity. Just to be clear, a cognate word is a word similar in quality to another.
- Hayot even goes so far as to say that you can use words that sound similar or even rhyme or that have similar prefixes or suffixes to create a sense of continuity. This is a bit of a reach, but it can make your writing even more cryptic and rhetorically interesting.

The Components of Your Research

When I began writing my thesis in Communications, I felt overwhelmed with uncertainty. With what depth did I need to research the subject matter? What knowledge base of theory or methodology should I possess? Would my present knowledge ever be sufficient for the task at hand?

Having bypassed the honours course on suggestion of a professor, I found myself in the dark for what level of background was required of a master's thesis. I focused instead on various keywords in my paper, weak ones, as it turns out, and researched the dickens out of them. I also read up on the methodology I learned, but the methodological learning curve seemed endless. Many facets that I could have, and should have, researched went by the wayside.

Eric Hayot knows exactly the breadth of knowledge needed for writing a publishable paper. His exploration of what is needed to make a solid thesis or article will surprise you:

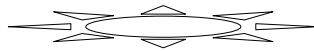
- You will need to explore archival documents such as historical records.
- You will need to study the critical perspectives on the topics that you are about to discuss.
- You will need to delve into theoretical perspectives on the topic that you are about to discuss. You may even explore the theoretical development of the theories that underlie your topic of study.
- You'll need to know the biographies of major figures you discuss in your book as well as histories of events.
- You'll need to know what schools the authors of major works you cite come from. You will need to know some depth of history and biography on these authors. For instance, you'll want to explore the biographical background and school allegiance of your most cited theorists.
- You will need to know the genre and language—background—of books or objects you study (say as primary sources). For instance, if you study something in a foreign language, you will need to know how to read some of the language and how to interpret the cultural nuances. In another instance, if you use poetry books as a primary resource, you will need to know something about the historical evolution of poetry along with contemporary poetry criticism and the structures of poems.

- While you need to know all of the above (the iceberg, metaphorically speaking) to get the insight necessary for an effective thesis or publication, you only show the tip of your iceberg in your actual writing.

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.

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In Conversation with Bad Citizen, Part I

Wanda Waterman



*Bad Citizen is an up-and-coming band from New York, known for lively classic rock and R & B. On July 15 they put out their debut EP, *Citizens Rise*. You can see the video of one the songs, "Watch It Fall," [here](#). Recently band members Matt, Frankie, Steve, and Patrick were good enough to talk to Wanda Waterman about the sometimes painful costs of loving rock and roll.*

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

MATT: The very fact that I wasn't allowed to listen to anything but gospel and Christian

music but snuck rock and roll in anyway. I had to risk getting my ass beat by my dad to get my fix. My brother bringing home a Gun's N' Roses (*Appetite For Destruction*) tape is what lit the fire. I used to jump around, head bang, sing, and play air guitar to the "Paradise City" music video when my dad wasn't around!

What's your favourite instrument to play and why?

FRANKIE: Gibson Les Paul custom 1977. It's the hottest guitar ever made.

What was your most beneficial educational experience?

FRANKIE: Failing but still here.

What or who in your training had the most—and best—influence on you, as a musician, a composer, and a human being?

FRANKIE: I'm basically a wannabe Jimmy Page with less skill and flare.

What was the most mesmerizing musical experience of your life?

STEVE: For reals, when I was in fourth grade a bunch of cats from the choir busted into the classroom and performed a medley of songs from *Alice In Wonderland*, one of them being the Mad Hatter's "I'm Late." They had choreography and everything. That was pretty mega. I joined up right quick. I wanted to perform baby!

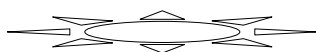
Seeing Green Day at age 14 was also mega rad! The first time I heard the song "Caravan" by Duke Ellington in 7th grade was really transformative as well. That goes mucho mucho for the first time I ever heard Louie Armstrong. Elvis Presley was blasting in the car when I coming home from the hospital after being born!

Has anything funny or strange happened to you in the recording studio or on the stage?

