

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 23 Issue 46 2015-11-27

## Meeting the Minds

Talking with Tilly!

## The e-Text Sex Question

Engender Studies.

## The Final Exam

Looking Back on a Program.

*Plus:  
Extracurricular  
Only So Far  
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

Meeting the Minds: *Dr. Tilly Jensen, Part II* ..... 4

## Articles

Editorial: *November's End*..... 3  
The E-Text Sex Question..... 6  
The Final Exam..... 14  
Licence to (not) Drive ..... 16

## Columns

Music Review: *Bad Mary* ..... 8  
In Conversation: *with The Naturalists* ..... 9  
The Study Dude: *Writing a Dissertation in a Snap* ..... 11  
Extracurricular: *Kite Flying* ..... 13  
From Where I Sit: *Only So Far* ..... 18  
Dear Barb: *Apology Acceptance* ..... 19

## News and Events

Student Sizzle..... 15  
AUSU Update..... 21

## Comic

Chazz Bravado: *A Woman's Right* ..... 20

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# 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

### November's End

Karl Low



It's astounding to realize that November is already at its end. We just barely got Halloween put away and it feels like we're behind in digging out the Christmas decorations. Plus there's all that stuff remaining from the beginning of the year, the stuff you swore that, this year, you were going to get it done. Time is running out to make good on that promise.

If you're in the US, this is also the time of year when you're dealing with Thanksgiving, which, ironically, is then immediately followed by Black Friday. Give thanks for what you have, now go get more of it.

No offense intended toward any of our American readers, but, seriously, what were you guys thinking? Turkey for a late November Thanksgiving means you're just finally finishing off the left-overs by the time Christmas rolls around, and hey, it's turkey time again! In that respect, I think we got it right up here in Canada. Thanksgiving before Halloween gives you a couple months in between to forget all the stuff your relatives said and did before you have to see them again. Otherwise, it starts to feel like an old country song, "How Can I Miss You When You Won't Go Away?"

The end of November also means something for us here at The Voice Magazine. It means it's time for us to start planning our Best Of edition, which comes out in the first week of January (to give our writers a chance to nurse their brains following any new years' celebrations). As usual, I'd really like to hear from what you, the readers, think were among the best stories we published this past year. What stories do you think deserve to be shown again, so that even more readers can get a chance to see them?

Me, I've got a number of ideas already, but there's still three more issues in December to come, so things may change. After all, in this issue alone we have Barb Lehtiniemi. exploring a story about research done by an AU students on AU students about a topic that is particularly relevant to Athabasca University – how do students and e-textbooks mix?

Our Feature article this week is the second part of our interview with Dr. Tilly Jensen. Some of you may have had a sneak peek of this, as it got accidentally included in the issue two weeks ago for a time. But if you didn't catch it then, now is a great time to catch up!

Plus, Deanna Roney has taken her final exam in her program, she lets us in on what it feels like to have that behind her, both the highs and the lows.

And of course we have our selection of interviews, reviews, advice, and other articles to keep you busy and in touch with what's going on with other AU Students. So enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl", with a stylized flourish at the end.

# MEETING THE MINDS

## INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



*Dr. Tilly Jensen is AU's Associate Dean of Pedagogy and Student Experience. She is also an Assistant Professor of Accounting at AU and was an Academic Coordinator for AU's undergraduate Accounting Program, and has taught accounting in the Middle East as well as at NAIT and to students enrolled in the British accounting certification program. She was kind enough to give The Voice Magazine an interview ranging from her advice to online learners to her research interests and philosophies of teaching, to her favourite course to teach.*

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

My philosophy on student evaluation stems from the field that I am in, which is accounting. Accounting requires a high degree of technical proficiency, as well as the ability to apply that knowledge and think critically in diverse and continuously changing business scenarios. So on the one hand, students have to demonstrate that they have acquired the technical proficiency, which is often tested in an environment where there is either a right or wrong answer—lots of math and journal entries! Once a student has that technical expertise, they need to take that and learn to work with case studies, where there are degrees of right and wrong, it's very challenging for students to switch gears but so rewarding from an instructional perspective as students struggle through the process and you see in their writing the growth in understanding of how all the pieces fit and work together ... and what doesn't fit and work together ... they begin to see that an answer can change given a different perspective and that they need to address as many perspectives as possible.

