

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 45 2015-11-20

### **Minds We Meet**

Interviewing Students' Like You!

### **Becoming a Course Survivor**

Dealing with the Course from Hell

### **Be Your Own TED Talk**

Your Personal Manifesto

*Plus:*

*Extracurricular  
Combat Exam Anxiety  
and much more!*



# CONTENTS

*The Voice's* interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

## Features

Minds We Meet: *Interviewing Brandon Simmons* ..... 4

## Articles

Editorial: *More Dangerous if we Don't* ..... 3

Be Your Own TED Talk: *The Art of the Personal Manifesto* ..... 7

Becoming a Course Survivor..... 13

Malala ..... 22

## Columns

The Writer's Toolbox: *Fragments, Part II* ..... 9

In Conversation: *with Ron E. Scott* ..... 11

Extracurricular: *Needle Arts* ..... 15

The Study Dude: *Become a Mathematician, Part II* ..... 16

The Mindful Bard: *20,000 Days on Earth* ..... 18

The Fit Student: *Combat Exam Anxiety*..... 20

Music Review: *The Sylvia Platters* ..... 25

From Where I Sit: *Remember* ..... 26

Dear Barb: *Dating Tolerance* ..... 27

## News and Events

Student Sizzle..... 14

Council Connection..... 23

AUSU Update ..... 29

## Comic

The Machiavellian Writer ..... 28

***The Voice  
Magazine***

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

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

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email  
[voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org)

**Publisher**

AU Students' Union

**Editor-In-Chief**

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  
contributors and do not  
represent the views of AUSU  
Student Council

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

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

*The Voice* does not share  
its subscriber list with  
anyone.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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



**EDITORIAL****Karl Low****More Dangerous if we Don't**

I was head down in *The Voice Magazine* last week when the attacks in Paris happened, so the first I knew of it was when I started seeing the responses to it appear on Facebook.

In Canada, the attacks seem to be serving as a backdrop to the question of whether our government should follow through on its promise to bring some 25,000 refugees from ISIS occupied Syria into our country. Some people worry about the security concerns of bringing these people into Canada with little vetting, but I'd suggest this isn't a terribly rational reasons. Will there be some bad eggs among the refugees? Of course. It just stands to reason. After all, if you're bringing in 25,000 people in a short time, it doesn't matter where they come from, some of them are probably going to be not very nice people. That has nothing to do with terrorism, that's simply to do with human nature.

And it's what we have police for.

But it's not a reason to refuse these people who are fleeing from their homes and lives in fear of what ISIS may do to them. What the naysayers should remember is that every single person we refuse is

one more person who may simply decide that joining ISIS is easier than living in fear of them. And yes, there are a lot of questions, such as how are we going to feed and house these people? Will they be competing with the rest of us for jobs? How will we pay for their medical needs? But those questions need to take a back seat to the question of "Do we want these people joining ISIS for their own self-preservation?"

That is how these groups tend to work, after all. Very few terrorists were happy and fulfilled people when they decided to become a terrorist. I can only imagine what a fertile breeding ground for the type of person who becomes a terrorist these refugee camps must be, and how much of an easier time ISIS will have getting converts if those refugees start thinking that people who could help, like Canada, like the U.S., have turned their backs on the suffering. We should bring those people here simply because it's more dangerous if we don't.

A couple of the articles in this week's *Voice Magazine* also touch on terrorism, and in addition to those, we have a look at how to deal with the course from hell, some strategies to handle anxiety (especially for your exams), a look at the latest Council meeting, check it out if you want to see the latest news on the AUSU Executive wages, plus information about a possibility of home-invigilated exams, and pressuring AU to provide some cost savings for the move to e-textbooks. Also, if you're in Calgary, you'll want to check out the AUSU Update this week, which takes a look at the Bow Valley College building where AU is housed.

And of course we have our feature article, this week, we interview High River student, dad, and AUSU's own VP of Finance and Administration, Brandon Simmons. He talks a little bit about what it was like living through the 2013 floods here in Alberta. And all of that is on top of our regular selection of news, reviews, advice, and other articles to keep you busy for a few minutes while you're waiting for the AU website maintenance to complete. Enjoy the read!

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

# MINDS WE MEET



*Brandon Simmons is an AU student from High River, Alberta. He is in the Bachelor of Management program at AU. In the recent AUSU By-election, Brandon was a successful candidate, and he went on to be elected AUSU council's new Vice-President, Finance & Administration.*

*Brandon was recently interviewed by The Voice Magazine. Here's what he had to say about school, disasters, and Dragon's Den.*

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

I live in High River, Alberta, but I've lived all over Alberta. I was born in Lethbridge, then lived in

Edmonton, Fort McMurray, and Spruce Grove. After I got married we lived in Okotoks, and now we're in High River.

**Which AU program are you in?**

I'm in the Bachelor of Management program. I started out in the Bachelor of Commerce program majoring in Accounting but later switched. My life took a bit of a detour after the disastrous floods here two years ago, so even though I started at AU three years ago, I'm only entering my second year of studies.

**If you work, describe what you do.**

I've been working at a number of things. I have my own business consulting company. I'm also a public accountant. And I'm still doing stuff for the charity I started a couple years ago. Now that I'm VP, Finance & Administration for AUSU, I've basically shut down my company, although I'm still passing some work to friends. I had already been winding down the charity. The original need was accomplished so it functions more as a charitable foundation now.

**Describe the path that led you to AU.**

At one time I had taken on a number of management jobs. I was helping set up a company in Calgary and things were not happening. I realized I was relying on other people when I would rather be working for myself. I applied to go to Mount Royal University, but my math marks were 1% off and I didn't get accepted. Soon afterwards, I was attending a CMA information session and I learned about the accredited programs at AU. Now I'm glad I wasn't accepted at Mount Royal—if I had been, I would have never had the opportunities that I've had at AU. I really have an edge with my AU program, and it allows a balance between work and studies.

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

I don't have a lot of time when I'm not studying or working—I seem to be always occupied. Mostly, I spend time with my wife and kids. I have two daughters, one is 2 ½ years and the other is 7 months. I like to spend time out in the country, and with friends. I also like horseback riding.

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

My dad. He had initially started out at university studying to be an accountant, but hard times meant it was difficult to make ends meet. He ultimately went into the trades. He taught me that I can learn something from everybody, even if it's how *not* to do something. There's just so much to learn from other people.

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

That's a tough one. There are a number of people, but I'll say Brett Wilson. I'm a big follower of Dragon's Den, and I've been following his business career. Brett's a really nice guy and a great role model. He's really ethical, and he strives to do the right thing.

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

I quite enjoy it because I can study everywhere and at my own speed. Especially when I was working in the trades, I could pull out my iPad on my lunch break or whenever it suited me. What I dislike is the missed opportunities to work face-to-face with other students.

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

I don't know if I did. I'm not a huge fan of how academics are set up. I don't like that you're considered incapable of doing a job because you don't have a degree. In my view, you still need to have hands-on experience, not just the ability to memorize for an exam. A degree doesn't give that experience.

I did struggle a bit after the flood [in 2013]. Not long after that, I had to undergo life-saving heart surgery. It was hard to get back on track after all that.

**What was your most memorable AU course?**

My favourite AU course was ADMN 499 because I got credit for this course by doing the CPA Board Governance Case Competition. I really enjoy the study of board governance. Additionally, I enjoy helping to develop strategic plans to help businesses to grow and resolve challenges.

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

I would definitely be quitting my job! I enjoy the work I do for AUSU, but I would focus more on my non-profit company. I'd like it to focus not just on assistance after natural disasters, but financial help for ongoing personal crises. After my surgery, I had friends and family to help me out. Some people don't have that.

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

I haven't had to give up anything; it's been all positive. I struggled at first with finding time for my studies as I had to work so much.