PATRICK: The first thing that comes to mind is our EP release show at Arlene's Grocery in NYC. Our rehearsal space is tiny, so Matt is normally relegated to a corner since he has the least gear to wield, but that means we don't get to experience the full performance he brings to the stage. He's a wild man at shows, but that EP release show was when he started slinging his mic around like a lasso, with it passing inches from my face. It was definitely the first time I was totally afraid for my life while playing music. Though dying from a flying mic while melting faces with our music is a pretty badass way to go.

(To be continued ...)

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



Music Review Ships Have Sailed

Samantha Stevens



Artist: Ships Have Sailed

Album: *Moodswings*

What is it about certain types of music that capture the very essence of summer? With the days becoming colder, summer feels so far away. But after listening to Ships Have Sailed's latest album, it's like those carefree and relaxed feelings that I have during the warmer months aren't as far away as I had thought.

Moodswings is the band's first full length album, a follow-up to their EP, *Someday*, which was released last year. Considered an alternative pop-rock duo, this LA based band reminds me of Coldplay, Hedley, and The Black Keys all rolled into one.

With a focus on strong emotions and stories, Ships Have Sailed wanted to create an album that wasn't

driven by a strong single. Instead, they created an album that leads from one song to the next, meaning that as a listener goes through the album they are embarking on more of a story, a journey, than just passively listening to the music. The music is robust and dynamic, and the lyrics are deeply emotional and will move a listener to either dancing or tears.

Listeners have the option to choose from upbeat tempos to thoughtful and sombre electronic tones. With eleven tracks on the album, there is truly something on *Moodswings* for everyone.

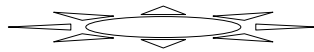
My favourite track on this album is "Criminal." The song begins somewhat repressed, like a tide of emotion is being held back. Then the music crescendos to strong drums and the grand and emotional vocals quickly join in and become the focal point of the song. The mood of the song is fairly dark, especially compared to some of their other songs, but I really enjoyed the themes and tones of the music.

"You Should Know" is a love song unlike any other I have heard. The song isn't sappy or full of innuendo. Instead the music and lyrics sound and feel more like real emotions, as if the singer is speaking directly to the person that he admires. The tones are suitably upbeat, but not overbearingly.

"Imaginary Friend" is an adorable tribute to friendship. The music is lighthearted, much like a child skipping through a park. The lyrics are sweet and refreshing, and the singing is perfectly matched to the song.

The final song that I will mention is the opening track "Drive." At first the song sounded too much like typical pop songs for my tastes. However, the incredibly strong singing and electronic effects made the song for me. The layers of effects are incredible, and the male vocals evolve the overall tones into something that I had never heard before.

I highly recommend checking out Ships Have Sailed's latest album *Moodswings*, which is available on iTunes. *Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.*



Extracurricular Stargazing

Carla Knipe



Learning about the night sky is something that anyone can do. Believe it or not, you don't need expensive equipment to start out and you definitely don't need a science background. The nights become longer and darker this time of year and the air is crisp, which makes for excellent stargazing. It's an activity that the entire family can enjoy.

The best starting point is to familiarize yourself with some general knowledge about astronomy. If you know a little bit about the phases of the moon and the solar system, then you're already

on your way. Books from your local library can help. What you will be able to see changes from month to month, so a star chart is essential. Fortunately, there are free star charts on the internet that you can download and print. Two good websites for this are <http://whatsouttonight.com/> and <http://www.skymaps.com/>. It takes a bit of practice to learn to use a chart but, once you get the hang of it, it isn't difficult. If you have a smart phone, there are also Apps available for download that tell you exactly what you're looking at when you hold your phone toward the sky. But with all that information, it's easy to get intimidated, so start slowly.

You will probably be eager to rush out and purchase a telescope. Please do not do this. A good pair of binoculars is all you really need. Cheap "department store" telescopes are just glorified toys and will leave you frustrated. If you decide you want to pursue this hobby more seriously, you can invest in a quality telescope from a local astronomy shop where you can also ask advice on the best equipment to purchase for your needs.

But to begin your exploration of the night sky, find a dark open area, sit on a blanket or a lawn chair and simply look up. A good tip is to cover a normal flashlight with a piece of red cellophane secured with a rubber band. This enables you to read your star chart without hurting your eyes with bright light. Remember to dress warm, bring a hot drink and some snacks, and don't stay out too long. The red flashlight alone makes this a fun activity for young kids, plus you can get them interested in some science.