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

Constructivism is the pedagogical approach I take. I believe that we construct knowledge through a variety of processes but key to that process is providing the opportunity to question, which is why I think chatting, discussion forums, and, yes, algorithmic web-based assessments are excellent tools. I include web-based assessments as a form of questioning because the specific tool I use provides students with limited feedback on questions that they complete, which forces them to question what they did right and wrong and then go back into the course content to find out what they did wrong and why. So I also believe that helping students develop an independent learning style—where they ask questions of themselves of the content of others—is important to success in courses and in life.

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

To me, online learners require a high degree of self-discipline because of the nature of the independent learning environment. We try to reach out to students to help them feel connected, but ultimately it is the student's responsibility to get the work done and contact us as often as they need to for any help that is required. So my advice is, make a plan using the custom calendar we provide in some of our courses and, as part of that plan, include regular phone calls or emails to us even if you don't have any questions. Staying connected will help a student stay on track with their plan. And if 'life happens', which is often the case, and a student's original plan requires adjustment, let us help you adjust that plan. Our goal is to help students succeed so reach out to us.

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

I need to do two things. First, I would create a large computer monitor that could fold up into the size of a cell phone and weigh as much. Why? Some course content doesn't work on a cell phone screen which limits flexibility and access. Also, some individuals, including myself, require a larger screen because of vision issues. Second, I would have dependable high speed internet available absolutely everywhere at a reasonable cost with no need to connect to a wi-fi network, your plan would provide you with high speed wherever you are in the world. I'm not a computer person so don't know the correct terminology but I'm asking to be able to connect wherever and whenever without having to muck about with guest passwords.

***What is your view on interdisciplinary studies?***

Interdisciplinary studies are important to helping a person develop and enhance their critical thinking skills. A big part of critical thinking is the ability to see multiple perspectives in a given situation. How can you do this if you don't go beyond your discipline?

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

I keep abreast of best teaching practices by attending conferences/webinars, talking to colleagues, and reading, reading, reading.

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

The single greatest insurmountable challenge for me is time. Do I ignore my teaching duties in lieu of publishing? I can't. So what suffers is the publishing.

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

Introductory financial accounting is my absolute most favourite course to teach because I enjoy taking on the challenge of changing a student's mind about how much fun it really is. Some students really surprise themselves and end up LOVING accounting. Big win for me!

***What were some of your childhood passions?***

Wow. I so enjoyed camping, hiking, swimming, baking with my mom (dad just ate the baking!), and family time in general. We had so much fun doing things together. I have fond memories of things like camping holidays where building a fire (or trying to) in the pouring rain or attempting to build a rock dam in a creek were such adventures.

***If you could instantly learn one thing in its entirety with no obstacles and no time constraints, what would that one thing be?***

Sorry but I have to pick two things. I've always wanted to play the piano and speak several languages.

## The E-Text Sex Question

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Did you know that your attitude toward e-textbooks could be partly determined by sex? That's one of the findings AU student Kenneth Desson reports in his graduate thesis, "Attitudes to E-Textbooks Among Mid-Career Learners". You can read Kenneth's thesis on [\*The Landing\*](#).

In his thesis, Desson finds that "women were found to be statistically significantly more likely to hold negative attitudes towards e-textbooks than men." While Desson states further study is needed to confirm this, he suggests that women may need more support—and different kinds of support—to help them adapt to e-textbooks. Sex, however, isn't the only—or even the most significant—factor that determines attitudes toward e-textbooks.

The purpose of Desson's study was to answer the question: "For mid-career learners enrolled in online graduate courses, how are attitudes to and

engagement with e-textbooks shaped by the circumstances in which e-textbook use takes place?"

Desson undertook research and conducted student surveys and interviews for his study of e-textbooks. Although Desson focused on graduate students, he plans to conduct further research to see if undergraduate students hold similar opinions.

Whether students like or dislike e-textbooks depends on the structure of the e-textbook itself, the type of reading device a student uses, and the attitude the student's tutor has toward e-textbooks, among other factors.

Among his conclusions, Desson finds that the structure of the e-textbook was a factor in how well students adapted to it. Students surveyed for Desson's thesis express frustration with e-textbooks that can only be read online, or ones that do not permit printing except for short sections. Students also notice a lack of consistency in e-textbooks: some are converted from paper texts to PDFs while others are designed specifically for e-devices. Students find some PDF texts frustrating due to inconsistent pagination and incompatible sizing between page and screen. On the plus side, students prefer e-textbooks for their portability and their text-search capabilities, as well as the multimedia extras offered in some e-textbooks.

