

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 43 2015-11-06

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students' Like You!

University Rankings

Should We Care?

Dodging Campus Drama

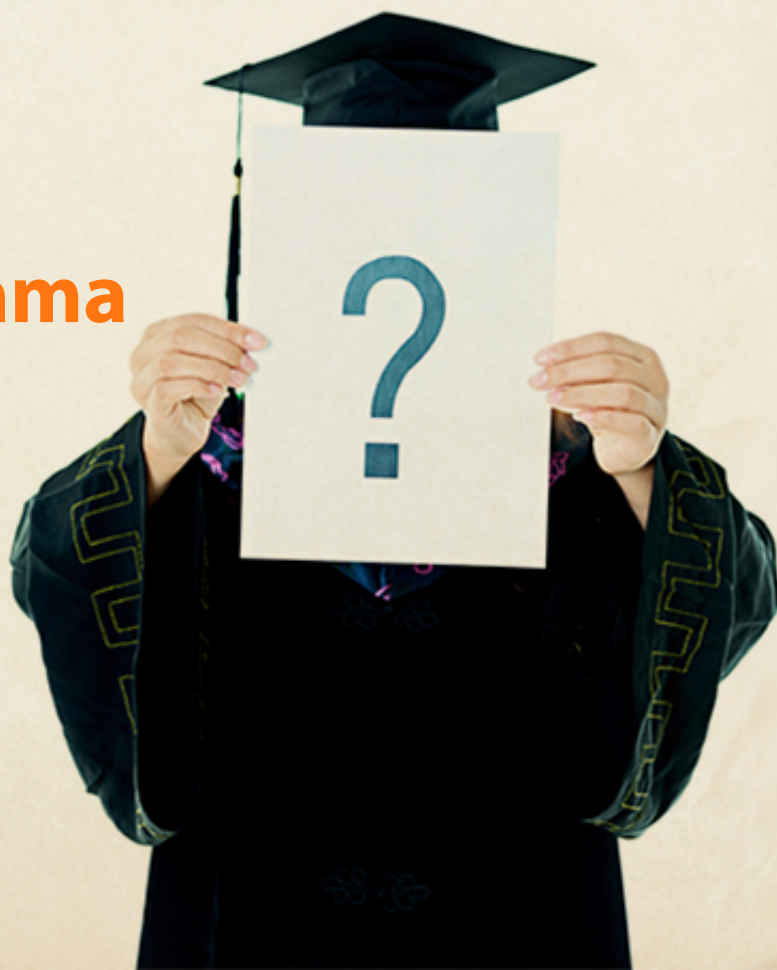
Hidden Benefits of AU

Plus:

The Writer's Toolbox

Remember

and much more!



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www.voicemagazine.org

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

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief
Sarah Cornett

Managing Editor
Karl Low

Regular Contributors

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

Views and articles presented
here are those of the
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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EDITORIAL**Karl Low****Intruding in the Domain of Grown-Ups**

One of the things they don't tell you about when you start going to Athabasca University is once you graduate, you'll be invited to various alumni events. Last week, I went to a reception in honour of the 2015 Athabasca University Alumni Awards Recipients. This year, the awards went to Sarah Lynn Stephens (Volunteer Service), Christopher Horn (Rising Star), and Kathleen Kelava (Future Alumni). Their accomplishments are impressive, and the awards were well chosen.

If you get a chance to attend one of these events, you absolutely should, even if only for a few minutes, simply to sample the menu that they put out. Two tables were full of tasty treats, from two kinds of sliders (a meat and a vegetarian option), some sort of dumpling, and a full table of desserts holding everything from delicious looking brownies to single-spoon serving sized crème brûlée. Had I been thinking, I would have grabbed a picture. Next year.

Plus, you'll get a chance to meet some high-level academics and some of the administration of AU, which, if you're better at networking than I am, could prove to be a solid opportunity.

Unfortunately, I didn't stay very long, as, to be honest, I always feel out of place at any of these sorts of events. When I walk into a room of strangers, many in suit and tie, I somehow always feel like I'm just a kid intruding on the domain of adults, even though I'm in my mid-40s. I have yet to figure out how to silence that little voice in the back of my head that questions why I think I should consider myself an equal to these obviously professional people.

After all, I still play videogames and read science fiction for goodness sakes'. How can I be an adult?

Then I read this week's Feature interview with student, flautist, and SF aficionado, Jason Bernard, who, coincidentally, is near my own age, and also plays videogames. Maybe I'm not so weird after all. And that makes me happy, because that was exactly the point of having these interviews with students like you in the first place. So that no matter where we are with our studies at AU, we can find that there are people just like us doing the same thing. Even if we'll never meet personally, I think most people find it comforting to know they're not the only one.

Plus, this week, Carla Knipe takes a deeper look at what the various university rankings that are coming out around now mean, and if we should really put a lot of faith in them.

I'm also happy to note we have the return of The Writer's Toolbox, along with a solid Study Dude to help you look at your writing from the macro to the micro scale.

And, of course, our regular selection of news, reviews, and other goodies to keep you amused.
Enjoy the read!

MINDS WE MEET



Jason Bernard is an AU student from Moncton, New Brunswick, and is in the Masters of Science in Information Services program at AU. Jason received his undergraduate degree in Computer Science from Bishop's University in Lennoxville, QC, and he ultimately plans to pursue a PhD and become a research professor.

Jason was recently interviewed by The Voice Magazine. Here's what he had to say about school, flutes, and science fiction.

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

I live in Moncton NB, but I've been all over. I was born in York, Ontario, but spent my childhood in Moncton. I left to go to university in Quebec, and I lived in the United States for a while. I served in the army and so moved around a bit, but now I'm out of the army and back home in Moncton.

Describe the path that led you to AU.

I had been in the army, but then I got injured. I was medically released from the army, and I had to decide what to do with the rest of my life. I was a computer programmer but I found I didn't like that too much. I really wanted to get into research and academics. At the time, my kids were younger and it just wasn't possible to go to a physical university. AU became the right option at the time.

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

I like to play the flute, mostly. I also play video games—they're great for relaxation. And I read books, mainly science fiction.

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

I loved school right from grade one and that's thanks to a truly amazing grade one teacher who recognized my intellectual capacity. She made me feel I could learn anything, and I've carried that thought with me all my life. If I'm not learning, I'm not happy.

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

Well, I'm not a religious person, but I would say Jesus—how fascinating would that be? Who has had more of an impact on how people live now than Jesus? I would be interested to hear his impression of how Christianity has evolved to what it is now.

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

I really like the ability to control my own hours, and to control how I learn. The AU teaching staff have been really open to letting me learn my way. I like to learn by tinkering and they allow me to do that even if it's not strictly following the syllabus—I just run my ideas by them and they let me run with them.

What I dislike is the inability to hold discussions with fellow students. You don't get that on-campus feel of being with other students; you really feel alone. The instructors are trying to promote discussions on The Landing but it hasn't attracted a lot of participation from students yet.

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

Yeah, just last year. I was writing my first conference paper and, well, it wasn't going very well. It required a great many revisions. I really struggled with the writing process and began to question if academics were really for me. I faced a real loss of confidence.

I got through it by simple tenacity. There really wasn't much of an option but to move forward. I took some of the mini-courses from the AU library to improve my academic writing and I believe my writing has improved. I've learned to write in a way that leaves no questions.

What was your most memorable AU course?

It was COMP 658, Computational Intelligence. One reason why I picked AU was for its offerings in the relatively new field of Artificial Intelligence. I found the course just amazing. It really improved my understanding of AI.

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

I'd definitely finish my masters and then my PhD without worrying about money! Really, I think I'd do what I was going to do in life anyway, just that I wouldn't worry about money so much.