You will soon start to pinpoint easy objects, such as the Big Dipper, Orion, and Cassiopeia. You can also learn a lot just by looking at the moon. There will be limit to how much detail you'll be able to see without a telescope but even with binoculars you'll still be able to see the different areas of it and some of its larger craters. You may also see planets, satellites, the International Space Station or—if you're lucky—even a "shooting star," but give yourself time and patience to learn.

A problem with stargazing in urban areas is the amount of light pollution. Any amateur astronomer will tell you that house and street lighting is a big distraction for clear viewing. You will still be able to see quite a bit but you won't see the amount of detail that you'd be able to see in a completely dark sky. You are unlikely to see the Milky Way in a light-polluted area. If you can, travel to a rural area or to one of the designated "dark sky preserves" around the country that were created to promote astronomy in a light pollution free environment.

Of course, part of the fun of learning how to stargaze is meeting new people who share your hobby and who you can exchange knowledge with. Check to see if there are any astronomy groups in your area. The Royal Astronomy Association of Canada (RASC) has groups across the country, but a local Community College or Meetup.com might also provide some resources. Owning your own telescope often isn't a joining requirement.

Stargazing is a great introduction to science and once you start learning about our universe you will want to learn more and more. So go outside on a clear night—and just look up.

Resources:

<http://www.rasc.ca>

<http://www.space.com/skywatching/>

<http://www.skynews.ca>

Carla and her family has recently purchased her first telescope for stargazing. However, they have been frustrated by the cantankerous Calgary weather!

Let's Make a Change

Deanna Roney



Recently there has been an influx of students commenting that assignment turn-around times are far beyond the standards set out by Athabasca University. Some students remarked on waiting for assignments submitted in August, and wait times of five to seven weeks. It is easy for students to blame their tutor for this wait time. As it is the tutor who is marking (or not marking) and returning (or not returning) the assignment.

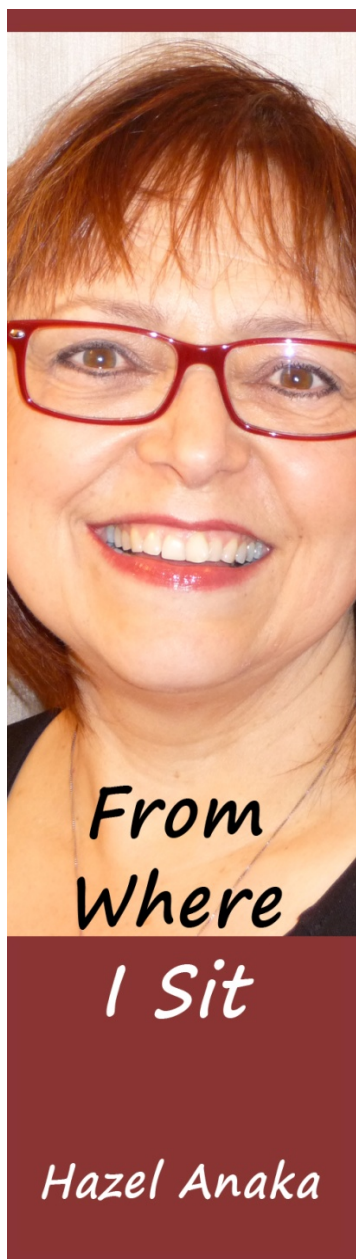
I count myself among the lucky that have not encountered this. I have had some longer than standard wait times, but these were resolved quickly and without backlash. In one case I waited two weeks but I had been contacted by my tutor and advised that wait time for this assignment

would be longer than normal as there were a few students who needed quick marks in order to qualify to graduate in June. For this I did not mind the extra wait, as I hope that, if I find myself in that situation, my tutor will take the time to help me squeeze under the deadline. However, waiting several weeks for marks is setting students up for failure. As distance education students, we spend much of our time studying alone, sometimes feeling segregated, and we do not have the support of classrooms or lectures. Because of this, assignment feedback is extremely important, and I will wait until I have an assignment back before beginning the next so that I am able to take that feedback and improve the next piece.