Desson's study shows that "the e-reading device used is definitely a factor in the experience of using an e-textbook." However, Desson finds that, so far, there isn't one device that suits all students—and all e-textbooks—in all situations. Desktop and laptop users enjoy quicker download speed for downloadable e-textbooks, but tablet and e-reader users enjoy greater portability. E-reader devices are found to be easiest to read, but aren't compatible with all e-textbook software.

Desson didn't have enough data to make firm conclusions about the benefit of tutor support but states that what he did have "strongly hinted at the need for increased instructor guidance in support of e-textbook use."



The few respondents to Desson's survey who indicate they had received adequate guidance from their instructor on how to use the e-textbook were more likely to be positive about all aspects of using them. While there could be many factors at play, Desson cites earlier studies that showed "efforts by instructors to inform their students about the use of e-textbooks were identified as key predictors of positive attitudes towards e-texts."

Among other factors that influence students' attitudes towards e-textbooks, Desson highlights cost and accessibility as major considerations. Students bear additional costs if they have to purchase a device suitable for reading e-textbooks, or if they have to also purchase a hardcopy text, for example. Students were also concerned with time-limited licenses on some e-textbooks, which denied them use of their course text after a certain period of time. Desson states that "a deliberate strategy by universities to choose only the best available e-textbooks and to insist on perpetual licenses would go a long way towards making them more acceptable to mid-career learners."

Most students in Desson's survey report that they feel they learn less—absorb less information—from e-textbooks. However, whether that is a function of the e-textbook itself, the circumstances surrounding its use, or the students' attitude requires further study, Desson says.

E-textbooks are still a developing technology. While some of their benefits, like portability, searchability, and environment-friendly composition are immediately obvious, many students resist the transition to e-textbooks. I am one such student. Is it because I'm a woman? Perhaps. Perhaps not.

When I contacted Desson about his thesis, he said, "To me, the most surprising finding was that, among the mid-career graduate students who participated in my study, women were so much more likely than men to dislike e-textbooks. Follow-up research is needed to confirm that finding and to explore what factors might be at work." Desson went on to surmise that "the finding may, in part, have been a result of some frankly dreadful e-textbooks encountered by the female nursing students who responded. When e-textbooks are simple PDF page-turners suitable for viewing only on a desktop screen (i.e. don't automatically reformat to accommodate viewing on tablets or smartphones)—and when user licenses make them no longer accessible after as little as six months—who wouldn't dislike them?"

For myself, I can't say that I *dislike* e-texts. I am still resisting them and avoiding courses that have switched to e-texts. I'm confident I will enjoy the searchability aspect of e-texts, and maybe their portability. I'm less confident that I'll enjoy extensive reading off a screen (I had difficulty reading Desson's thesis, in PDF, on my laptop's screen, and his thesis was shorter than a textbook.)

Despite my resistance, I found Desson's thesis informative, interesting, and well worth reading. I especially enjoyed the inclusion of numerous comments from participating AU students on their experiences—good and bad—with e-textbooks. After reading Desson's thesis, do I feel more favourably inclined toward e-texts? Not much. What his thesis did make me realize is that e-textbook publishing technology is still evolving and has a long way to go before they put regular old books out of business.

*Read Kenneth Desson's thesis, "Attitudes to E-Textbooks Among Mid-Career Learners", on [The Landing](#). Login with your AU student number for access.*

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



## Music Review

### Bad Mary

Samantha Stevens



**Band:** Bad Mary

**EP:** *Killing Dinosaurs*

The punk rock music genre is about to get a lot more fun. Marked by fantastic guitar playing, in your face rhythms, and vocals that shake you to your bones, punk rock music has always been a favourite of mine. So when I got the chance to review a band like Bad Mary, I couldn't have been happier or more excited.

Living and working on Long Island, New York, Bad Mary has gained a reputation for "creat[ing] their own strain of punk that takes you back to New York in the 70's but with a modern vibe." Heavily influenced by bands like The Ramones, Blondie, Green Day, and No Doubt, their sound also reminds me of Dropkick Murphys at times. Their first album, *Better Days*, received three first-round ballot Grammy nominations, which included Best Rock Performance and Best Rock Song.

Their origin story is as incredibly unique as the band. Bad Mary consists of four members: Amanda Mac on vocals, Mike Staub on bass and vocals, Bill Mac on drums, and David Henderson on guitar. "David is a professor in the drama department at Hofstra University. Every semester, he puts together a band with students who play a bunch of covers. The group started with David and his two students, Mike and Amanda. After some turnover, Amanda's dad, veteran drummer Bill Mac, joined" (<https://soundcloud.com/bad-mary>) and Bad Mary was officially formed in 2012. To me their story reads like two master musicians teaching the up and coming talent. I just love band and musician stories like this, because it makes their music more real, more dynamic, and who doesn't love a great origin story.