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

Sustainability. Actually, I just had a meeting with AU president Peter MacKinnon about this yesterday. Sustainability is one of the big issues. I'm not sure if the new government puts a value on distance education. AU is different: the student body isn't just 18-year-old students, it's made of people of all ages, many of whom

are balancing studies with full-time work. I'd like to see the government recognize the importance of AU and get the funding changed so we can get the same coverage that other institutions get.

**What's your favourite sound?**

Just being out on a farm, hearing farm animals out in the field. It's peaceful. I hope to get a ranch someday.

**What is your most prized possession?**

I don't really have one. That's one thing the flood taught me: there aren't many material possessions that matter. What matters most to me is my family.

**Please tell us something that few people know about you.**

It's my dream to get into tie-down roping in the rodeo. I'm not sure when or if that's going to happen, given that you can spend anywhere from \$10,000 to \$100,000 on a horse. But I'd like to do it, even if I have to lease a horse at first.

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

Just like my Dad said, you have to learn from others. You are always learning, not just when you're at school. And you have to keep your eyes open to learning opportunities.

**What do you think about e-texts?**

I'm not a huge fan. I've grown to like them a bit only because I used to have a Surface Pro with a pen. That allowed me to use it somewhat like a book—it gave it a similar feel. Still, I like having a hard text. And I would have hated it on the Surface Pro without the pen.

*That's the one thing the flood taught me: there aren't many material possessions that matter. What matters most to me is my family*

**How do you find communications with your course tutors?**

To be honest, I haven't really used them. I'm an independent learner, and I tend to figure things out on my own. I find the business courses so straightforward that I don't have any questions about what I'm supposed to do. It was different when I took an English course; in that case the tutor and I didn't see eye to eye on some things. I think it came down to style differences.

**Where has life taken you so far?**

Not very far outside of Alberta. I've been to California, helping out at a mission with my church. I've also been to BC and Montana. I don't have a big desire to travel—I just love Alberta.

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

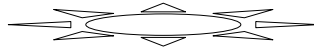
I don't have much time for reading, but right now I'm reading *Redefining Success* by Brett Wilson. In it he looks back on his life and traces how his perspective on "success" has changed over time.

**Final question: You're now the VP, Finance & Administration for AUSU. At the end of your term on council, what do you hope to have accomplished?**

There is a lot that I would like to accomplish but as it is a shorter term I may not be able to accomplish everything I would like. That being said, three things I would like to accomplish outside of the many regular administrative duties that I have would be: 1) to ensure that policies that have to deal with governance and finance issues with the council are refined. This will help to protect the best interests of AUSU members as a whole; 2) Refine the AUSU executive training process so that new AUSU executives can hit the ground running with the specific



administrative roles they have; and 3) The third Item is already in the process: I would like to see greater advocacy in regards to the financial support of AU. This is something that we have talked about with AU executives and ultimately we need to discuss with government officials. The financial wellbeing of AU is crucial to all of our membership and with only 30% of AU's operating costs being covered by the government compared to approximately 55% for other universities it shows that the government does not understand the true value of AU and the opportunities that it opens for students.



## Be Your own TED Talk

### The Art of the Personal Manifesto

**Carla Knipe**



There is no doubt that TED Talks are a modern phenomenon. What began in 1984 as a single conference showcasing Technology, Education, and Design is now a global franchise that embraces a variety of topics. The accessibility and popularity of TED has been attributed partly to TED.com, launched in 2006. Anyone with an Internet connection could access select TEDTalks for free through the website, and later, through YouTube, Apple TV, and Netflix. TED Talks have become a part of modern popular culture.

The approach of the presentations has been analyzed in terms of their artful public speaking techniques but this fails to answer why they are so popular across diverse cultures and countries. Of course, TEDTalks by celebrities are a big draw because people want to hear what these famous personalities have to say and establish a connection with them. While celebrities may use TED to capitalize on their star power, often the most surprising and engaging talks are by those who aren't famous but are willing to share their expertise, passion, and wisdom. What becomes evident is that they are not simply university-style lectures; they serve as personal manifestos for the speakers. A pattern that runs through the presentations is that they set out what the speaker has learned, their goals and ideals, and how they want to make the world better.

Based on the TED model, I believe that everyone can—and should—create their personal manifesto. The point of doing this is not for public performance and accolades, and of course not everyone has the inclination to record themselves either on video or by public speaking, but putting thoughts into words is a powerful tool to set goals and for setting intention in how to live a fuller life. After all, everyone has gained wisdom they've learned in the course of their life, regardless of the level of their formal education. The magic of TEDTalks does not need to remain only the domain of celebrities.

The first ingredient, then, of a personal manifesto is to brainstorm what you want to tell the world. A personal manifesto does not have to focus on one particular aspect; it can include several sections. A good beginning is to have a strong opening statement. But the "ingredients" of a personal manifesto can include answers to questions such as: What are your beliefs? What do you feel strongly about? What life lessons do you want to pass on? What is something intensely meaningful for you? What do you know for sure? What have you learned



through the hard knocks of life? Other ideas for content might be: dealing with disappointment and failures, the kinds of risks are you willing to take, the causes would you like to champion, how you would like to treat your health—just to name a few. Remember, there is no singular and correct way to write a manifesto. It is a very personal, unique document that should reflect exactly who you are but it should be about the whole picture of you and not simply about your career, which is unlike the subjects of many TEDTalks. Don't allow yourself feel inferior because you don't consider yourself to be an expert on anything. You are the expert of your own life.

The final section could incorporate practical ways about how you intend to put what you wrote into practice and the ideal picture of the way you want your life to look, both now and in the future. After all, a manifesto is ultimately a declaration, a code of conduct, and a call to action.

In terms of the actual writing style, initially it is important to simply put pen to paper, or just to start to type, without initial editing. But allowing some time to mull over what you've written and then edit, tweak, and change it is crucial to the process. Your subconscious might lead you to more items to include or aspects to change. While TED speakers are master storytellers, most people feel they are unable to compete on that level. What is important is to write with your own words and vocabulary without feeling that it must be embellished and polished into some literary masterpiece. What matters is that you have the confidence in your own wisdom and your own voice. Sometimes, the simplest words are the most powerful. You could perhaps use a quotation by others or phrase you've come across that is meaningful to you, but it is important to make your words the focus. There is no prescribed length, but it should not be pages of rambling explanation. The language should be bold, positive, and written mostly in the present tense with some future tense. Use lots of vibrant action words.

The best part of writing this document is that you do not have to let anyone else see it if you don't want to. You can let it remain hidden in a private drawer or folded in your journal. You can say it out loud to yourself or with your pet cat as your audience. However, if you are artistic, you can make it beautiful by writing it out in calligraphy, illuminating it with drawings, or printing it out as a poster. Or, you can take a small section of your words and create a computer graphic from it similar to the way Internet memes are created and frame it on your wall to remind you of the entire document. Whatever form this takes, it is important to refer to it periodically. Consider it as a reflection of you as a work in progress. Just as reading a book or essay over the years might make you realize that your reaction is different from before, reading your manifesto in light of time passing and experiences lived might make you see that you are changing and evolving.

If you do want to use your manifesto in the spirit of TED, you could invite others to write their manifestos and read them out to each other in a safe setting. This is an intimate thing to do, but it might lead you to emotional connections and new perspectives in the same way that the best TEDTalks do.

The ultimate appeal of writing your manifesto, however, is not to highlight the eloquence or pedigree of us as a speaker or writer. It is the opportunity for us to get beyond our comfort zone and to go deep within ourselves to re-think our view of the sphere of influence in which we live, which might even inspire us in new ways to make a difference in the world. This is why TED does not just belong to those who are highly educated or have a pedigree in leadership. Everyone has the ability to harness the power of our stories. And that is definitely an idea worth spreading.

*Carla watches TEDTalks while doing the ironing (her least-favourite chore). She would love to see TEDxAthabasca, where students, faculty and supporters of AU can present their ideas and learn from each other.*

## Writer's Toolbox

### Fragments, Part II

Christina M. Frey



Sentence fragments are exactly what they sound like: pieces of a sentence. They're incomplete because they are either missing a major component (a subject or predicate) or because they're actually dependent clauses, unable to stand on their own without the larger context of an independent, standalone clause (sentence).