I do not believe that blaming the tutor will resolve the issue. However, this is a serious concern for students, and an issue that must be addressed. I understand that Athabasca University has had some financial troubles in the last few years and I can see an attempt to resolve this with my increase in tuition; as an out of province student my tuition is not regulated the same as Alberta students, and not conditioned to the tuition freeze. I mentioned in a previous article that I had spoken to one of the tutors who stated that they were also unhappy with the situation; but they were getting it from both sides, budget cuts mean more students per tutor, tutor lay-offs, and low tutor-morale. When students get, understandably, frustrated and post on Facebook it can add to the low morale of tutors. I am not suggesting that venting on Facebook is a bad thing, but remember that your tutor is likely reading it, and words can be hurtful, especially when they are trying their best.

Perhaps I am naïve, but I believe that anyone who becomes a tutor at Athabasca University has a desire to teach and to help students succeed in this challenging environment. As with any group of people, not everyone is the same. Some likely become jaded and have lost their desire to teach. I believe (hope) that most still have this passion, though they may be becoming frustrated. My tutors have, for the most part, been amazing. I wonder if we as students expressed our displeasure in the support that we, and, by extension, our tutors, are receiving, that something could be done? The answer is not as simple as blaming the tutor or contacting the course coordinator. I know the AU Students' Union has been advocating on students' behalf with this concern, but, to my knowledge, they have not gained much ground; the university has not provided any answers. Meanwhile, the students and tutors are suffering. Maybe, we need to show the university that something needs to be done at a higher level to alleviate the issue. The best way I can see to do this, is to email AUSU (president@ausu.org) and relate your personal experience. The more personal experiences and stories that they have the more ammunition they can put forth when addressing these concerns, and the better our opportunity to help facilitate change.

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



Future Moments

As I write this harvest *still* hasn't started for the Anaka family. I've managed to keep busy with many time-sensitive projects for Babas & Borshch: final reports for government, two new grant applications, a Travel Alberta videotaping in Calgary, an Alto Award nomination, phone and in-person meetings.

I also managed to squeeze in a visit to the walk-in clinic, an eye exam, selecting a new pair of glasses (yippee), two physiotherapy appointments, a visit to a podiatrist and a fitting for new orthotics with a pedorthist. I survived a weekend sleepover with Grady but appear to have caught his head cold.

I've also made some inroads on extra projects that were stalled. I've managed to sort and store most of the festival supplies. I took a cold, hard look at the unsold items from my garage sale and considered the nudge from Hilary before finally deciding to donate the items. One packed carload later, it is done.

Had the weather been better (and the excruciating pain in my heels bearable) I might have spent some time outside trying to whip the yard into shape. This is the first time in forever that I haven't trimmed the cotoneaster hedge even once this year. In a moment of lunacy I thought about digging up the perennials I wanted to save and throwing away everything else. Deconstructing some of the flowerbeds as it were. Reducing my work and my guilt in one fell swoop.

I'm poised to spend the next few weeks driving a combine; preparing endless on-the-go meals; enduring the long, hard days; and ignoring the upheaval in my schedule. One bonus of the long monotonous days spent alone in the combine is the thinking time.

And there are a few things I need and want to think about. One: does the book project I've undertaken with a friend have a prayer for completion? What can I do to ensure we do what we've promised? Two: what special books and intentions

should I pack for my week at the Canmore time-share? Why do I physically need to leave home to get the benefits of a retreat? Three: how should I prep for the Travel Alberta conference in Banff to get the most out of my time there? Four: will the Canadian dollar rebound a bit before our February trip to Rancho Mirage, California? Is it possible to holiday without shopping? Five: who holds the truth to my heel pain diagnosis? Is it heel spurs or posterior tibial tendinitis dysfunction? Which expert's advice should I be following? Which should I disregard? Will this ever go away?