Look on their [website](#) and the first two sentences read "Doc Martens and fishnets, ninjas and zombies, crunchy guitar and funky drums, what more could you want? Bad Mary plays high-energy, danceable punk that's fast, loud, and fun." I'll admit, these sentences made me giggle with excitement as I hit play on the first track of their new EP *Killing Dinosaurs*.

"Soapbox" starts the EP off with a bang. Bad Mary shows that they are not messing around with their music. The hard sound starts immediately, and doesn't let up until the EP is over.

"Want What I Want" is crass, honest, and cheeky. The sound is heavy punk, and the vocals are screaming, but not in an overly annoying way. Instead, the overall effect will have you up and dancing.

"Next to You" is a cover of the Sting song of the same name. The cover is fairly close to the original, but Bad Mary adds their own flair with their signature harder sound.

"Sucks to Be You" is similar to their other songs, but it has one unique element that caught my attention. Just as the song begins, there are two quick pauses in the music, creating a level of fun anticipation, almost like they are teasing the listener.

"One More Song" draws attention to Amanda's incredible vocal range, and this track is my favourite on the EP. Amanda's singing made this song for me. She demonstrates her ability to range from belting-out those incredibly hard punk vocals, to singing equally difficult hard rock vocals with a complex harmony. Combined with the killer music and kick ass guitar solo, this song has everything that a punk rock fan is looking for.

Overall, I really enjoyed the EP *Killing Dinosaurs*, and I firmly believe this EP is aptly named. If you listen to this EP from start to finish, which will take you less than 15 minutes, you'll be so pumped up you'll be ready to take on the world, or kill some dinosaurs. So I recommend listening to *Killing Dinosaurs*, available wherever you buy your music, while having your morning coffee.

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



## In Conversation with The Naturalists

## Wanda Waterman



*The Naturalists are a Buffalo-based indie rock trio comprised of twins Craig (vocals and guitar) and Travis Perno (drums) and Zach Russell on bass. They're currently touring their new EP, Home Honey, I'm Hi, recorded at Quiet Country Audio and produced by Paul Besch. Recently the band's drummer Travis Perno took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about their backgrounds, inspirations, and current goals.*

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

Craig and I grew up in a very musical environment. While it took a few years to actually pick up an instrument, I was listening to everything from the Beach Boys, the Beatles, Crowded House, or Hall & Oates at a very early age. My dad always had something on the stereo. I picked up the bass at like 12 years old but was never any good. Then, when I was about 13 years old I started up with—and stuck with—the drums.

### What's your favorite instrument to play and why?

My favorite instrument to play is, and will always be, the drums. It's the only instrument I can think of that you literally feel everything you're playing, and it pulsates through you. I get bruised up every time I perform because of the intensity of that

instrument.

**Do you feel that Buffalo is a creatively stimulating city? Why or why not?**

I think for the last decade or longer, Buffalo was looked at as almost a downer of a city. I don't think that statement holds any truth anymore. Even just in the last two years there's been so much growth in the city's culture and art, and there's so much talent coming out of this city it's unbelievable.

**Why did you call this EP "Home Honey, I'm Hi"?**

We definitely wanted to go in the weirder direction when it comes to album titles. But ultimately it's just a play on the phrase "Hi Honey, I'm Home," and once Craig brought up the EP title (Home Honey, I'm Hi), we all had it stuck in our heads.

**Who writes the lyrics, and where does most of his inspiration come from?**

Craig writes all the lyrics to our songs. I wish I knew more about where his inspiration came from for them but it seems to me that they come from real life—experiences, dreams, and perspective stories told by others. Oftentimes bands will get caught up writing about one subject, usually love, sometimes politics. What I like about Craig's lyrics is that he has a wide variety of subject matter that he deals with in his lyrics. And that's coming from a drummer, folks.

**Do you consider yourselves a throwback to the nineties?**

I don't think we're a throwback to the 90's. We play what we would want to listen to basically. What I do think is that the nineties were all about drifting away from music that became essentially mainstreamed garbage. That whole scene was about getting back to real music and songs that were no bullshit. I think we're starting to see that all happen again in today's music scene and that's really exciting.