Here's a secret, though: sentence fragments may be incomplete sentences, but that doesn't mean they should be excised from your work. Fragments lend a punchy, staccato effect to certain types of writing, and when used in moderation they can create emphasis or a more conversational, informal feel. In fact, they're a valuable part of a writer's toolbox.

Most of the time.

See what I did there?

If you need a more detailed refresher, check out last week's [Toolbox](#); otherwise, let's take a closer look at fragments, how you can fix them, and whether or when you'd want to.

### Answering Questions

As with many grammatical standards, there's a question of time and place. Fragments usually don't belong in formal writing, including most essays and papers. "Answer in complete sentences" is the classic elementary school instruction, but it's good advice to take with you all the way to adulthood. Whether you're answering questions on an assignment or in a testing environment, full sentences—not fragments—are the way to go (even if the fragment is a more accurate representation of how you'd answer the question orally). In fact, it's likely your instructors and professors will expect or require full-sentence answers.

As an illustration, compare these answers to the question "Why doesn't Gandalf meet the hobbits at the Inn of the Prancing Pony?"

*Example A: Detained by Saruman.*

*Example B: Because he was detained by Saruman.*

*Example C: He was detained by Saruman.*

Only Example C is a complete sentence. Example A is a sentence fragment since it includes a predicate, but no clear subject. Example B is also a sentence fragment—a dependent clause attempting to stand on its own.

Example C, however, has both subject and predicate and is not dependent on another clause for meaning or context.

This type of fragment is easy to fix, as you can see above. Just work it into a standalone sentence with subject and predicate. You can go simple, as in Example C, or more detailed and complex—whatever is appropriate for the situation:

*Example D: Though the hobbits didn't realize it at the time, Gandalf had been imprisoned by Saruman, who in his pride and greed hoped to convince him to ally with Isengard.*

### Longer Works

The same principle applies to longer formal writing, like essays or term papers. In particular, watch for dependent clauses masquerading as complete sentences; often they can be joined with other clauses to create full sentences that convey the same information in basically the same way.

*Example E: Many epic fantasies include the archetype of the mentor. Like Gandalf, who provides wisdom and encouragement to Frodo along the journey.*

*Example E (reworked): Many epic fantasies include the archetype of the mentor; here, Gandalf is the guide who provides wisdom and encouragement to Frodo along the journey.*

*Example E (reworked): Gandalf fulfills the fantasy archetype of the mentor, providing wisdom and encouragement to Frodo along the journey.*

They can also be amplified into standalone sentences of their own.

*Example E (reworked): Many epic fantasies include the archetype of the mentor. In The Lord of the Rings, Gandalf provides wisdom and encouragement to Frodo along the journey.*

### The Beauty of Balance

If you're writing an informal article, a memoir, or a work of fiction or creative nonfiction, you have a lot more flexibility in terms of what's considered acceptable grammatical structure. In fact, the judicious use of sentence fragments can add life and rhythm to your work.

*Example F: 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. All crazy-picky things that editors with no social life obsess about getting correct—but that really don't matter. Right?*

Here, the whole example is composed of sentence fragments—but it works (I hope) because it sets a certain informal tone and emphasizes both the individual points and the main issue that the author's trying to get across. Reworking it in full sentences wouldn't have the same effect. In fact, it might come off as clunky or heavy-handed.

Fragments are also increasingly popular in Young Adult literature, especially in works written in first person, because of the intimate, conversational feel.

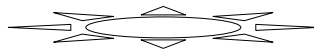
*Example G: School was a drag today. Like yesterday. Like the day before. Like always.*

But even in very informal writing, fragments can lead to chopiness or slow the pace if overused. In Example F, several fragments are placed back to back, but they're varied in length and rhythm. In Example H, there's little length variation, and toward the end of the example the pace begins to plod:

*Example H: School was a drag today. Like yesterday. Like the day before. Like always. Tired. Bored. Because I don't like school. At all.*

Like a square screwdriver when you've got a star-shaped hole, sometimes sentence fragments simply aren't the right fit for what you're writing. But while they may not be complete sentences, they play an important role in a more informal setting, as long as they don't overwhelm it. Experiment with fragments in your own writing and see where they take you—you might just find they're your newest writing "toy."

*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](#).*



## In Conversation with Ron E. Scott, Director of *Blackstone*

**Wanda Waterman**



*Award winning independent producer, screenwriter, and director Ron E. Scott has contributed to over 180 television episodes so far and is now in production of the fifth season of the outstanding dramatic series *Blackstone*, the ongoing saga of a Canadian First Nations community struggling to heal and build a happy future. A member of the Metis Nation of Alberta, Scott is a key player in the Canadian film industry and has done much to increase visibility for Canadian First Nations communities. He's very much in demand as a speaker and has won numerous prestigious awards for his artistic achievements. Recently he took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about himself and about the fifth season of *Blackstone*. (See past issues of *The Voice* for interviews with *Blackstone* castmembers [Justin Rain](#), [Ashley Callingbull](#), and [Georgina Lightning](#).)*

**What elements in your childhood and early years prepared you for a career in film?**

*I've always enjoyed the language of cinema from an early age and my challenging childhood helped me speak into different aspects.*



**What in particular prepared you for the creation of a television series set in a First Nations community?**

My childhood and earlier adult years were filled with stories and experiences that prepared me.

**What is it about your character and background that makes it possible for you to oversee and direct this kind of artistic project?**

Having a strong relationship to personal experiences.

**What was your most beneficial educational experience?**

Going to Film School was a great experience.

**Are there any books, films, or albums that have deeply influenced your development as a filmmaker?**

There are many— from the classics to the modern.

**What was the most mesmerizing thing about creating the fifth season of *Blackstone* ?**

It was great to work with such an incredible cast and crew for five seasons.

**Do you have any thoughts on why film can be healing? Both making it and watching it?**

I feel anytime a person can relate to an experience it can have an emotional and personal impact.

**What unique contributions do you think *Blackstone* has made to television?**

I feel *Blackstone* has attempted to bridge the communication gap between native and nonnative people.

**What did you think of Ashley-Callingbull-Burnham winning Mrs. Universe?**

We are all very proud of her.

**You're in great demand as a speaker, consultant, and all-around pundit. Which aspect of your information sharing activities has the most significance for you?**

I really enjoy the feedback from our very diverse audience. It's been great and I look forward to hearing about Season 5.

**If you had an artist's mission statement, what would it be?**

Be true to yourself, do your best to take creative risks, and try to listen to wisdom from past generations.

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



**Ron E. Scott on set at *Blackstone***

## Becoming a Course Survivor

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Ever had one of *those* courses? One that, in hindsight, was a big mistake and now you're stuck with it? One that makes you want to scream every time you open the textbook? One that you just want to be over?

I recently finished a course that seemed more like an endurance test than an educational opportunity. I won't name the course, because I'm sure it was me, not the course. It just wasn't the right course for me, or at least it wasn't the right time to take it.

Now that I've survived the course from hell and spent some time reflecting on the experience, I've come up with a few strategies students can employ for course survival:

**Withdraw.** You can withdraw from a course any time up to the contract end date, provided you have not

yet attempted the final exam. Importantly, if you withdraw from a course within 30 days of the contract start date, you get most of your tuition back (minus a \$150 processing fee) and the course will not appear on your transcript. If you withdraw later, you get nothing back, and your transcript will show a "W" for Withdrawal. For more info, check "[How do I withdraw from a course?](#)" at [Ask AU](#), or check the [Undergraduate Calendar](#).

**Contact your tutor.** Your tutor is a resource and he or she may have valuable advice. You're probably not the first student to struggle with the course. For my course from hell, I was lucky to have a sympathetic tutor who provided me with advice and encouragement that helped me persevere.