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

Not much of anything. Mainly just a few years of earning money, but I expect it will work out in the end. I'm in my early forties so, while retirement isn't that close, it's definitely on the radar. Because I'm not earning, I'm not contributing to my retirement savings; sometimes I look at my RRSPs and sigh.

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

Although AU is an online institution, I think my focus would be how to get students to communicate. I'd like to create an on-campus experience without being on-campus.

What's your favourite sound?

I have two. The first one is thunder. And the second is that cool sound effect that lasers make in movies (pew! pew!).

What is your most prized possession?

Definitely my flute. I've had it for five years and it helped me through a difficult time in my life. After I was injured, there wasn't a lot I could do, or at least it felt that way. I took up the flute. It made me feel that there was something I *could* do.

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

It's two parts. First, don't give up. But, because the first lesson can become hard at times, I would add a second part: don't be too hard on yourself. I'm a bit of a perfectionist, and sometimes I'm too hard on myself. I want

to be good at everything I attempt but, realistically, nobody should expect to be good at absolutely everything—it just isn't possible.

What do you think about e-texts?

I love 'em. Why waste paper?

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

Most have been quite good. Sometimes they're not as speedy as I would like getting marks back. But I know they have other courses, and research, too. But if you're in the third section of your course and you haven't got your marks back for the first section, you might be making the same mistakes without knowing. I guess I was spoiled a bit at Bishop's University. It was a smaller campus and it was just so easy to go knock on the professor's door and get immediate feedback.

Where has life taken you so far?

In Canada, I haven't yet been further west than Ontario. I've been around the US, and I've been to Spain. I'll be going to Romania soon for a conference. I like to travel and I want to start doing it more.

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

I just finished *The Martian*, by Andy Weir. I wanted to read that before going to see the movie. And I just bought *The End of All Things*, by John Scalzi. It's the finale to the Old Man's War series, and I'm really looking forward to reading it.

Click of the Wrist**Write on Target**

We're wrapping up the first week of [NaNoWriMo](#) (National Novel Writing Month), and maybe your initial enthusiasm and adrenaline have started to fade. If distractions are keeping you from hitting your daily word count goals, turn to one of these resources to keep you on track.

Social Media Wall

Social media is incredibly valuable for building a reader community and networking with other writers, but it's all too easy to lose hours in Facebook or Twitter-land. The Strict Workflow app for Chrome can be customized to block access to certain sites for a particular period of time; because it's based on the Pomodoro technique of time management, the app includes break time, too. Mac user? Try the program [Anti-Social](#)

No More Daydreams

Need more motivation or accountability? Write or Die allows you to set rewards, stimuli, and consequences—including the dreaded kamikaze mode, which starts deleting your writing if you go silent for too long.

A Sense of Place

If the right environment is what keeps you on track, OmmWriter is worth a look. This "beautiful distraction-free writing environment" includes customizable backgrounds as well as soundtracks and keystrokes to help you maintain your writing zen.



Writer's Toolbox

It's the Little Things

Christina M. Frey



The length of a flight from Prague to New York. The construction date of the Sydney Opera House. The name the state hospital used twenty years ago. The number of seats in a particular make and model of jet. What the gay marriage law was in California in 2012. Which direction the Amazon flows.

Crazy-picky things that editors with no social life obsess about getting correct—but that really don't matter. Right?

Wrong.

There's a reason behind our madness, our research, our insistence that nothing can be presumed. That authors must check and double check their facts—and that we'll still give the manuscript a once-over to be sure. It's simple: we want to keep the reader in the story.

The role of a copyeditor—who edits for grammar, spelling, punctuation, consistency, and accuracy—is to be invisible. If we do our job right, the reader doesn't notice us. They're immersed in the story, in the characters' world, and the outside world of words and facts is secondary to the reading experience.

But when reality bursts into the story world, it spoils the illusion—sort of like breaking the fourth wall in television, but unintentionally, and with disappointing results.

Inaccuracies, errors, and inconsistencies can take a reader out of the story, and even if it happens on a minor level, it's enough to change the reader experience that the author was hoping to create. That's what we as editors are trying to avoid.

Recently I enjoyed a Big Five book by a nationally bestselling author, and I was completely engrossed in the trials and tribulations of the main character, a suburban madam with a complicated past. Then I got to the Thanksgiving scene. The main character lived in a city not far from where I live—and her son went to school in the same district where my daughter attends school, and in the current time period. So when the character's son gets a half-day holiday the day before (US) Thanksgiving, I put down the book for a moment.

Wait a minute—the kids in this district get the whole week off.

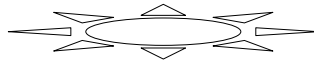
The thing is, this is a local author. She knows the area, and she probably based the scene on the fact that the neighboring counties *do* have a half-day holiday the day before Thanksgiving. Maybe the editors, too, presumed that the author knew the area well enough for them not to question her knowledge. Maybe they didn't think it was important to check; after all, how many people would notice or really care if a specific county's school holidays were accurate?

True, probably not too many. And at some point you have to draw the line between nitpicking for nitpicking's sake and creating accuracy for a better reader experience. After all, the error didn't *ruin* the story for me.

On the other hand, it did take me out of the story, and for several minutes I stopped thinking about the suburban madam's problems and let my wait-a-second thought process derail my enjoyment of the book. And that's not ideal for either reader or writer.

As a writer you've done so much work on your book that it'd be a shame for the reader's concentration to break, even for a short while, over an issue that's avoidable. Resolving inaccuracies in fiction won't bring about world peace (well, maybe it could—what a great novel idea that'd be!), but it will make your readers' experience as smooth as possible, as escapist as possible, as real as possible. And after all, that's what the writer-reader connection is all about.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor, literary coach, and lover of great writing. For more tips and techniques for your toolbox, follow her on Twitter (@turntopage2) or visit her [blog](#).



Dodging Campus Drama

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Being an AU student, what I witnessed was like a scene from a nightmare. I peered into the bowl of a vast lecture hall where dozens of students hunched over desks, furiously scribbling away. A timer projected on the screen above the prof's head counted down the minutes, then the seconds. It was horrible. Not because those students were writing exams, but because they were writing them *by hand*.

After several years of being an AU student, I find one of the best aspects of online study is online exams. To me, writing by hand is excruciating torture. When AU began making the transition from paper to online exams, the sun shone a little brighter in my sky.

I witnessed the lecture hall scene above recently when I visited University of Ottawa's campus. I was there to attend a general-interest lecture, not to study. After driving an hour to get there, paying exorbitant parking fees, then trudging across the rain-soaked campus, I thought, "I'm so glad I don't have to do this all the time."

Online study has its challenges. There are times when it would be beneficial to be on campus with hundreds or thousands of like-minded colleagues.

But as I browse through the student newspapers and magazines of campus-style universities, I notice that many of the articles relate to issues I don't have to worry about:

Crime. Student safety at university campuses is a major concern. Studying online at my campus of one, I don't have to worry about crime on campus. My car won't be broken into while I'm in class, nobody is going to swipe my purse, and nobody is going to stalk me around campus.

Parking. University parking rates are insane. Studying online, I don't pay parking fees, I don't have difficulty finding a parking spot, and I don't have to suffer inclement weather while walking from car to class.

Drama. Where there are people, there will be hassles. Studying online means nobody is cutting in front of me on my way to get coffee. Nobody is talking too loud, invading my space, or being a general asshole. Although I live where I study, I have no dorm mates who might hog the bathroom or leave disgusting splatters in the microwave (or vice-versa.)