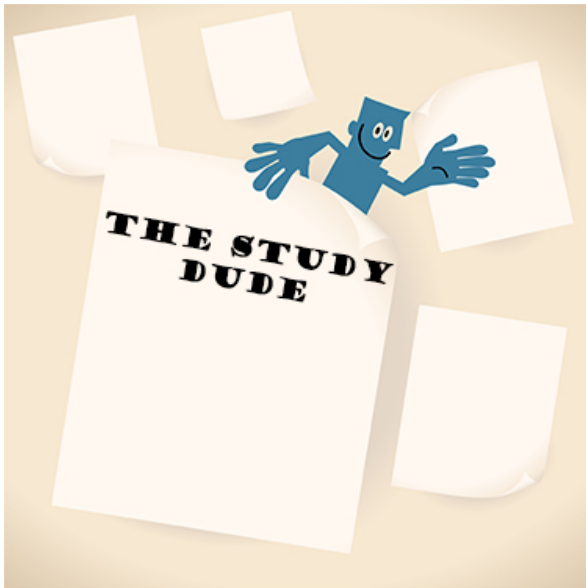
**Are there any books, films, or albums that have deeply influenced your development as an artist?**

Might be a strange one, but *That Thing You Do* with Tom Hanks is probably the biggest reason I started playing drums. Guy Patterson was so cool, man. Manchester Orchestra's *Mean Everything to Nothing* album could easily be listed as number one on albums that have influenced me the most.



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





## Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

### Writing a Dissertation in a Snap

*There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to avoid abusive faculties and advisors.*

*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.*

*Demystifying Dissertation Writing* by Peg Boyle Single, PhD, sweeps you through the process of research from focus statement to completed dissertation with easy to follow steps.

Her book almost croons in an inviting manner, dispelling the fears and anxieties that come with writing the formidable dissertation.

### The Single System in a Nutshell

At last, a system arrives where we can take one step at a time on the journey toward finishing our dissertation, often leaping back and forth between dissertation writing activities, but always moving forward overall. I often wondered how I could encapsulate the dissertation research process for the Study Dude's readership, and now that I've found this, I must share Peg Boyle Single's system with you.

It has been a long time since I last wrote an essay. As I'm temporarily a computer science major, I've gotten rusty on the essay writing process. I recall, however, that I previously would sign out ample materials from the library, scour them for any noteworthy citations, highlight them, and then transfer them to a makeshift outline. Yet, Peg Boyle Single's system is a much smoother process, ensuring that you can handle anything from an essay to an otherwise unwieldy dissertation.

- The system involves starting with interactive reading, followed by interactive note taking.
- Once the reading and note taking are underway, you alter your notes into citable notes that you can store on a program such as Endnote.
- After your citable notes are taken, you can create a focus statement, not unlike a thesis.
- Then, you craft a one-page outline, which will be discussed further in the next two week's Study Dude articles.
- The one-page outline will evolve into a long outline containing references. This outline will be the lifeblood of your writing process.
- From there, you form a regular writing routine, guided by your long outline.
- And then you come to the final stage: the dissertation.
- You won't just proceed in a steady linear fashion throughout these steps. Often, you will backtrack or jump forward, but these steps serve as a guide for getting you into the right direction.

### Move from the Generalized to the Specialized

In another article, I discussed how essential it might be to research from a disciplinary dictionary or disciplinary encyclopaedia. In hindsight, I'm not so certain that these resources offered up what I had hoped. You see, I



purchased a dictionary of education and found it emphasizing the British educational system, primarily for k-12 grades. I had hoped to analyze and assess higher online education, but finding books on the matter seemed either rare or costly—or worse yet, nonlocal and outdated. For instance, I found an encyclopaedia kit for education costing thousands of dollars. Another I found for less than forty dollars, but it was severely outdated.

So, what do you do when the materials for your discipline are out of reach, outdated, or nonlocal? Peg Boyle Single has some strategies for moving from a generalized topic to a specialized one with flare:

- Begin your generalized search with an introductory textbook on your topic matter or a Wikipedia search. While the textbook is citeable, Wikipedia is likely not acceptable as a scholarly resource, but both will serve as a first generalize scour of the literature.
- After that, try to find a more specialized book. When reading an introductory text, you'll discover specialized topics from which you can branch out.
- Try to locate a review article or book. Look for review journals such as "Education Review" or "Education Bulletin", but catered to your particular discipline.
- In the reference section of the review article, you'll find scores of journals and books that will take you to your particular specialization.
- Your advisor will serve as an excellent resource for narrowing down and prioritizing your articles and book choices.
- Email the scholars you come across. They might be able to direct you to other sources or provide you with valuable materials. If you don't get a response, no harm done.