**Talk to other students.** It's not easy contacting other students when you study online, but it's worth the effort. Check on [myAU](#) or [The Landing](#) to see if your course has a message board. Although the AUSU Forums were discontinued recently, you can still reach out to students on the unofficial [Athabasca University Facebook page](#). I was lucky to find a student who had a similar experience (with a different course) and we talked on the phone about how she got through it.

**Talk to anyone who will listen to you.** Discussing your situation with someone not directly involved can help you gain perspective. Somebody might have some insight that you hadn't considered. I spoke to my husband, my mother, my writing group, and anyone else who had the misfortune to ask me, "How are you?" Opinions varied on whether I should bail out of the course or stick with it, but everyone had good suggestions, many of which I was able to use.

**Persevere.** In order to complete the course, you just have to grit your teeth and do it. I detested reading the textbook so much I had to set a timer for ten-minute increments just to force myself to keep at it. I set daily goals and rewarded myself for reaching them. Major milestones, like completing an essay or the exam, meant major rewards.

**Extend.** If you have no hope of completing the course by the contract end date, you can purchase a two-month extension. If an extra two months is what it will take to get you through the course, it's worth the \$165 fee. You can purchase up to three extensions for a course; see more information at "[Can I request an extension?](#)" at [Ask AU](#), or check the [Undergraduate Calendar](#).

**Take it easy on yourself.** Don't let one miserable experience colour your academic career. Focus on how good it will feel to have the course behind you. I also had to learn to lower my standards and hand in essays that were just "good enough" in order to keep making progress.

**Learn from your mistakes.** After surviving your course from hell, reflect back and think of what you might have done differently. For myself, I wish I had recognized an unwise course decision early on when I could have withdrawn, gotten a refund, and redirected my time and money elsewhere. I also wish I'd been disciplined enough to finish the course in six months, instead of prolonging the agony with an extension.

A sour course experience can overwhelm you and make you want to chuck the whole post-secondary degree pursuit. It can sap your energy and suck up time that would be better used elsewhere—almost anywhere, really. A course that makes you miserable while you work on it probably makes you miserable the rest of the time too.

Sooner or later, most students will encounter at least one tough course that seems tedious and unrewarding. Even if you can't avoid or withdraw from the course, you can employ survival strategies that help you to get through it and to become a course survivor.

*Have you survived your own course from hell? Tell us about it, at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org).*

*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**

Ash points out some education apps that might help students, including TED TV. Bolt's question about telling if an exam is online or with paper and pen turns to touch on how helpful (or not) the AU Support Centre is. Also, Rebecca wonders whether appealing a grade for an assignment is worth doing when it won't affect the final grade much.

Other questions included how to declare a minor, how long e-texts last for, and students are looking for information about the Spanish courses, or courses CMNS 420, 455, ACCT 460, LGST 482, HRMT 316, FNCE 371, and PSYC 395

### **Twitter**

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets: " Meet AU's CAIP Rsch Chair Dr. Chris Glover #science #sustainability & #LordOfTheRings ^HS <http://ow.ly/UTGW6>"

[@AthabascaUSU](#) (AUSU) tweets from [@AUSU\\_president](#) "It's official! [@AthabascaUSU](#) has 2 votes on the Board of Governors at [@AthabascaU](#) thanks [@LoriSigurdson](#) for the Ministerial Order! #abpse"

## Extracurricular Needle Arts

Carla Knipe



What was once the domain of ladies of a certain age has become—gasp!—trendy. In the past decade crochet, knitting, needlepoint, and other needle-based activities have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, especially among the younger generations. It is difficult to give an exact reason for the renaissance, but it may have something to do with reconnecting with skills that were once on the endangered list, the pride of creating something that is useful, and the realization that it is an activity that can be done pretty much anywhere. Plus, it's just plain relaxing.

Embroidery and needlepoint are the needle arts that require the smallest materials and techniques. Embroidery involves decorating fabric with thread or yarn stitches. Cross-stitch, the most common form, is a double stitch using an "X" shape. Needlepoint, also known as canvas work or tapestry, can be done either on plastic or canvas mesh, or on other material such as felt or heavy cotton. Embroidery and needlepoint have had a close association with cultures in the Middle East and India, which held the elaborate embellishment of clothing and other items in high regard. The original needles were made of bone, horn, or thorns but the development of steel needles yielded more intricate and accurate work. The original threads came from a variety of natural sources, including precious metals, but now are largely made of cotton or linen.

Crochet is the next step in terms of needle size. The term comes from the French word for hook, and its origins were likely in the methods used by fishermen to mend their nets. Eventually crochet as a handicraft was seen as a less expensive, less intricate version of lacemaking. Queen Victoria was avid about her crochet, and by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, specialty patterns became available and specialized hooks and threads appeared. Crochet is seen as somewhat of a hybrid craft between needlepoint and knitting. The hook is smaller than a knitting needle but only one hook, aided by fingers, is used to create the patterns of loops. The popularity of crochet took off in the 1950s and reached its peak during the 1960s and 70s, but was later disdained.

Knitting is perhaps most closely associated with needle arts, and is the largest, and perhaps the most complex, of the three. Different projects require different sizes and types of needles and yarns, as well as specific techniques suited to each particular project. Evidence of rudimentary forms of knitting has been found in the Nazca culture in Peru and Saudi Arabia. The craft was brought to Europe around 400 CE, and, by the time of the Middle Ages, the British cultures were producing knitted clothing for the cold weather and knitting guilds were formed. Although most knitted items have been produced on machines since the Industrial Revolution, hand knitting continues to be popular and is held in high regard.

The best way of starting to learn needle arts is by having someone who is skilled teach and guide you through those crucial first steps. Pattern books can be incredibly daunting. Many mail order companies and dedicated needle arts shops are evidence of the rise of this hobby. Finding a shop assistant who genuinely wants to assist and advise a newbie can mean the difference between giving up before really giving the handicraft a chance and persevering through the difficulties.

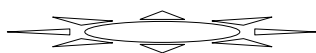


There are also YouTube videos to provide some visual demonstration, but needlework has become a social activity through an updated revival of the "bees" of yore, with groups calling themselves "Stitch n' Bitch" and other cheeky names popping up in living rooms and community centres across the world.

The recent reputation that needle arts have had of being tacky has actually worked in their favour; that reputation has been embraced with a sense of irony due to the rise in geek culture. Needle arts have been used for kitsch knitting and hipster needlepoint. There are patterns for Star Trek cross stitch banners and Harry Potter samplers. Knitters can recreate almost any item in yarn, which only seems to be limited by creativity and the knitter's needle skills. Even the humble crocheted granny square has taken on new life in Minecraft-esque afghans. The online marketplace Etsy has created a new version of cottage industries for needle arts, and crafter forums on the Internet have been great places to share ideas.

It is difficult to say whether the momentum of needle arts will continue or whether it will cease to be trendy at some point. But judging by history, needle arts are sure to always be around in some form or another.

*Carla would love to be able to take part in any hobby involving a needle, but she has resigned herself that this is impossible due to the fact that she may indeed possess all thumbs.*



### **Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend Become a Mathemagician, II**

*There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to use your fingers to store and recall three digit numbers.*

*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.*

Arthur J. Benjamin, PhD and mathemagician, and Michael Shermer wrote the book *The Secrets of Mental Math*, which leads us to part two of the Study Dude's examination of mathemagics.

### **Using Fingers to Remember Two or Three digit Numbers**

I once saw a little child math prodigy who resourcefully used her tiny fingers to calculate the hardest math problems. Once, she appeared on television, calculating at lightning speed on her hand, but got the answer wrong. Her eyes welled with tears, and my heart leapt for her. Little did she know, everyone watching stood in awe, irrespective of her error. She mastered instant calculations to the extent that she appeared numerous times on national television. No shame in that, even if one of her varied appearances yielded a wrong answer.

I often wondered how she used her fingers to calculate. Although, Benjamin and Shermer give some indication, they don't quite capture this little girl's system. Yet, Benjamin and Shermer assist you in recording on your fingers two or three digit numbers so that you too can make instant calculations.