Judgement. There's no such thing as a bad hair day at home. I don't have to worry because nobody can see me. Neither tutors nor other students can see what colour my skin is or what body shape I have. Nobody can make judgements on me based on my faith or sexual orientation. My grades are a reflection of the academic material I produce, and not of cultural conflicts between me and the marker.

Most AU students quickly identify the pros and cons on online education. The pros include flexibility while the cons include isolation. However, there's a lot more to consider than those elements which surround the act of studying. Studying online eliminates many frustrations that accompany studying on site. By dodging campus drama, AU students conserve their energy for what matters: successful learning.

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

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Rebecca invites AU students to join her online study group page at facebook.com/groups/104271983268917. Jesse wonders if it's possible to over-study for an exam. Barry expresses an opinion on outdated course materials. Other posts include primary vs secondary sources, student transcripts, and courses ACCT 451, ENGL 305, HLST 320, NURS 250, and PHIL 333.

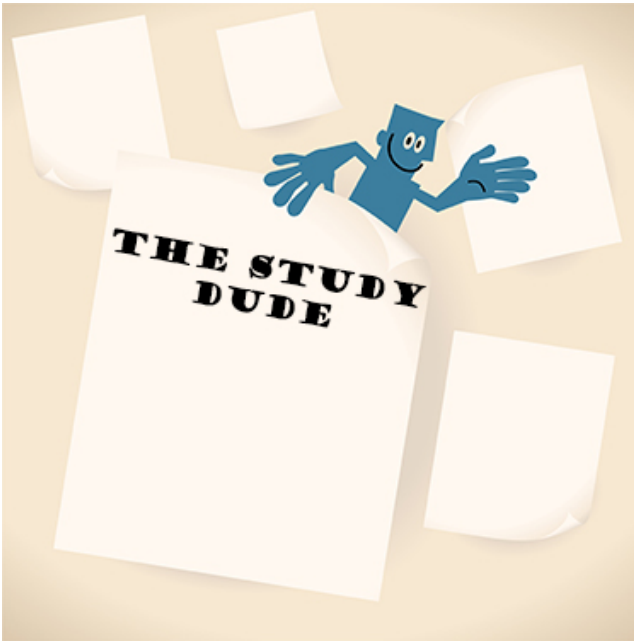
Twitter

[@AthabascaU](https://twitter.com/AthabascaU) tweets: "Athabasca University offers the first fully accredited online graduate program in Greece. <http://ow.ly/Ua2WW>."

[@AthabascaUSU](https://twitter.com/AthabascaUSU) (AUSU) tweets on October 28: "AUSU has just issued a press release regarding the unfortunate unsustainability of the Health & Dental Plan. <http://bit.ly/1GxuzG5>."

Youtube

On the [AU](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) channel: "[AU Library Welcomes You](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)".



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

How to Write Like a Philosopher, Part IV

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to learn how to sprinkle breathing room in your academic writing.

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.

Part four of the Study Dude article on the book *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* by Eric Hayot looks at how to make sentences rhythmic, how to add breathers in your writing, and how to hone your academic

writing skill.

The Flow of Sentences

At university, I discovered an epiphany: namely, put the stuff you want to downplay into a subordinate clause.

I discovered this through reading a letter that was written by a Nazi affiliate during World War II. The letter struck me as heinous as it contained impartially written commands on taking people to their demise. The university class dissected what exactly made such an inhumane letter socially acceptable during Hitler's reign. One of the strategies involved removing the actor by resorting to the passive voice. Another strategy involved stuffing the touchy points into subordinate clauses, where these points would likely be overlooked.

This marked my foray into the world of textual manipulation. Yet, author Eric Hayot cites it as one strategy for writing compelling papers. Along with that, Hayot cites a number of other techniques for making your writing have rhythm:

- Put your least important information at the beginning of the sentences and your most important information at the end. Similarly, end each paragraph with your most important stuff.
- Try to leave with a bang at the end of your first opening sentence and your last sentence of your paragraph. Make these last components, if possible, gripping.
- If you have a complex conclusion, introduce it with two or three sentences.
- Put your boring stuff and tiresome facts in a dependent clause at the beginning of the sentence.
- Try to make only some of your sentences the standard eighteen to twenty-five word length. Put as much variation in sentence length as you can muster. Don't let more than two or three sentences possess the same length.
- If you are talking about hurrying up, or speed, or anything to do with fastness, use short sentences. If you are talking about meandering, or slow pondering, or anything to do with slowness, use long sentences.

Make Your Writing "Ventilated"

Sprinkling in figurative language and jokes into my writing is something I haven't quite mastered, although Eric Hayot, as you will soon see, recommends it.

The reason I hesitate with sprinkling in figurative language has much to do with my training in playwriting. In playwriting, you need to skinny down your text, and to this day, I fear that an additional metaphor might bulk up the writing with superfluous content. Yet, taking the content and replacing it with figurative language now strikes me as a solution.

I also wondered how people chose metaphors and similes without sounding too off base. How does one come up with a compelling metaphor? This mystery vexed my curiosity for a number of years, until I read in Hayot's book that extended metaphors don't need to be remotely similar to the content. I interpreted this as being able to take any metaphor and make it work for practically anything with a little tweaking, a little cleverness, a little creativity.

And everyone loves a harmless joke. Why not liven up your writing with a funny metaphor? For instance, in a book by Paul Sylvia that I previously wrote about, he made the joke about the necessities of life, such as knitting your pet dog a Christmas sock. I howled at the joke. Did it have anything intrinsically meaningful to add to the context? Not especially, but it left me in stitches, yearning to read more.

What follows contains some advice from Eric Hayot on the art of writing ventilated, or "airy" writing that has room to breathe, to pause, to laugh:

- Use different sentence lengths to add breathing room in your writing.
- Vary your writing from funny to serious to add ventilation.
- Sprinkle in figurative language to add airiness.
- Switch from a personal tone to a conversational tone for variation.
- Use parenthesis and longer sentences for a humanities type of feel to your paper.

Some Last Minute Exercises

How do you schedule the time to write? How do you even launch the daunting task of writing? For me, I schedule writing regularly three to five nights a week with a designated task to accomplish at each writing session. One of those nights included my creative writing session. I've forced myself to write on one night that I visit a library. Stuck in the library for two hours, I do nothing but write extensively. I finish a page-and-a half of creative writing, which hones my writing skills as well as produces material on an ongoing basis.

Another way to increase writing productivity includes freewriting. The freewriting process, which I've read so much about, sparks my curiosity. Hayot advises us to do some freewriting before our actual writing session. Previously, I shunned the notion of freewriting, thinking it little more than a meaningless brainstorming session, but the more I did freewriting in journals, the less anxious and more focused I became. I know that freewriting held many benefits for the student paper.

Interestingly, Hayot provides many exercises for getting your writer's bone tuned to the demands of academic writing. Not only does he profess the value of scheduling writing time, he also espouses a number of other strategies that will make your writing shine:

- Set aside thirty minutes a day to devote to writing, preferably at the same time each day. Also, try to work writing time in during the mornings, as your energy stays at peak level early on and dissipates as the day wears on.
- Take two or three minutes to engage in a freewriting exercise, emphasizing commenting on where your writing left off previously and where you plan to begin presently.
- Find some raw data (a statistical fact, a primary document) and try to write a paragraph about it, in which you start with a theoretical question, lead down to the data and summaries of the data, and then finalize with your theoretical answer to the question. Ah! You just discovered the secret to writing like a philosopher.
- If you can't decide what to write, try multiple alternative sentences that might work, and then choose the most appealing one.
- Try to sprinkle similes into your writing. Place them at different positions in the sentence, from beginning to middle to end.
- Isolate parts in your essay that seem to be side thoughts or extraneous information, and put them in footnotes if your style guide allows for footnotes.
- Start a writing group or organize a writing camp.