### **What to Do If Confronted with an Abusive Faculty**

At the University of Calgary, my faculty forsook providing me with the support that most students expect. My initial supervisor had a son that reminded her of me, and her befuddled relationship with him carried over to me. She criticized, harped on me, and provided me with so much misguided advice that I left her tutelage and sought out other supervisors who might have some neutrality. Miffed, to this day, she serves as a blockade to me eventually receiving a teaching position at the university.

So what do you do if your advisor has a vendetta out with your name on it or if some creepy dean starts to salivate over your new outfit or latest hairstyle? Peg Boyle Single, PhD, provides advice and encouragement to students facing abusive faculties:

- If faced with abuse from a faculty or advisor, seek out the assistance of "the director of your graduate program, the departments of equity and diversity, human resources or disability right, the graduate college, the counselling center, or the union (if the students in your university are unionized)" (pp. 32-33).
- Abuse can involve sexual harassment, verbal harassment, physical abuse, discrimination, and bullying.
- When confronted with an abusive faculty member, don't worry. One door shut is another door open. You can always shift gears to a new advisor or, in a worst case scenario, to a new university.

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*

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## Extracurricular Kite-Flying

Carla Knipe



Think of dreary, grey skies. Now picture brightly coloured kites floating and flicking in those same dreary skies. Doesn't the thought alone cheer you up? Kite flying has been around in some form or another since the earliest kites were developed and used in China over 2000 years ago. Through history, kites were seen more as a children's toy and a novelty, rather than a serious pastime. However, thanks to the science of meteorology, kites were taken seriously as a scientific tool for a time. Launching kites with instruments attached, such as thermometers, aided the understanding of weather patterns.

And who could forget Ben Franklin's famous experiment that proved lightning was indeed electricity! Kites also helped us to understand the principles of flight—it isn't too much of a stretch to believe that using kites helped the Wright brothers develop their first airplane in the late 1800s.

Kiting is making somewhat of a comeback as more people discover this relaxing hobby. New materials and innovative designs are taking this traditional childhood toy into new territory. Kite flying remains great fun for kids and is a proven stress reliever for adults. However, despite the American Kitefliers Association (<http://kite.org>) boasting at least 4000 members in 35 nations and counting, the sight of kite flyers in public spaces is pretty rare. Why is this? After all, it's an activity gets people outdoors, it doesn't require a lot of money to purchase equipment, and it can be a real conversation-starter with others who are drawn to the site of a kite in the sky. If you think you'd like to take up this hobby, here's a quick guide for you to start.

First of all, you'll need a kite. While the "toy store specials" will suffice, your experience will be much more satisfying if you purchase a sturdier model from a dedicated kite shop. A good kite made from rip-stop nylon and a sturdy spindle of string needn't be expensive. You can purchase a kite online, but the benefit of shopping in person is that you can ask lots of questions and kite enthusiasts will be only too happy to share their knowledge. A kite that's not too big and not too small is ideal for the beginner. Single-line kites in delta shapes, diamonds, or simple bird or bug shapes are the easiest to fly. Multi-line kites such as box kites and very large kites with tails (such as dragons) are really tempting because they look so gorgeous but can leave less-experienced kite pilots frustrated. Stunt kites and harness kites are definitely for advanced pilots! Large kites create a lot of drag and can create a situation that a beginner's skills aren't equipped to handle. It's best to start small and learn in easy weather conditions and work up to more advanced skills once confidence is built.

There isn't much to flying a kite if the conditions are right. The trickiest bit to master is launching your kite, but please remember these safety tips.

- Always fly your kite in a large open space free from power lines, trees, fences, and never close to houses or roads in case your kite comes crashing down on top of someone. And despite what Benjamin Franklin did, never fly your kite during an electrical storm.

- It is illegal to fly a kite within several kilometres of an airport. If you're not sure whether your chosen site is too close to an airport facility, contact airport administrators or Transport Canada.
- Wear good, sturdy footwear for grip and ankle support. Look around the site for tripping hazards like rocks, gravel, and gopher holes. On sunny days, wear sunglasses and be aware of the position of the sun when flying—you don't want to look directly at the sun.
- Be aware of other people or animals, such as dogs, in the area while flying. If there are other kite flyers in the same field, give each other a wide area as to not create a very tangled situation!