- the number six is represented by your thumb touching your pinkie.
- The number seven is represented by your thumb touching your ring finger.
- The number eight is represented by your thumb touching your middle finger.
- The number nine is represented by your thumb touching your index finger.
- With the above tools, you can store the hundred's digit place of a three-digit number on your left hand and store the tens digit place of a three-digit number on your right hand. The ones digit place you store in your brain. Where else?

### **Divisibility by 2, 3, 4 and so on**

In junior high school, we learned little tricks to determine a number's divisibility by the numbers from two to nine. The whirlwind of rules and tricks overwhelmed me, and I walked away with knowledge of how to determine a number's divisibility by, of course, 2, but also by 3. I retained the divisibility by 3 rule all throughout my university experience, and it often came in handy. Yet, I felt slightly disadvantaged not knowing the rest of the rules to determine the divisibility of numbers from 4 to 9. If I had known these rules by heart, I'm certain my math experience would have yielded even greater results, although I did end up with the highest grade in seven out of nine math classes.

Now, Arthur Benjamin and Michael Shermer open the doors for you, too, to learn the tricks for determining divisibility by the numbers from 2 to 9. I'm omitting 7 and 5, as the rules for 7 are too complex and those for 5 are too simplistic.

- Numbers divisible by 2 are even numbers.
- Numbers divisible by 3 have digits that add up to a multiple of 3. For the number 216,  $2+1+6=9$ , and nine is a multiple of 3, so 216 is divisible by 3.
- Numbers divisible by 9 have digits that add up to a multiple of 9. For the number 216,  $2+1+6=9$ , which is a multiple of 9, therefore it is divisible by 9.
- Numbers divisible by 6 are even and have digits that add up to a multiple of 3.
- Numbers divisible by 4 have the last two digits divisible by 4. The number 45680 is divisible by 4, because the last two digits, 80, are divisible by 4.
- Numbers divisible by 8 have the last three digits divisible by 8.

### **Guessing Done Right**

Do you stare down a long list of shopping items to collect, marking down the cost of each item in the next column? That may seem easy to do, but you also need to mentally tally the total of those grocery items. While carrying a calculator proves to be the best solution in any situation, some advantages exist for making calculations in your head on the fly.

Even if you lack math craftiness, you can always learn simple tricks for not only calculating grocery lists, but also for determining the tip on a restaurant meal.

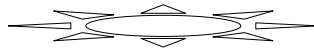
If you ever wanted to defer paying the automated 15% that comes up shining on the Interact machine, take heed in Benjamin and Shermer's advice on how to guesstimate most any everyday calculation:

- When guesstimating grocery bills, round the digits to the nearest 50 cent increment. In other words, \$1.19 is closest to \$1, while \$1.60 is closest to \$1.50. Add this easier calculation in your head.
- When multiplying two digit numbers by two digit numbers, round each number to the nearest 10s place. So, 88 X 54 would be rounded to 90 X 50.
- An even better method of multiplying two digit numbers by two digit numbers involves rounding up or down one number to the nearest tens place and then rounding the second number up or down the same increment in the opposite direction. In other words, 88 X 54 would become 90 X 52 (88 + 2 = 90 and 54 - 2 = 52).
- When you need to calculate a 15% tip, take 10% of the total and 20% of the total, and then take the average of the two. Alternatively, take 10% and half of 10% and add the values together.
- When you need to calculate a 25% tip, divide the amount by 4.

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

Benjamin, Arthur, & Shermer, Michael. (2006). *Secrets of Mental Math: The Mathemagician's Guide to Lightning Calculation and Amazing Math Tricks*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.



### The Mindful Bard 20,000 Days on Earth

**Wanda Waterman**

**Film:** 20,000 Days on Earth

**Directors:** Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard

"In the end, I'm not interested in what I fully understand."  
- Nick Cave

This is a documentary about a day in the life of iconic performer and composer Nick Cave, starting with a multi-screen pre-dawn dream sequence (where his life appears to flash before his sleeping eyes) and ending with an impassioned stage performance of songs from his 15th studio album, *Push the Sky Away*.

Anyone who came of age during the eighties and who was actually paying attention to the bracing changes taking place in pop culture back then will remember the lanky, elegantly nihilist persona of Nick Cave, the singer-songwriter who made appearances in many independent films and composed numerous soundtracks.

But he was more of a muse for the era than the era was for him, and his art was certainly not circumscribed by any of the

trends of that time. On the contrary, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds helped define the aesthetic of the eighties

by setting a precedent for a kind of brooding introspection that was part of a timeless tradition. Such an aesthetic would have been as much at home among the *symboliste* poets of *La Belle Epoque* as it was in 1985, and is as relevant today as it ever was.

What we mindful bards need to know, of course, are the secrets of Cave's creative process, his inspiration, and his theories of art. This film serves up all that with a cheerful readiness.

Cave types out his song lyrics on an old manual typewriter whose working sound is music in itself, rich in archaic key slaps and end-of-line dings. He then takes his typed lyrics to the studio and tries putting chords to them, aided by his collaborator and bosom buddy, Warren Ellis.

The two of them enjoy a fruitful creative relationship that even makes use of the discussions they have during social visits. A case in point: While visiting at Warren's house for lunch (Warren serves him eels) Nick reminds him of a time they shared the stage with Nina Simone, whose presence was phenomenal, to put it mildly. Nick remembers Nina glaring at the audience, sitting down at the piano, removing her chewing gum, and sticking it to the piano before delivering an incredible performance.

Warren remembers this, too, and remarks that after the show he'd taken the gum, as well as the cloth with which Simone had wiped her forehead. Nick confesses to being jealous. (Both of these items are now part of the Museum of Important Shit, a collection of oddities assembled during the making of this film.)

Although multi-instrumentalist Warren provides excellent musical support, it's Cave that comes up with the theatre-of-the-absurd lyrics.

"Do you want to know how to write a song?" he asks, quoting a well-known surrealist dictum: "Counterpoint. Counterpoint is the key. Putting two disparate images together and seeing which way the sparks fly."

In Cave's world consciousness the source of such disparate images is a precious commodity. He fears losing his memory, that storehouse of characters and events that feed his art. Included is the memory of happy childhood, then his father's unexpected death (when Nick was just 19), followed by bizarre existential experiments that could have ended any which way. And all this time he was constantly writing.

For years he kept weather diaries because, he says, he didn't like bad weather and sought to make it less threatening by writing about it. Living in Brighton, England, where the weather is stirring and always changing, he had lots to write about. The weather was actually a touchstone, a way to get started on expressing the state of his soul each day—a highly effective artistic exercise.

The result of all this is brilliantly performed rhapsodic post-rock with modal elements, a narrative style of songwriting that puts you in another zone, vicariously experiencing Cave's ever-changing persona.

Sometimes he's a lonely high plains drifter in a ghost town inhabited by one soulful girl, and sometimes he's a rebel without a cause in a post holocaust American mythology, but in the end he's never really knowable.

There's a great monologue at the end wherein he states, "I'm not interested in what I fully understand," as effective an artist's credo as I've ever heard.

*20,000 Days on Earth* manifests six of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.



- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It provides respite from a sick world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It gives me artistic tools.
- It makes me want to be a better artist.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

*Many thanks to Bill Watermn for his indispensable research assistance.*

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



## The Fit Student

### Combat Exam Anxiety

Marie Well



Does exam anxiety creep in on you the night before the test? For many, exam anxiety can lead to the freeze response of the freeze, flight, or fight automatic reactions. The trick lies in ensuring that you don't grow overwhelmed by anxiety to the point of mental foggiess, when the answers you know by heart no longer come readily to mind.

Engagingly, Edmund Bourne writes about a myriad of strategies for combating exam anxiety in his book *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*. The book's strategies pertain primarily to people undergoing extreme anxiety conditions such as panic attacks, OCD, and agoraphobia (agoraphobia involves the fear of immersing oneself in certain spaces, especially with no clear escape, such as malls, airplanes, grocery stores and even in the driver's seat on the highway). Yet, these strategies at alleviating anxiety can help even the most passionate exam takers abate unwanted stress and tension—calming your nerves and boosting your grades.