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

Hayot, Eric. 2014. *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities*. NY, New York: Columbia University Press.



Fly on the Wall: Sisyphus' Punishment, Sisyphus' Liberation

Jason Sullivan



The weeks following an election remind me of the weeks following completion of AU courses. No matter the outcome, we're back to ground zero. After a tiny lull, real-world realities flood into our lives. This election, like an especially arduous stack of courses, was a particular letdown in that a lot of hopes did not lead necessarily to a lot of substantive change in terms of issues such as childcare and opposition to Bill C-51. Along with many other progressives who saw a chance for the most left-wing government in our history melt away amidst a mashup of niqabs and fighter jets, I'd been feeling a certain sense of loss and hopeless. Those of us who

enjoy, and perhaps also feel spited by, our activist impulses are forced to contend with, and then accept, the fact that the Canadian middle class may not necessarily share our vision of what a better Canada looks like. Or, what amounts to the same thing, the fact that the middle class shares our vision but chose, en masse, to not vote for what they believe in. But enough political devils in the details. In this article I'll briefly interrogate the philosophies that lead folks like me to believe that we are somehow entitled to get the Canada we believe in and how, if we are to be honest with ourselves, we must achieve serenity in our daily lives without tying our

happiness to unrealistic expectations. I will address some causes and consequences to the activist urge and its inherent failings.

The Greek Myth of Sisyphus comes to mind when thinking about that empty feeling following an election that didn't go one's way, or a semester that ended only to leave one with a sense that one's life hasn't been radically improved. For those who don't know, Sisyphus was a character in Greek mythology. Having angered the gods, he was sentenced to for all eternity roll a huge boulder up a hill only to watch it slide back down to the bottom. Thus, a Sisyphean task is one that interminably invokes a sense of eternal recurrence. To believe that the world will ever match our dreams is akin to believing that true love will, with every breath and in every moment, carry one forth in bliss 'for as long as ye both shall live'. Nice imagery, but wholly impossible.

Bearing this in mind, Albert Camus devoted his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* to an inquiry into the "absurd" reality that "the world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart," (Camus, 1942, P. 16). Nihilistic though this statement reads, its kernels of truth lies in how it mirrors the reality of life itself. We wish for order, an order of our own desires no less, and are perpetually faced with the impossibility of this fantasy. A socialist Canada may occur someday, but that day is not on the horizon.

As Sisyphus watches his rock roll to the valley bottom he, like Ahab lashed to his whale, is compelled to descend in pursuit. Yet here Camus asks us to pause in our minds and reconsider the apparent anguish of the situation. He writes:

"It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me ... That hour, like a breathing space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock." (Camus, 1942, P. 89).

And so are we, as students who must begin further courses with their struggles and rewards, and certainly as progressives who feel cold as we contend with the prospect of a government who has failed even to promise many things we hold dear. Camus' words may trail us, and provide solace in their stark-yet-sustaining realism: we must "accommodate (ourselves) to what is" (Camus, 1942, P. 39) and reconcile "that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints" (Camus, 1942, P. 37). We have to accept the distance between our hearts and minds and the world we live in. Only then can we move on and begin our lives anew with the challenges and successes that lie ahead.

As distance students the pressures of productivity uniquely bind us to our sense of self-discipline and assumptions contained therein. We feel we must accomplish our tasks according to schedules of our own design. Deadlines often loom only in our own minds: an essay due on a Friday because we will it so, or a forum posting completed by the end of the morning because we feel we should contribute as soon as possible. Yet, just as our political efforts involve assumptions, so too do our academic goals involve a lot of what the psychologist Albert Ellis termed "musturbatory" beliefs about ourselves and the world we live in (Ellis, 2014, P. 191).

We must interrogate ourselves in light of our assumptions; too often we face adversity and filter it through our belief systems such that consequences come to embody preconceptions. Ellis' refers to this as the ABC model of psychological intervention: adversity, belief, and consequences (Ellis, 2014, P. 189). It is based on the discovery that "covert hypotheses are illogical, unrealistic, and destructive," (Ellis, 2014, P. 189). In order to

find serenity it is necessary to discover what is real in the world rather than what we believe ought to be real. Elsewhere, David Hume illustrated the need to differentiate between the 'is' and the 'ought' when scientifically investigating the world; "no ethical or indeed evaluative conclusion whatsoever may be validly inferred from any set of purely factual premises". (Cohon, online.) As Friedrich Nietzsche noted, "there are no facts, only interpretations." (Wicks, online).

A textbook example of Ellis' discovery of our tendency towards unrealistic hypotheses describes "a male who has the unrealistic premise that he should be the king of the universe, but actually has only mediocre abilities, is shown that he is "logically" concluding that he is an utterly inferior person," (Ellis, 2014, P. 191). We progressive students may not feel like our core identity includes a need to be king of the universe, yet we may well have invested our identity in an unrealistic assumption that our political beliefs are entitled to a position of power which they are not at all about to achieve. The key is to accept reality; finishing one course with an A doesn't mean that we are, for all time, an A student. With Sisyphus we may calmly descend the slope as we begin a new course as a student with a grade of 0.

Martin Heidegger, in his own way, addressed the desire for certainty and finality in life. The hope that we are on the right track towards an optimal society, or a successful academic career, contains a certain element of unreality. Just as paths through park woodland only superficially represent a natural forest, so too do our idealizations of the world and our role within it only vaguely map onto actually-existing life. We must not, as it were, lead ourselves down a garden path. Heidegger wrote that:

"Wood" is an old name for forest. In the wood are paths that mostly wind along until they end quite suddenly in an impenetrable thicket. They are called "woodpaths." Each goes its particular way, but in the same forest. Often it seems as though one were identical to another. Yet it only seems so. Woodcutters and foresters are familiar with these paths. They know what it means to be on a woodpath." (Heidegger, 1977, P. 34).

We must not fear reality or the unknown it contains; "woodpaths always lead somewhere-but where they lead cannot be predicted or controlled," (Krell in Heidegger, 1977, P. 34). For our dreams of ourselves as better students and our country as a better Canada to come true we have to be aware of the reality of our surroundings. We cannot afford to allow our hopes and fantasies to charge ahead of the reality of the wilderness we inhabit. Dreams easily swallow one whole, just as a dense lodgepole pine forest swallows up one's sense of direction. In order to accept the Sisyphean reality of the proverbial 'real-world' it is necessary to remember the adage 'first things first' (Anonymous, online). First off, we need to retain our sense of direction. And then, after a few deep, slow breaths, we may, like Sisyphus, begin our descent back to the base of the mountain.

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

Should Anyone Care about University Rankings?

Carla Knipe



Last week, a small article appeared in the *Globe and Mail*. If you didn't manage to see it, the link is [here](#).

The article provides a brief overview of Alberta universities, including Athabasca. It does not provide any in-depth reporting on individual schools. Despite the assertion in the opening paragraph that "choosing the school that best suits you requires going beyond rankings and reputation and considering the unique culture and educational environment of your potential alma mater," the relatively brief article does not provide much insight into either the culture or educational environment of Alberta universities, including Athabasca. So, what was the purpose of the article?

AU's Communications Director, John O'Brien, provided a bit of background and context to the *Globe and Mail* piece.

The article was not designed to be a piece of journalism, even though it gives every appearance of being one. It is what is called "native advertising", or a special section in a newspaper that features some editorial content wrapped around the featured advertising space, not the other way around. In other words, the section of the newspaper is primarily designed to sell print ads and not provide any in-depth content. The advertising format in the print edition of the paper does not translate to the website view, so only the article content is shown. The author, Ash Kelly, is not a *Globe and Mail* reporter but is an employee of Discourse Media, a Vancouver-based company contracted by the *Globe and Mail* to produce the section.