Don't think that kite-flying can't be done year-round. A breezy winter day with snow conditions that are not too icy is great for kite flying. Just remember to dress appropriately and, of course, to have fun.

#### RESOURCES

<http://www.kitemap.org>

<http://kitelife.com>

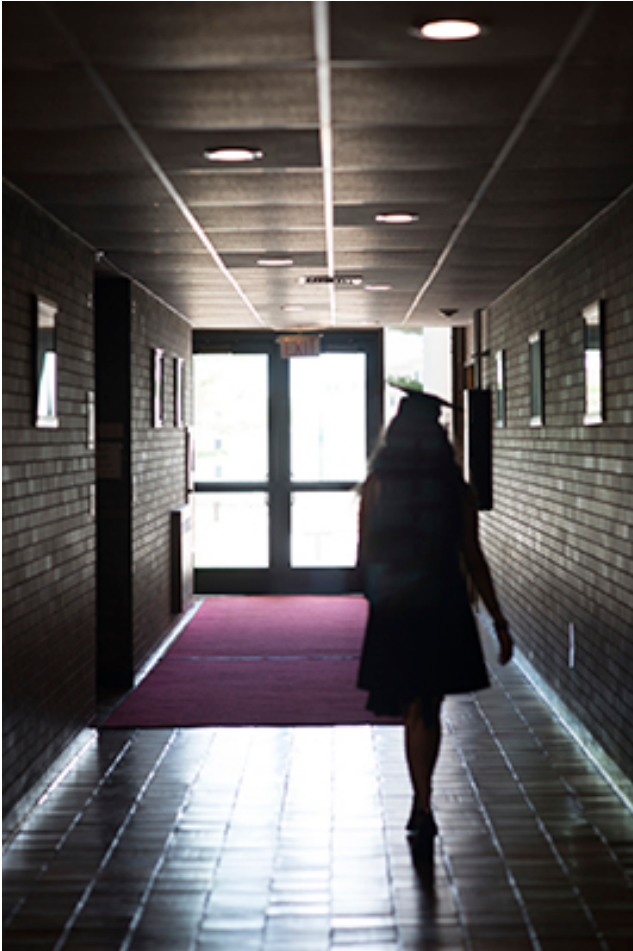
<http://www.nationalkitemonth.org>

*Carla is an AU student and a caffeinated beverage definitely keeps her going through her studies. However, her pet peeve is seeing people occupy the tables at Starbucks for long periods of time when she can't find a seat.*



## The Final Exam

**Deanna Roney**



On Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, I wrote my last exam for my degree. That is, of course, unless I change my mind on one of my final two courses. The rest I have enrolled in have no final exams. So while it was not my last course it was still a milestone. A milestone which makes it seem all that more real that soon, I will be done my degree—I'm on the home stretch now.

While I am excited, and anxious, to be moving forward and onto the next chapter in life, it has made me reminisce about how far I have come over these last few years. By the time I am done it will have been four years with Athabasca University (assuming I meet my self-set deadlines moving forward). I have grown as a person and a student through these years. Athabasca University has helped me find my voice and ignite my passion.

The first course I took with Athabasca University, English 211 – *Prose Forms*, was a challenge in and of itself. I was getting back into the groove of school after a seven-year absence, learning the ropes of distance education, and remembering just *how* to write an essay. Now, three and a half years later, meeting word counts does not seem so daunting, working through courses all follows the same general guidelines, and I am so used to being buried under schoolwork that I am going to have to relearn how to live without it.

The experience I have had so far with AU has been a mixture of amazingly good, and amazingly frustrating: the good, undoubtedly, outweighs the bad. And the frustrations are those which would occur at any school that you would attend. AU has opened doors for me, and I am sure countless others. I am grateful for this wonderful school, a school that keeps adding new courses, new ideas, and new programs.

I have slowly made the transition from the one asking all the questions on the student feeds to someone who can offer advice, solutions, and answers. The most common question I see come up on, either the new AU app, or the AU Facebook page, is regarding final exams. It can be tricky to give advice about how to prepare to an exam without getting yourself, and the person asking, in trouble. The best advice, and advice which can be taken for any course final, is that this exam is an opportunity to showcase what you have learned through the course. If you review the unit objectives and find yourself nodding, knowing the various objectives, chances are you will make it through the exam unscathed. The exam is not set up to try to stump you (as I often found in high school tests where the teachers had apparently wanted to test how closely you read the question rather than the subject). Each exam I have taken has been decently clear and concise about what was required, and followed the course objectives. I have found that viewing the exam as an opportunity to show what I have learned, rather than as a "test", enabled me to relax and the knowledge came through much clearer than if I was stressed out about not reading a question properly.