My own plight with anxiety stemmed from a workplace situation, in which boredom and purposelessness plagued me. In light of the dearth of stimulus, I began to get panic attacks that manifested as workplace agoraphobia. I tried infusing purpose into my workplace environment by calling upon Buddhist spirituality, with which we seek to see the benefits of our work on others. By being altruistic, we gain a sense of purpose—and a sense of purpose can help dispel unwanted anxiety. Yet, in spite of me finding such purpose in altruistic acts, each day, the panic for me would arise, lasting for numerous hours, disabling me with a spacey, terror-filled mindset, accompanied by OCD attacks during which I would check my belongings repetitively.

I thereafter sought entrepreneurial and related work to avoid being stymied by an office place scenario. In sum, I developed a phobia, or a fear of office settings, avoiding them altogether. What a shame, as I enjoy the role of an employee.

The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook presents a number of excellent strategies for beating the anxiety just as you start to feel it surface. These strategies, I believe, can help alleviate exam related anxiety, nipping it in the bud and allowing you to perform at peak level.

Mind you, I haven't taken an exam since developing workplace anxiety, as I tend to avoid classes that contain an exam component. Avoidance is the hallmark of phobias. The graduate level program appealed to me due to its absence of exams, which seems to remove the threat of exam anxiety. However, reading strategies for abating anxiety from Dr. Edmund J. Bourne gives me hope that I may one day tackle an exam without serious repercussion.

### **What To Do When the Anxiety First Surfaces**

As soon as I feel the anxiety surface, my mind attaches to the thought, "I'm going to lose control." Sure enough, moments later, my mind races, attaches to worrisome thoughts, and grows spacey. Simple tasks overwhelm me with fear. An exam seems like an impossible undertaking.

Yet, Edmund J. Bourne advises to just let the anxiety flow through you without judging it as dangerous. The anxiety will pass, as anxiety is time limited.

But if you don't have the time for that when the anxiety starts to come on, there are a number of tasks you can do to help alleviate it. For one, you could always use a distraction technique such as pulling out a piece of gum and chewing on it. That's a perfect exam strategy.

Another strategy involves counting the people in front of you and around you or counting backward from one hundred in groups of three (100, 97, 94, etcetera). This strategy seems optimal for the time when you are waiting for the exam to begin. Counting proves highly beneficial in serving as yet another distraction strategy.

Put a rubber band on your wrist and snap it when the anxiety comes on. This will serve as yet one more distraction strategy.

Additionally, try taking a deep breath through your nose, holding the breath until you can't any longer, releasing, and then repeating for up to three times. Alternatively, you could do deep abdominal breathing, preferably through the nose, for three minutes. Abdominal breathing involves allowing your area below your rib cage to naturally rise with the intake of breath and fall with the outtake of breath.

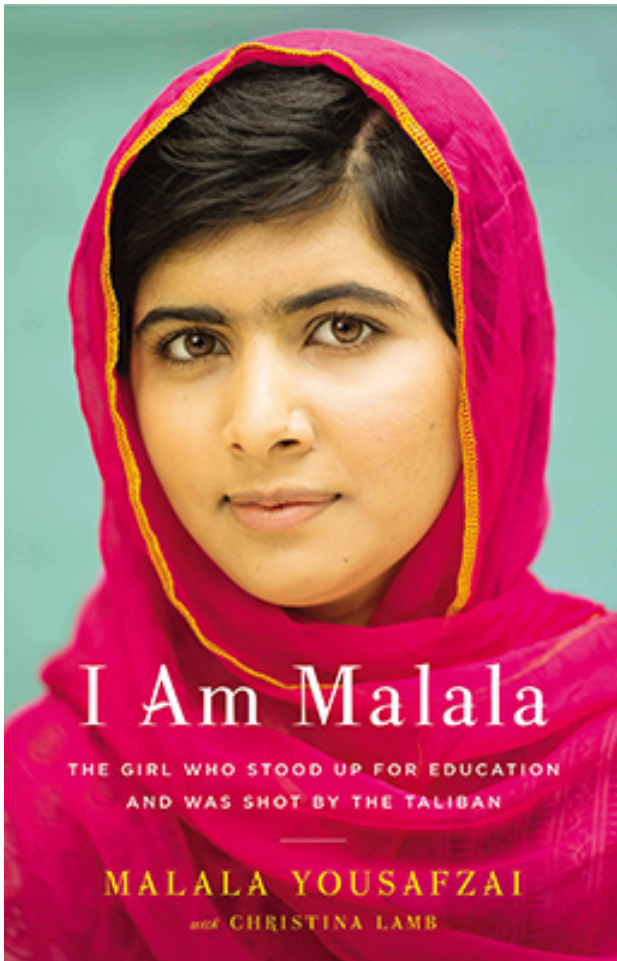
Also, if anxiety often plagues you during exam time, consider removing caffeine and sugar completely from your diet. Often what people feel as anxiety are the physical reactions their body has to changes in sugar, glucose, and other stimulants in their body. The reactions are very similar to the symptoms of anxiety, and cause additional fear, especially in those already prone, that they might be having an anxiety attack. This fear in turn increases the likelihood of actually having an attack. However, by removing caffeine and sugar these reactions will lessen and so the attendant anxiety will likely cease and possibly desist permanently.

If it's the day before your exam or earlier that same day when the anxiety surfaces, try engaging in something pleasurable, like eating something tasty or getting someone to hug you or rub your back. You could read a funny book or watch a funny move or just soak in a hot bath or shower.

So, plenty of strategies exist for you to calm those frayed nerves when exam time looms.

## Malala

## Deanna Roney



I wrote this article last week, before the tragic events that took place, not only in Paris but around the world. I am appalled at the amount of hatred that has flooded social media since the attack on Paris. Amidst the hate, there have been some incredibly inspiring posts; it was in these posts that I learned about the attacks in Beirut. I struggled with how to adapt my article to include these attacks, to address this hatred and misunderstanding. The best way to combat this, is through education.

I just finished reading *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb, I am inspired by her message, her strength, and her resilience. Malala provides us with a unique perspective on what life is like in a war torn country. What it is like to live where going to school is life-threatening. Without this book a large part of that world would remain a mystery. What the media portrays is a skewed view, we see only a single perspective. I believe it is this perspective that is contributing to the hate, anger, and misunderstanding toward a culture, a religion, and a group of people. One of the things that I learned is that when terrorist groups claim to be doing these attacks "for Islam", it is untrue. Islam is a peaceful religion, Malala observed in her book that sometimes it was difficult to find someone to butcher chickens because of the dislike for hurting a living creature.

I have also gained a new appreciation for education. Education has always been an available option, I did not have to fight for my right to attend school. I never feared for my safety because I attended school. While I have learned a lot about the rights of women in University and the struggle that women have gone through to attain rights—to vote and attend university—I have also discovered a world through Malala where girls were still struggling for the right to attend grade school. Since then, it has become legal for girls to attend, but it is not always that simple; some of the men who lead the homes do not allow their daughters to attend, mostly because of fear.

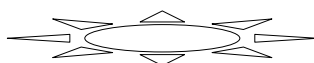
The book *I am Malala* shows the power of the written word. It has the power to educate the world about a culture which we do not understand. A world that the media portrays in a violent manner. Malala looks evil in the face and chooses to speak out against it, to write out against it. It is through this that she is able to reach so many people. The written word can transcend cultural differences and educate people on what is happening.

If it has ever been doubted that the pen is a powerful tool, this will abolish that. While guns inspire fear and hate. The people who are spreading hatred, those who are behind the attacks, and those who would condemn an entire culture for them, will not stop because they hold a weapon, a weapon will not deter fear, only spread it. The way to stop it is to educate: educate those behind the weapons that what they are taught is only one perspective. Education, books, learning, these are the best ways to deter fear and hatred.