The entire advertorial was based on data from an annual survey that Athabasca and other Canadian universities complete every January. What concerns some AU personnel is that the survey is designed and weighted for a traditional bricks-and-mortar university and contains questions that simply do not pertain to Athabasca; for example, 'describe your student residence experience'. In this particular instance, AU was not approached to answer any questions regarding its research projects, and yet the published results contained a section on university research. Subsequently, several AU Faculty and Board members were puzzled by the section's 'not applicable/not enough data' designations for areas like Athabasca's research and student experience, given that AU does excellent research and the company has access to Athabasca's results from annual surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement.

O'Brien cautions against reading too much into this advertorial and its portrayal of Athabasca University, especially in relation to other universities. "Nothing in this article was inaccurate, it simply means that it doesn't have enough data to give a clear picture of what Athabasca is all about."

This advertorial, that is based on the survey results, highlights the current trend of ranking systems being used to give a picture of universities.

On another front, the *Maclean's* magazine annual University Ranking survey results for 2016 have just been published this week. The *Maclean's* University survey has been around since 1991 and the special edition is one

of the most popular and eagerly anticipated issues for the weekly news magazine. But how much weight should people give the survey results, and are they an accurate portrayal of Canadian universities?

The *Maclean's* survey is part of the relatively recent trend of condensing schools' performance and student experience into statistics and then ranking the schools based on the data. University ranking began in 1983, but the trend did not fully take hold until the 1990s, when a proliferation of school ranking systems (ranging from The Fraser Institute—that rates elementary and secondary schools—to a number of league tables for higher education both within North America and abroad) gained popularity. It is difficult to say, however, whether the weighting and importance attached to them has also increased along with the number of ranking systems. Certainly, education at the post-secondary level is now a high-stakes game. One where competition is often fierce for students to be admitted to programs with limited places, especially at elite schools, and the overall cost of post-secondary education has skyrocketed. Universities and colleges must also compete for government and private funding to create opportunities for growth and development. This has contributed to an atmosphere where there is a lot riding on investments into education and the quality of the overall experience. Perhaps these rankings play into the current mentality.

So what is the big deal about university rankings? Are they truly an unbiased, comprehensive method to provide a snapshot of an institution? Certainly each time new results are released they grab the news headlines. Good results invite bragging rights by the institution and the results are often used to promote a school and boosting its stature. Conversely, a low ranking may hinder a school's reputation and create a label that may take years for it to recover from. On the surface, using algorithms and statistical methodology should give a foolproof result and the authors of these surveys pride themselves on the quality of their statistical research. But because they are presented in ways that focus on certain aspects of the institution and present them in simplified ways, perhaps what these rankings leave out is as important as what they include.

The *Maclean's* survey is the most popular and well-known university ranking in Canada. The magazine asserts that it has tweaked and improved the methodology that it uses over the years. It looks at many factors, including student evaluations of teaching staff, the quality and amount of research produced, and student satisfaction. *Maclean's* prides itself on including student stories about the institutions profiled in its annual special edition.

But not everyone is a fan of the *Maclean's* report. Some universities are recognizing it is primarily designed to sell magazines, not provide comprehensive results from every single college and university across Canada. Some universities begrudgingly participate and others have refused to provide any data to the magazine. Indira Samarasekera, a former president of the University of Alberta, has argued that too many measures, especially those used for reputational rankings, rely on subjective opinions. Ranking systems reduce university findings to one common core and ignore the fact that the evaluation in like-for-like Faculties can vary widely between universities or even between individual classes and teaching faculty when looking at a single school. Rankings such as the *Maclean's* report rely heavily on hard data such as the amount of faculty research and gloss over what cannot be measured, even though the unmeasurable may still be crucial to the university experience, such as community engagement. There have been various critiques of ranking systems, including an [article](#) by Malcolm Gladwell in *The New Yorker*, "The Order of Things: What college rankings really tell us", that highlight the issues and flaws within them. But, ironically, there has not been much scholarly research to evaluate the criteria used and how the information is compiled. In the case of the *Maclean's* survey, a lot of the student satisfaction results are taken from online surveys that are self-referring, meaning that students take the survey voluntarily, rather than being a comprehensive and representative sample in all university populations.

The case of Athabasca University's unique situation in Canada also illustrates how these rankings can present a bias toward certain institutions. Athabasca, by its nature, is somewhat of an educational anomaly in post-secondary education because, although it has a bricks-and-mortar building as its headquarters, its distance-learning model means that it is excluded from a bricks-and-mortar university culture as in the case of traditional universities. It does not have student residences or sports teams or predominantly face-to-face classroom experiences. And yet many surveys, including the one conducted by *Maclean's*, still give much merit to these factors. As a result, Athabasca drops behind the pack. With the increase in the number of traditional universities offering online and distance classes and programs in addition to their traditional framework, it remains to be seen whether the surveys adapt to this changing model of education.

When asked by The Voice in a telephone interview about AU's stance regarding the rankings, AU's Communications Director, John O'Brien, said that there is a place for these surveys and ranking systems, but he has no idea whether people pay a huge amount of attention to their results as, to his knowledge, this hasn't been investigated. He admitted it would be nice for these ranking systems to have a broader mandate that incorporates online and distance learning, and for them to "get into the 21st century."

So while the *Maclean's* survey is likely to be eagerly read out of a sense of curiosity as to who got the top spots this year, it should by no means be taken as the final word or most comprehensive method to evaluate Canada's universities. University rankings seem to be here to stay—for now—but whether they continue to be relevant in light of how education is evolving remains anyone's guess.

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



The Fit Student

Inner Beauty for a Stress-Free Life

Marie Well



The simpler things in life can truly bring us respite from daily woes and hardships. Even the most unsettling events of our lives can be ameliorated by fostering our inner beauty—beauty that includes compassion, humility, and forgiveness. Fostering our inner beauty is key to helping overcome both our own and other's life challenges with grace and dignity.

Amit Sood, author of the Mayo Clinic book called *Guide to Stress-Free Living* inadvertently joins us today to teach the stress reductive value of plain old good emotions. His wisdom will shower you with strength, resilience, and love, enabling you to overcome any barrier with an open heart and a broad smile. Plus, your positive emotion will serve others as they tread, or even flail, through life's obstacles.

Smile

Smiling simply feels good. When I worked at the hospital, I would encounter stress from the daily humdrum routine. The boredom

exasperated my anxiety, and I found myself struggling to ease the burden of the anxiety that plagued me on a daily basis. I sought every positive emotion I possibly could—from listening to clips on near death experiences to showering my coworkers with love and compliments. I thought by embracing the positives, the stress would somehow alleviate.

During this time, I discovered a way to foster a positive connection with my work. Namely, when I came into work each day, I would smile at everyone passing by. Sometimes I wouldn't get a smile in return, but when I did, I felt a surge of beautiful energy. After watching near death experience videos, I came to realize that the simplest acts of kindness we do mean the most in the end. I chalked up each smile as a broader taste of the spiritual, for both me and the person I smiled at.

Amit Sood delivers wisdom on the value of a smile. He says to try to replace the worry lines on your face with smile lines whenever you so feel inspired. Your spirit will shine in the process.

Wish Others Well and See Yourself Sharing their Soul Essence

When I encounter someone, my default is to demonstrate patience. I like to view people from a relaxed, nonjudgmental frame of mind. This tendency has naturalized within me, and I typically succeed in viewing people with neutrality of ego.

Yet, each person, each living being, represents a part of what mathematicians call eternity and spiritualists call God. Each living being possesses value that cannot be understated by the troubling circumstances of life. Each soul is precious. I once read that if you improved at least one other person's life in even a small way, then your life has been worthwhile.