So even though it feels like I'm cooling my heels, waiting, waiting, waiting for harvest to begin, in fact I'm filling my days with small wins and doing some cerebral planning for future projects. It's not quite the definition of being in the moment, but perhaps it is improving the quality of future moments, 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

Grudge-in-Law

Dear Barb:

My sister-in-law hasn't spoken to me in thirty years! She also hasn't allowed my brother to speak to me! We're virtual strangers now, because we haven't been a part of each others' lives. This became apparent recently when we ran into each other at the mall. Following an initial hug and a few tears my brother and I were left wordless. The worst part is this happened because of a stupid event. At that time I had recently gone through a bitter divorce and my brother and sister-in-law hired my ex-husband as a real estate agent to buy their new home. What upset me was that they didn't tell me they were dealing with my ex; I heard it through my young daughter who had been visiting her father and overheard a conversation between her dad and my sister-in-law. I realize she doesn't have to ask my permission to use my ex-husband's services, but I feel it would have been considerate to let me know they were dealing with him. I told my sister-in-law how I felt and she had a melt down and said it's none of my business and that my ex will always be their brother-in-law. I didn't really intend to invoke this response; I was just sharing my feelings with her. This was thirty years ago! She still will not speak to me. Why would someone be so vindictive to actually carry a grudge for thirty years? Thanks Mary Ann.

Hi Mary Ann:

Wow, that is a long time to carry a grudge, but, unfortunately, many people do exactly this. Often holding grudges make people feel powerful, as there is a sense of power in being the wronged person, the victim. When, in reality, the anger and bitterness a person feels as a result of holding onto wrongs or perceived wrongs is only preventing any healing from occurring. For example, if your sister-in-law had simply discussed how she felt without overreacting, you both would have been able to move forward from this event and been a part of each other's lives and your children would have grown up with each other. Your brother owns a part of this as well. He could have told his wife he wanted to see his sister and her family. His wife likely would have resisted at first, but if your brother had maintained a relationship with you, his wife probably would have come to realize that a healthier alternative would be to join her husband and accept the reality that people are human and life doesn't always go according to your plans. Thanks for your question and Good luck Mary Ann.

"If you withhold love as a form of punishment, who is being punished?"

— Donald L. Hicks, *Look into the stillness*

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

How Bad Artists Vote



NOT AT ALL...

I had to choose— voting, or dirty windshield art.



There's an Election?

FOR A CHANCE TO ANNOY PEOPLE AT THE POLLS...

This is the last time I'll be voting. Gonna renounce my citizenship to protest the government's refusal to pay for the reversal of sex change surgery.



FOR THE CANDIDATES THE GOOD ARTISTS CHOOSE...



You're voting Green? What a coincidence!

FOR WHOEVER HAS THE MOST POWER...



Who knows? Maybe under the Nazis my talent can find the adulation it deserves!*

* SAID BY A PARISIAN ACTRESS TO SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR DURING WWII

TO MORTIFY THEIR PARENTS...



You're voting Conservative? What a coincidence! I'm voting Marxist Feminist Vegan!

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.

The election is just around the corner! Pledge your Vote and WIN!

There are over \$400 in prizes to be won for students that pledge their vote in AUSU's [Get out the Vote Campaign!](#)

1. [Pledge to vote](#) for a chance to win a free coffee on us or some AUSU Swag
2. [Pledge to Vote](#) AND #TWEET IT for a chance to win a gift card valued at up to \$100 to the store of your choice. Tweet using the hashtag #GOTV and either @AthabascaUSU or @AUGSA.

Note, in order to qualify, you must be an AUSU or AUGSA member, and you must fill out the pledge form completely so we can verify your membership using the information provided. Prize winners will be randomly selected after October 19.

On October 19, join us in having your voice heard. Pledge your vote [here!](#)

Yes! I will vote.

Like us on Facebook!



Keep checking our Facebook page for updates, news you can use, and more! Like us at "[Athabasca University Students' Union \(AUSU\)](#)".

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Oct 19:** Federal Election – [GET OUT AND VOTE!](#)
- **Oct 31:** Deadline to apply for course extension for courses ending Nov 30
- **Nov 1:** Awards application deadline
- **Nov 10:** Deadline to register for courses starting December 1
- **Nov 11:** Remembrance Day

Awards Applications Now Online – Apply now for the [NOV 1 deadline!](#)

AUSU is pleased to announce that our new [electronic awards applications](#) are now online. This will make applying for AUSU awards easier & faster!

The following awards are available for AUSU's **November awards cycle** (see below). Each award is **\$1000**, and the awards are split evenly between our November and May awards cycles.

DEADLINE: November 1, 2015

- Academic Achievement Scholarship
- Balanced Student Award
- Bursaries
- Returning Student Award
- Student Service Award

To apply for an award, visit our website [here](#).



CLASSIFIEDS

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

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