In Western societies we are privileged with the right to an education. And while the massacre at École Polytechnique in Montreal shows us we are not immune to women being attacked for seeking an education, it is a rare occurrence. Reading this book inspired me to reconsider what I am stressing about, about timelines, exams, and essays, and remember how *lucky* I am to be able to take these courses, how *lucky* I am that I am able to stress over timelines, exams, and essays. I do not have to stress out about whether or not someone will attack me for going to school or standing up for my rights.

Before spreading fear, hate, and misunderstanding, remember that there is more than a single perspective. Mass media does not always portray the whole story. Remember that among those who are responsible for these attacks are innocent people who grew up in fear. Grew up to the sound of bombs and the sight of death. Reconsider perpetuating racism, do not condemn a culture, race, or religion for the acts of a few.

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



## Council Connection

**S.D. Livingston**



For the most part it was business as usual at the AUSU Council meeting on November 12. But the agenda also included news and votes on three topics that have been generating discussion among AU students for a while now. If you're interested in e-texts, executive pay and benefits, or virtual exam invigilation, read on for the highlights.

E-texts have been a hot topic for a while now. When AU announced that it was moving to e-texts there was mixed reaction. But whether you love them or loathe them, there's one question students agree on: if e-texts mean lower overhead in course materials, why aren't those savings being passed on to students in their tuition?

To help address these concerns, council updated position policy 9.22 to oppose AU's continued use of e-texts without sharing the cost savings with students, and to advocate for a "clear breakdown of the Learning Resource Fee at AU and a clear understanding of the costs of textbooks verses other associated fees." The policy also recommends that students should have a choice, whenever possible, between hard copy and e-texts.

This issue affects students in critical ways, from finances to grades, so keep an eye out for updates.

And speaking of course fees and where your money is going, you might be interested to know that council has received another raise in executive compensation. The increase is thanks to Policy 2.15, under the Compensation and Benefits section.

From a current honorarium of \$49,851.22, your council president's compensation will rise to \$50,960.42. As well, the vice-president's honorarium sees a jump from \$42,729.81 to \$43,680.55. And those totals don't include the free undergraduate course every six months, or the health benefits.

As you might recall from this [Voice article](#) back in April, hefty increases since 2012 mean that the Executive pay has more than doubled. The result is that, even before this latest increase, your AUSU executives are the highest paid student union execs in Alberta. As that article notes, the next closest was the University of Alberta's SU president at \$39,804.



So why, you might be wondering, are yet more of your AUSU fees going to executive pay?

The rationale is that it's due to point 2.15.17 of the compensation policy. Specifically, the point now reads that "executive honoraria shall be adjusted by the Core Consumer Price Index (CPI), calculated as an average of the 12 months of available prior data of the Bank of Canada Core CPI 'Percentage change over 1 year ago (unadjusted),' at the beginning of each fiscal year. If the CPI increase is negative, pay shall not be reduced."

To be clear, the section that ties the executive compensation to an external cost-of-living index is nothing new. It was already in the policy. But the discussion came up as Councillors were seeking to provide clarity about how it's calculated.

During the discussion on this item, councillor Pierre Plamondon put forward a motion to repeal that section all together. In other words, to base executive compensation on AUSU's annual budget rather than automatic increases. He noted that, even though the CPI could be looked at, it shouldn't be the deciding factor in increases.

The counter argument from other councillors was that, if council neglects to review exec compensation for a few years, there could be a huge jump to make up for that. But, as councillor Tamra Ross noted, most other university unions in Alberta currently do an annual review, and it's common practice for the honoraria to be set at the time that a council is leaving so that any increases would apply to the incoming council.

Faced with the question of whether to eliminate the CPI section (and base executive raises on an annual review instead), only three councillors voted to do so—Pierre Plamondon, Tamra Ross, and Philip Kirkbride.

The motion failed and the CPI changes will remain in policy for next year.

And last but not least, it's time to take a look at an interesting new strategy in exam services. In the Vice President External report, Colleen Doucette noted that AU is looking at a virtual exam invigilation service. Instead of travelling to an exam centre, students would be able to "write online exams from the comfort and convenience of their own home office or at another suitable location with internet access while an invigilator supervises them via web-cam."

I don't know about you, but a service that would save me an hour's drive, loud movies in the next classroom, and even the raucous singing of Happy Birthday outside the exam-room door would be a welcome change from some of the invigilation sites I've encountered.

There are, of course, lots of questions to be answered. Things like how students would pay, what would happen with any tech issues, and whether other universities would give transfer credit for courses that used virtual invigilators. But if those issues can be worked out, this type of service could be a real boon to students who find it hard to travel for exams, and could even play a part in reducing exam anxiety.

It's a project that holds lots of potential, so watch this space for news and updates on it.

In the meantime, click on over to the AUSU [site](#) to get the details on the next council meeting. It's on Thursday, December 10 at 4:30 p.m. MST, and it's free to dial in. See you there!

*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.*

## Music Review

### The Sylvia Platters

Samantha Stevens



**Band:** The Sylvia Platters

**Album:** *Make Glad The Day*

I love it when a Canadian indie band releases a debut album. It's exciting for them to get their music out to a wider audience. It's exciting for music lovers because you get to hear something new and fresh. *Make Glad The Day* is The Sylvia Platters full length debut album set to release next week and I couldn't be more impressed.

Fresh from Langley, BC, The Sylvia Platters show how lifelong friendship and a love of music can blossom into something amazing. Described as power pop, their music reminds me of Sloan, Tom Petty, and The Beatles. And if you think that the title of their album sounds familiar, then you're right. Borrowing the phrase "Make glad the day" from the 1824 poem "Mutability" by Percy Shelley (also known as "The flower that smiles today"), the band aimed at creating a "thematic undercurrent: a thrilling embrace of our fleeting

existence." Perhaps this theme explains why no song is longer than 3 and a half minutes, with the entire album lasting just over 30 minutes. The feeling of *Carpe Diem* oozes from their music, and not once is the tempo very slow or very fast, it's just enough to get you moving. Even the pink and purple album cover reminds me of a rising sun just breaking over the horizon, reminding us to get up and embrace the day.

With 14 tracks to choose from, I'll point out a few of my favourites. "Goodnight Persephone" reminds me of the feeling when something totally amazing comes to an end. On one hand, you are so happy that something wonderful just happened, but you are also incredibly sad that it is over. The fast-paced guitar is perfectly matched with the cleverly written lyrics.

"Girl With Curious Hair" inspires daydreams about all of the good things in life. I loved the inclusion of the female vocals in this song, and the harmony between the singing and the music. Also, the music changes to lower tones part way through the song, something that I love because it keeps the sound fresh. Like the rest of their music, the composition is simple, sticking with their guitar, bass, and drum sounds, yet it still feels incredibly complex, with layer upon layer of sounds.

"We're All Dead!!" starts off, appropriately, with a harder sound, and then morphs into a song that is an unusual mix between punk, pop, and a touch of ska. And it feels like just as you get into the song, literally a minute later, it is over, and I found myself wanting more of that sound.

"Suddenly" is the final track on the album. And there is something absolutely heavenly about it. The effects add a slight echo to the guitar and vocals create an ethereal sound. This is by far my favourite song on this album. Unfortunately, just as they reach a beautiful crescendo and heart-tugging harmony, the song ends! But I guess that is the entire essence of this album, nothing good lasts so enjoy it while you can.

I highly recommend checking out The Sylvia Platters debut album *Make Glad The Day*, which will be available November 27th on Bandcamp, iTunes, and other digital music vendors. There will also be a vinyl copy of the album available in February 2016. Finally, if you find yourself in Abbotsford, BC on the 29th of November, be sure to check out The Sylvia Platters live.

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



### More Questions than Answers

Recently I needed to grab lunch before a medical appointment in Sherwood Park. I chose Opa! in the Emerald Hills shopping complex. I don't know the exact time because it seems I was running an hour off. None of my watches or the clock in the Venza had 'fallen back!' Oops.