Amit Sood unveils the secret not for just seeing people neutrally, but for wishing the best on others. Imagine all those people who surely must love that person you encounter, and pretend that you share the same spiritual essence and familial lineage as that person you encounter. Amit Sood advises you to conjure up positive wishes for that person and to send them that person's way, silently—wish that person peace and love. Try to find something good about that person to focus on, and dwell on that positive characteristic for a while.

Enjoy Meals and Exercise

For the longest time, I didn't exercise. Later, I met an exercise guru who imparted the wisdom that one should exercise for at least an hour a day. Encouraged, I began exercising regularly for a minimum of an hour to a maximum of three and a half hours a day while taking full-time studies at the university. It seemed that the more I exercised and the more the benefits began to appear, the more addicted to the gym I became. My exercise peaked to five hours a day some days. With heavy weight lifting and lots of cycling, even my fashion and style life arrived at the point where, no matter what clothing item I tried on, everything seemed to look fantastic. Furthermore, just the act of exercise released the tensions of the day and refueled me. I was truly in the moment.

Amit Sood advises us to enjoy our routine acts throughout the day, such as eating and exercising. Try to make these experiences enjoyable and rewarding, any way you can. Ask a loved one or friend to join you at the gym. When eating, slow down your chewing and savor the food. Consider starting your meal with a prayer of thanks or just thoughts of gratitude for the plenty before you.

Express Gratitude Through a Gratitude Journal

I discovered that journaling is the only thing that alleviates my anxiety when it gets out of hand. Unfortunately, meditation worked only once at stopping a full-blown anxiety attack. Journaling, on the other hand—a form of distraction—alleviates my anxiety every single time. Before I started journaling, I would have to anxiously count sheep up to over a thousand just to fall asleep. Now, with journaling, I recover from the anxiety completely, hopping into bed refreshed and ready to read spiritual books.

Also, with journaling, I initially thought that I needed to express hurts from my past as a form of recovery. Writing about painful experiences seemed to alleviate the anxiety, but after reading Amit Sood's book, I discovered that journaling about gratitude and positive emotions is more helpful at reducing stress than journaling on painful experiences. So, I started journaling about gratitude, and sure enough, the anxiety alleviated.

Amit Sood talks about journaling. He advises to write one thing to be grateful for in a journal at the end of each day. Even if the experiences of the day seem negative, try to extract something positive out of them. For instance, getting a low C-grade on a test means that you at least passed. Also, having to undergo the drudgeries of work could be thought of, at least, as having a job and a steady paycheck. In everything, whether it be good or bad, there resides something positive to express gratitude for. Seek and find that meaning in whatever you do, and peace will be with you.



The Mindful Bard Sun Ra and his Arkestra

Wanda Waterman

Album: *Gilles Peterson Presents Sun Ra and His Arkestra: To Those of Earth ... and Other Worlds*

Artist: The Sun Ra Arkestra & Gilles Peterson

"Sun Ra and the Arkestra were the original DIY group. What went on in 1970s punk with self-pressed records and hand-drawn artwork – Ra was doing that in the '50s and '60s. The music was phenomenal – Sun Ra was the man, the ultimate artist for any vinyl collector."

- Gilles Peterson (DJ, producer, broadcaster)

"He claimed to be the last of the swing band leaders, yet dosed classic songs with LSD. He wrote poetry about the "coming space age" and claimed to be a citizen of Saturn. He dressed himself and his band in gold-lamé and lectured on

the Creator's message to the cruel and deceitful Earthman. He named himself after an Egyptian God. Was this guy for real? Sun Ra was very much for real."

- Robert L. Campbell (author)

To Those of Earth ... is an amazing compilation of tracks from the career of avant-garde jazz keyboardist and band leader, Sun Ra, whose heyday began in the late fifties. It's an inviting buffet of inspired creativity, rich musical knowledge, authentic sentiment, masterful musicianship, exciting concepts, and sheer fun. It's an escape into a dimension where love grabs you and sets you free.

Among the more scintillating musical elements: devilishly clever improvisations, drum kits that swing like nobody's business, *film noir* ambience, experimental sounds, moog space sounds, found sounds, tender piano, Coltanesque sax, hardcore funkadelic rhapsodies, and playfully expressive voices breaking in every now and then to sing of love, the sun, and outer space.

It's not just the music that makes listening to these tracks so titillating. This album is full-to-bursting with rich musical history. DJ, broadcaster, and producer Gilles Peterson personifies a colossal knowledge of living, breathing jazz in motion and is a gifted musical archaeologist. A brilliant musical bloodhound, Peterson unearths buried treasures for hordes of hungry listeners. (There's an interesting video in which Peterson discusses discovering Sun Ra and His Arkestra, first in record libraries and then in a London club.) Peterson curated this double CD, picking his favourites from Sun Ra's 125 albums, which couldn't have been easy.

Then there's Sun Ra himself. Born Herman Blount in Birmingham Alabama in 1914 (he was later to say of Herman Blount: "That's an imaginary person, never existed ... "), Sun Ra (after the Egyptian sun god) promoted himself as a citizen of Saturn, sent to bring a message of peace to us stupid humans. Judging from his biographical information, the guy must have had an IQ of 200, an autodidact with phenomenal powers of memory, imagination, study, and a capacity to work tirelessly night and day.

How can something be so sixties and still sound so new? When I first listened to this music I had no idea it was over forty years old; I thought it was the vanguard of the avant-garde, some new outgrowth of acid jazz. Now that I know better, I see Sun Ra and his Arkestra as the full flowering of the streams of creative inspiration that flowed through Miles Davis, Coleman Hawkins, and John Coltrane. Free jazz didn't die in the sixties— it just went underground. Hallelujah that Gilles Peterson dug it back up.

The band started its weird outer space persona in the fifties (can one think of a less sympathetic era for such esoterica?) and kept going until they were able to influence the explosion of creativity in music that happened in the eighties. And today, even though Sun has gone to his reward, the Arkestra keeps on keepin' on.

You get your money's worth. This double CD, priced as a single, has 16 tracks—two of them an hour long—and every one *boombastic*.

To Those of Earth ... and Other Worlds manifests seven of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It stimulates my mind.
- It harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda.
- It provides respite from a cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- 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.

Music Review

Nick Peay

Samantha Stevens



Artist: Nick Peay

EP: *Sobering*

One of the best things about listening to indie music is that you are often treated to the unconventional. What I mean by this is that you rarely come across music that sounds like something you would hear on the radio top charts. I happen to think that is fantastic. Music is a dynamic entity, capable of capturing the essence of humanity. Nick Peay is one such musician capable of such artistic expression, giving life to his music and resonating with the average person.

Fresh from Louisville, Kentucky, *Sobering* is Nick's latest EP. Nick has been playing music since he was very young, playing with the band OK Zombie for several years before embarking on a solo career. Similar to other singer/songwriters, Nick's music is very down-to-earth and Nick relies heavily on real world experiences to create his music. Influenced by The Beatles and Simon &

Garfunkel, Nick's sound is similar to those mentors but is also extremely unique.

Released in early September, *Sobering* is very short, with only five tracks. The album addresses an intense personal issue, the battle with an addiction, by combining the raw lyrics with catchy music. As well, the EP is a story where the listener is privy to the main character's descent into the perils of an addiction, hitting rock bottom, and then going on a journey of redemption.

However, Nick does mention that "...while it [the EP] isn't autobiographical," he continues, "I think it tells a story that is probably familiar to all of us. People lose themselves in addictions every day, and it doesn't have to be drugs or alcohol – it might be a bad relationship or a job, and it's up to us to find our way out. I believe *Sobering* speaks to all these things." Nick's wisdom and insight surprised me, especially how he made it clear that an addiction doesn't have to be drugs or alcohol, which is typically what comes to mind when one thinks of addiction.

Given this understanding of Nick's intentions for his music, it became immediately clear that Nick's unique take on people's vices resided in his lyrics. After listening to each song closely, I gained a new appreciation for the story that Nick is telling.

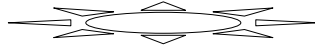
The musical accompaniment in each song is equally as raw as the lyrics. There is the typical rock sound, but occasionally Nick rounds out his sound with string instruments such as a violin. Although I liked this EP, I did find that the songs sounded off, just not quite right and the music was slightly unbalanced. But I think in an odd way that this unbalance added to the overall theme of the EP, however, I don't know if this was intentional or not.

Each song on the EP is special and fantastic, but I really loved the sound in "I Won't Fall in Love". The song has a slower tempo than the other songs, but I really liked the rhythm that develops as the song progresses. By

the time the chorus comes around, the subtle violin enhances the melancholy tone of the music, but it also adds a slightly optimistic feel. As well, I absolutely loved the harmony between Nick's singing and the music.

So if you are a fan of heartfelt and deep lyrics paired with brilliantly composed music, I highly recommend checking out Nick's EP *Sobering*.

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



In Conversation with Sunny Gang, Part I

Wanda Waterman



Sunny Gang is a lively thrash-punk-rap outfit based in New York, known for inspired (and inspiring) rap. Fronted by rapper Nasty Nate, other members include Chris Bacchus on guitar, Joe Sap on bass, and Marshal on drums. Sunny Gang just released "Godzilla", a single from their album, Party/Animal. Recently the band took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about their childhoods, musical influences, and how they developed their unique mix of genres.

Which elements in your childhood and early years pointed you toward music?

CHRIS BACCHUS: I can remember being three or four years old, sitting in a car seat, singing The Beatles and Frank Sinatra with my mom. She always wanted me to play an instrument because she never had the opportunity to learn an instrument as a kid. When I was around six my parents bought me a drum set and a guitar, which collected dust until I was around 12 years old and decided to immerse myself in learning music. I used to jump on the couch with my guitar, pretending that I was playing in front of thousands of people. It was around this age that I knew pursuing music would make me truly happy.

JOE SAP: My dad's a musician—he plays piano and guitar—so from a very early age I was put in front of a keyboard. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and Pink Floyd's *Piper At The Gates of Dawn* were my lullabies. I started taking piano when I was probably seven, stuck with that through grade school and then picked up guitar and bass when I was in high school.

MARSHAL: I remember that when I was about three years old, my mom would go to work at night and my father would put on MTV and let me and my brother run around and freak out in our boxers like psychopaths when bands like Nirvana and The Offspring came on. Funny thing is that 20 years later, nothing's really changed, except that maybe now when I'm freaking out in my underwear alcohol is presumably involved.

When I was sevenish my father told me I had to learn an instrument, and since my older brother was already learning guitar I opted to learn the drums since they were different, and loud as shit. I wasn't very good for the first four years or so, so I really didn't concentrate on it too much. But one day my dad's friend came over and

taught me how to play the basic "2-4 rock groove" and that was it— drumming effectively became my entire identity.

NASTY NATE: I originally joined the school band because my brother was in it. He played percussion, but I wanted to play something a little more melodic so I went with trumpet. Did that for a couple years, then switched to saxophone. To be honest, I didn't like either, because I just couldn't relate; so I switched to percussion in, like, sixth grade and played that until I graduated high school. My parents always supported that and always played me a variety of music from soul to metal to classic rock so I always had an appreciation for musicianship. As far as rapping, I mean, I always had a love for writing, and as a kid I listened to a lot of rap music, so it wasn't long before I said, "I can do that." So I've been writing rap lyrics since I was 12 and the part I enjoy the most is coming up with perfect multiple syllable rhymes that sound flawless, not forced.

Which elements pointed you toward thrash, rap, and punk? How did you develop your own unique mix of genres?

JOE SAP: It happened very naturally. The four of us started playing together originally as a band backing Nate, who was mostly performing material from his solo hip-hop project. At some point, we realized we were much better suited to be a rock band, and began writing music together that fit that mold instead. Then, as we really started to delve into how we were going to make it work, we started to realize that, at their core, punk and hip-hop really aren't all that different; music that started with a bunch of broke kids in New York just trying to dance and party, that over time developed into an art form that could be just as political and aggressive as it was laid back and fun.

People ask us this question a lot—how we manage to put these genres together—but it very rarely feels like a stretch to us.

CHRIS BACCHUS: We all listen to different music. I'm more into the punk, thrash and hardcore side of things. Sap's into the more classic stuff like Cream and 60's surf rock. Marshal's into indie and experimental music, while Nate's a well-versed hip-hop head. We don't really try to aim for a certain sound. It's literally all of us combining our influences into one big concoction.

MARSHAL: Genres never meant anything to me. As Chris mentioned, I'm really into obscure and progressive music like Animal Collective and Battles, but I'd also really hate to pigeonhole myself. I grew up playing albums by Blink-182, The Offspring and Green Day on repeat, but I mean, I also enjoyed Blondie as much as Queens of The Stone Age, or The Beatles as much as Kanye West; shit, just a few months ago I went on a serious Chopin binge.

The point is that labeling genres only helps create barriers between people and new music, that's why what has always mattered to me, more than anything, was whether or not the music has a certain "edge" to it. Now that I finally have the opportunity to reciprocate my passion for music, I aim to only do so by contributing something with its own personal "edge." Somehow, between the four of us, that seems to have been accomplished through our merge of both rock and rap, or punk-rap, or thrash-hop, or whatever other stupid label someone wants to throw at us.

JOE SAP: Word up, genres are shit. They're really only useful as a way for people to try and classify music without actually hearing it. Which causes a lot of problems for us, because when you say "rap-rock" people think: "I DID IT ALL FOR THA NOOKIE!"

NASTY NATE: For me I was always into rock-rap like Rage Against the Machine, Limp Bizkit, P.O.D., and Linkin Park. I always liked the fact that the tempos matched up with straight hip-hop tracks so it's easy to write rap lyrics over it. (It's hard as hell to write rap style lyrics over fast punk blast beats but that's a challenge I've accepted.) So I

always hated how rap beats all sound so similar because everyone is using the same formats and samples. That's why I welcome what we do so much because it gives me as a rap lyricist an opportunity to stand out.
(*To be continued.*)

Wanda also writes the blog *The Mindful Bard: The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self*.



Another Perspective on Getting Inked

Deanna Roney



A few weeks ago there was an article about the possible dangers of getting a tattoo. While there are some unknowns in the tattooed world, I would like to present you with another perspective.

Getting a tattoo can be a wonderful experience, albeit painful. The *most* important thing to do before getting a tattoo is to do your research. Find an artist you like and someone who is knowledgeable about sterilization and health. A good artist is passionate about their work and the health of the canvas which is it going on. I recently went with my husband and we both got tattoos from an artist I had previously gone to. This

particular artist is exceptionally thorough about cleanliness and takes the time to educate clients on the proper after care. After all, a fresh tattoo is a fresh, open, wound, and, like any other open wound, you need to make sure it stays clean and does not get infected. Every year this artist goes to several conventions and takes a health course to stay up to date on the best procedures.

A tattoo may not be for everyone, and if you are at all unsure of if you really want one, you should not get one (after all, they are generally permanent). These days tattoos have taken on a whole new meaning. In the past they were a sign of rebellion, the person was viewed as dangerous, but today people of all walks have them. For some, each tattoo has a personal meaning, while for others, some are pieces of art which they love. For myself, I have (so far) only three, each one marks a moment in my life. It brings back a memory, reminds me where I came from, and how far I can go.