I yanked the door open and was assaulted by noise and a crowd like I've never seen in any of these locations. I stopped in the doorway to consider entering or choosing another place. The cashier greeted me from her post and encouraged me to enter. There were a few seats available. I placed my order; braved a crowd to get my drink and cutlery.

I saw and heard a gaggle of teenagers. They'd literally taken over the restaurant with their numbers and noise. Out of a possible thirty-eight seats, kids occupied twenty-five. Plus others loitering or coming and going. Incidentally no one wore a poppy.

Then I noticed how many of them were chowing down on home lunches or takeout from Edo next door. As a former business owner and someone with a touch of common sense, I was flabbergasted. You don't do that. It hurts the business owner.

I cringed inside when one flipped the bird (with each hand) to someone outside. There were kids who just came in and hovered near the door, though perhaps the kid in shorts in November needed to warm up.

I tried really hard not to be the cranky old lady. I said nothing. I remembered being a teenager. I raised two teenagers. I've got grandsons who will one day be teens. Most teenagers do dumb things. Loudly. (I know I did.) They move and think in packs. They can be intimidating. Hormones are a driver; boy-girl interactions are a minefield. That most of us survive our teen years is more a result of divine luck than any smart actions on our part. I get all that.

After they headed back to the high school across the street the joint is silent and I'm the only customer. I watched an employee right the place. She re-positioned the chairs and four or five tables that got pushed together. She carried away garbage left on the table. She wiped everything down. Then she swept up all the fries on the floor.

I asked her how and why they put up with this. Why do they allow outside food? Are they aware paying customers may turn away? She gave me the business' take on this. They only ask them to leave if there aren't any seats left. Most kids buy at least fries or a drink so they overlook the brought-in food. Getting heavy-handed could attract vandalism. This woman, the one cleaning up after these kids, was a dentist in India who is now getting her credentials to practice here. Isn't there some irony in that? Who should have taught these young people better behaviour, parents or the school that is a neighbour to these businesses? More questions than answers, 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

## Dating Tolerance

**Dear Barb:**

*I'm 17, just starting University, but my parents separated when I was eight. I live with mom as dad basically left. Mom dates lots, and got married briefly once. She keeps bringing these men and their kids into our lives. I used to get attached and excited about maybe having a stepdad and even some siblings, but none of them worked out. I've got a boyfriend now, and he spends a lot of time at our house but my mom keeps bringing all these guys into the house and having them stay overnight. It's embarrassing. I don't want to say anything, as mom really doesn't like anyone judging her lifestyle and if she gets angry she could make my life pretty miserable. Do have any suggestions, or should I just bite my tongue and try to ignore her behaviour. Looking forward to your reply, Megan.*

Hi Megan:

You sound like a very mature 17 year old. Obviously you have had some difficulties to endure, but seemed to have your head on straight. Your embarrassment is understandable and your mother should respect your feelings. Since you cannot discuss this issue with your mother, is there anyone else you could talk to, like an aunt or grandparent, who may be able to talk to her? If not, perhaps you could visit with your family physician and see if he can refer you to a counselor who can help you to deal with this issue and any other issues you may be experiencing, as it seems like you would benefit from someone able to help. I agree it would have been better if your mother had taken more time before introducing all these people into your lives, but things aren't always ideal. Thanks for your question.

**Dear Barb:**

*I've had some traumatic events in my life and they've made me a more accepting and tolerant person. I'm working on accepting all people, no matter their appearance or beliefs. But I'm having difficulty grasping why many seem to have strong feelings about Muslims—fearing that they are trying to change Canada into an Islamic State. I hate it when I hear Canadians saying "If you don't like our ways go back to your own country!" I'm sure they just want to maintain some of their own customs and practices. And Canadians wonder why some Muslims aren't friendly. Who wants to be friendly with people who think you're a terrorist because you wear a headscarf, Niqab, or have a different religion? Am I alone in my thinking? Thanks Miranda.*

Hi Miranda:

It's great that you've chosen this path in life. I agree that many Canadians react as they do because they fear Muslims are trying to change Canada into an Islamic country, and worry they'll lose their way of life. I don't believe this thinking is warranted. Most Muslims I've spoken to come to Canada because they want to live the Canadian way of life, even while keeping some of their traditions. Also, most Muslims share the view that ISIS is a brutal, extremist group. It's my understanding that Islam is a peaceful religion, it doesn't condone violence or killing. Perhaps we should spend some time understanding the Islamic religion before jumping to conclusions. Also, Miranda, in your quest to become a more tolerant, accepting person, you must have understanding and patience for all people, even those whose fears have caused them to become narrow-minded and judgemental. Excellent topic, thank you.

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



# THE MACHIAVELLIAN WRITER

(Sure there's lots to be said for talent and hard work, but if you REALLY want to get ahead in the literary world, go Machiavelli!)



... does everything in the style of the latest trendsetters.

... Fills her social circle with people who worship her.



... never has anything good to say about another living writer.



... effects melancholy, with signs of substance abuse.



... joins judges' panels in order to reject the work of all writers more talented than herself.

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN





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

## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Nov 22:** [Meet & Greet in Halifax](#)
- **Nov 30:** December course extension deadline
- **Dec 10:** AUSU Council Meeting
- **Dec 10:** Deadline to register for courses starting January 1
- **Dec 15:** January degree requirements deadline
- **Dec 25-Jan 4:** AU Holiday Closure

## AU Calgary Location is a Great Resource for Students!

By Donette Kingyens, AUSU Communications and Member Services Coordinator

In 2013, AU Calgary campus moved to the brand new Bow Valley College (BVC) South Campus building at 345 6th Avenue in Calgary. AUSU feels it is time we let our members know about this great building and the many resources it offers to AU students in Calgary!

The 7-storey BVC building is home to numerous post-secondary institutions, including AU, Bow Valley College, Olds College, and the University of Lethbridge. The building is LEED silver certified, and provides many services to students from all of the institutions represented. The AU offices and exam center are on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the building.



Getting to the building is a breeze as the CTrain (*both red and blue lines*) stops right outside the front doors under a shelter at the City Hall station. The BVC building also has an underground parkade including carpooling stalls, and both indoor and outdoor bicycle parking.

The BVC building interior features lots of study spaces available, including a 4<sup>th</sup> floor outdoor terrace, a rooftop garden, various study nooks, and over 50 classrooms. It is a great place to study for those students who don't have a dedicate study space at home!

The main floor is home to the 'Market', a cafeteria with over 200 seats and a huge range of hot and cold foods with daily specials (*including a burger grill, pizza oven, grab and go sandwiches, sushi, salads, and wraps*). They post the weekly menu online [here](#) as well as on view screens outside the Market. And for those caffeine lovers, there is also a full-service Tim Hortons on the main floor.



The building features a bookstore with lots of books, clothes, and stationary items. There is a large print and copy center on the main floor, a multi-faith chapel, and an Aboriginal Center. There are huge, clean bathrooms on each floor, big airy open stairwells, computers available for student use, as well as lots of places for notices and literature.

Also, during heavy exam times, they even have [puppy rooms](#) for students to relax in and visit with puppies – a great way to de-stress!

For more information about the building you can view floor maps online [here](#) or you can view a video about the building on the Bow Valley College website [here](#).

If you have any questions about this article, please contact [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org).



## Resources:

[BVC South Campus grand opening ushers in collaborative era](#). Bow Valley College Media Release, 10 May 2013. Web. 17 November 2015.

[New South Campus Grand Opening](#). Bow Valley College. Web. 17 November 2015.

Amanada Malkiewich. [BVC's South Campus welcomes some puppy love](#). Bow Valley College, 30 April 2015. Web. 17 November 2015.

Photos and building insights provided by Tamra Ross, AUSU Councillor. 4 November 2015.

---

# CLASSIFIEDS

---

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

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

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

---

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

---

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

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

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

© 2014 by *The Voice Magazine*