Getting a tattoo should be a personal decision. No one outside of yourself should influence whether you get one, or what you get. Take care in who you choose to see, look through their portfolio, ask questions if you have them, and if you don't like the answers, or the portfolio, go and see someone else. The process of getting inked is a personal journey, one which no one else can experience for you, or with you. Even sitting there watching my husband get his first tattoo it was a unique experience for him, one which I cannot completely understand. With each sitting I learn something about myself, my tolerance, and those around me.

Don't get a tattoo because I, or anyone else, has had this experience, but don't avoid them because someone says you shouldn't get one.

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



Remember

From the two Great Wars to today in Afghanistan, men and woman are committing their lives to serve and protect us. It can't get more personal than that. As we gather on November 11th at legions, cenotaphs, and community halls, we need to thank past and current military personnel for the job they do and for their presence as part of the day's solemn program. We also need to pay tribute to each of their families—parents, siblings, spouses, and children—for the sacrifices they make in supporting that career choice. How many of us would be willing to serve our country in this way? (I know I'm grateful that neither Roy nor the kids chose that path.)

We can only hope that the government quickly announces increased services, benefits, and equipment for active members and veterans; a tangible sign that as Canadians we are no longer taking these sacrifices of life, health, and family for granted.

Each year we are encouraged to remember. But maybe the question should be 'why remember'? Simply put, there are more than 110,000 reasons. That is the number of men and women who have died in service to our country. More than one and a half million people have served, and continue to serve, in combat and peacekeeping missions all over the world.

It is our duty to acknowledge and honour the sacrifices that these brave men and women made and continue to make. While the rules and tools of combat have changed over the decades, the mission and the goals remain the same: to protect the efforts for peace and freedom around the world. We are blessed that a war has never been fought on Canadian soil.

Remembrance Day is a day of symbolism, observance, and meaning. Wearing a poppy, attending a ceremony, laying a wreath, and respecting the moments of silence are some of the easiest ways to show our gratitude. But each of us can do more. We can talk to young people about war, we can personally thank armed forces personnel when we see them, we can encourage our government to improve resources to veterans and families of lost members.

By remembering their service and sacrifice we recognize the tradition of freedom these men and women fought to preserve. They believed their actions would ensure a future of peace. Today we should honour their courage and sacrifice, and acknowledge our responsibility to work for the peace they fought to achieve. To do any less would betray that memory and effort.

We can allow ourselves to shed a tear or feel a tingle as we hear the piper's lament or the bugler's Last Post and Reveille. We can take pride in the Canadian flag and national anthem. We can try to understand these lines from Robert Binyon's *For the Fallen*:

"They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe."

We can remember, 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

Timing Issues

Dear Barb:

My boyfriend and I have been dating for two years and recently decided to move in together. Our relationship has been difficult as we hadn't accepted that we were gay before becoming intimately involved with each other, and had just been friends before. Our families are having a hard time accepting our situation. Since we moved in together I have noticed that my boyfriend is spending a lot of time looking at other men. When I mention it to him he denies it. I'm wondering if he is regretting moving in with me so quickly before exploring relationships with other men. I really love him, but don't want to hold him back. Need some advice! Thanks, Randy.

Hey Randy:

Thanks for your question! You both have gone through a big transition in what appears to be a short time. You may have needed some time before making the move to live together, but that decision has been made. I would suggest you both get some counselling, both individual and couple counselling could be helpful. I believe you may both have issues that have to be worked through, and I believe you need a professional to facilitate this for you. If you don't get these issues resolved early, resentment will build and you will both do and say things that can irreparably ruin your relationship. Hope this helps, best of luck to you both.

Dear Barb:

I am on the fast track to finish my degree at AU. I am registered in four courses, so my time is spent studying and writing essays. I am from a big Italian family and I have told my family and friends that I am very busy and would like to get my degree so I can begin my career. I had hoped they would appreciate that my free time is limited. Unfortunately they don't get it. I get all kinds of phone calls and I try to keep them short, so I can get back to my studies, but it is very difficult to get off the phone. Lately I have been letting it go to voice mail, but then I spend so much time listening to messages and feeling guilty if I don't call the person back. Often if I don't answer the phone, my family members will show up at my door, wondering what's wrong. I explained that I need to study, but they show up with coffee and snacks. I appreciate that I have a loving, caring family, but I also need to do the things I need to. Do you have any suggestions on how I can handle this situation? Thanks Theresa.

Hi Theresa:

Your situation is a very common complaint among people who work and study at home. You need to be very disciplined and have strict guidelines for your family and friends. I would suggest you have a family meeting and explain to everyone that you are studying between certain hours and that you will not be answering your phone or your door. In fact I would get a Do Not Disturb sign to put on your door just in case somebody forgets. You also need to do this with your friends. At first it may be difficult for you to control the impulse to answer the door or the phone, but it is essential that you stick to your rules if you expect your friends to. Happy studying!

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.

CHAZZ BRAVADO!

BRAVO, CANADA!



Great honking kudos
to Canada for picking
a feminist prime minister!

Justin Trudeau
did more than win
a landslide electoral victory—
he put guys like me back
in the spotlight!

If a male feminist
can become the leader of an elite democracy,
surely The Chazz Man
can get a date for New Year's Eve!



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.

Come meet AUSU Council in Halifax!

Guess who is going to be in Halifax on November 22, and would love to meet up with some AU students?

- AUSU President **Shawna Wasylyshyn**,
- VP Finance **Brandon Simmons**,
- VP External **Colleen Doucette**, and
- Councillor **Kim Newsome**!

Come by to say hi and get to know your AUSU council!

DATE: Sunday, November 22

TIME: 6:00pm AST

PLACE: Starbucks, 5466 Spring Garden Road, Halifax



Online Course Evaluations

AUSU recently launched new **online course evaluations** for all undergraduate AU courses!

We hope this will be a great resource for our members to review course feedback, as well as to write reviews of courses they have taken

We encourage all students to write reviews for any courses they have taken in the last 6 months!

**Click here to fill out a
COURSE EVALUATION**

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Nov 10:** Deadline to register for courses starting December 1
- **Nov 11:** Remembrance Day – AU Closed
- **Nov 12:** AUSU Council Meeting
- **Nov 13:** December degree requirement deadline
- **Nov 30:** December course extension deadline
- **Dec 10:** AUSU Council Meeting

Free Smart Draw Subscription

Did you know AUSU offers a **FREE Smart Draw** subscription for all AUSU members?

Smart Draw allows users to create a wide range of charts, diagrams and other business graphics that can be dropped in to Microsoft Word or Excel files. This makes it easy for students to include professional diagrams in their assignments for AU classes!

To obtain the license key, just email admin@ausu.org with your name and student ID number.



November AUSU Council Meeting

All members are welcome to attend AUSU council meetings, which are held by teleconference.

DATE: November 12, 2015

TIME: 4:30pm to 7:30pm MST

To RSVP, just email admin@ausu.org.

AUSU Twitter Accounts



Did you know that all three AUSU Executives are on Twitter? **Follow all of us for the most up to date news & views!**

AUSU Main Twitter Account: [@AthabascaUSU](https://twitter.com/AthabascaUSU)

President, Shawna Wasylyshyn: [@AUSU_President](https://twitter.com/AUSU_President)

VP Finance, Brandon Simmons: [@AUSU_VPFA](https://twitter.com/AUSU_VPFA)

VP External, Colleen Doucette: [@AUSU_VPEX](https://twitter.com/AUSU_VPEX)

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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

Publisher	Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief	Sarah Cornett
Managing Editor	Karl Low

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

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