Each program and course leaves a unique imprint upon the student who took it. The imprint is often affected by what is happening in their daily lives and the tutor support that is received. Each exam follows this as well. In courses where tutor support has been great I have gone into, and come out of, exams with little stress. In courses where I felt frustrated and lacked tutor support I went into the exams, and came out of them, feeling awful. On this, my last exam, I went into it throwing my hands in the air unsure of what was to come, but simply wanting it done and over with, I left convinced I would be rewriting it (thankfully I do not have to do that). While I am grateful that this was my last exam, it is not how I want to remember all my exams. I wish I had left this exam feeling as confident as I had with the others, as sometimes it is the last impression that sticks with a person.

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

## Student Sizzle

## AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

### AthaU Facebook Group

Mari seeks advice on how to submit a complaint to AU. Liz wonders if e-texts are prevalent in certain programs. Meanwhile, Susanne inquires how she can obtain a real book for a course that has e-text.

Other posts include e-mail addresses for the office of the registrar, changing programs while mid-course, how to declare a minor, and discussions about courses CMIS 351, EDUC 406, ENGL 387, NUTR 406, PHIL 252, POLI 309, and WGST 422.

### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Manmeet Bhullar believed all students need to have access to open education to have a progressive Canada <http://ow.ly/V6U8o> #ableg."

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "Cannot afford a course extension or supplemental exam? Apply for the AUSU Emergency Bursary! <http://bit.ly/1GIWJhi>."

### Youtube

On the AU channel: "Athabasca University and CFLPA - 'The Massage'."





## License to (not) Drive

Carla Knipe



I have a confession to make: I am 40-something years old and I have never had a driver's license. When I disclose this fact, I always brace myself for people's reaction in case they say what I sometimes feel; "Are you kidding me? Anyone can get a license from a cereal box! And cars nowadays practically drive themselves! What's wrong with you?" Learning to drive is such a rite of passage in modern life that it seems inconceivable that anyone would willingly choose not to. After all, society's love affair of the car that begins with, but also goes beyond, viewing them as simply a mode of transport is deeply ingrained.

However, there is increasing evidence that the infatuation with vehicles and driving is decreasing. Younger people, if they do obtain their licence, are increasingly choosing to not purchase a vehicle or drive as much, if at all. There are varied reasons for this shift. Awareness of environmental issues such as the reliance on fossil fuels is certainly one aspect. Economics has been another main catalyst for change. The 2008 global financial crisis hit the United States hard and highlighted the fact that vehicle ownership in the United States (and presumably other Western nations such as Canada) is often the second-largest household expense behind housing payments. Another hypothesis is that the millennial generation is the first group to earn a lower income overall than preceding generations, and therefore will be unlikely for some time to have the disposable income required to purchase and maintain a motor vehicle. But whatever the reason, there is a small yet growing segment of society that is eschewing car culture in favour of public and self-propelled (e.g. walking and cycling) transport.

In many places of the world the car culture is much different than in North America. For instance, Great Britain loves its cars and prides itself on its network of motorways, but also boasts a thorough cross-country public transportation network, something that is lacking in many North American cities and regions. Generations of Brits, even up to those in the post-war and Depression years, never drove or owned a car, but they didn't need to because everything they needed was in their neighbourhood. In modern Britain, especially in cities, it is considered perfectly acceptable to choose not to drive, even though most households own a vehicle. Granted, compared to North America, it is much easier to navigate local areas and even travel cross-country due to extensive bus and train networks and the local tram. And of course, London's Underground is an iconic part of British transport infrastructure.

In contrast, North American car culture is a completely opposite experience. Despite many cities boasting local rail networks, most urban areas are still extremely car-dependent and some are extremely difficult to navigate by walking at all. It is difficult to travel to rural areas without a personal vehicle. As well, the harsh winters can affect the number of people who choose alternate transportation methods. The arguments made in favour of travelling by car are that employment opportunities may be limited or it is more difficult to ferry a family around to various activities without one.

But perhaps because of increased awareness of economic and environmental issues, there is a growing movement that openly challenges reliance on vehicles. There is now more concern about the "livability" of communities and whether the dependence on vehicles has contributed to a sense of people's isolation and dissatisfaction with society, as well as an overall reduction in quality of life. Citizens are also starting to feel disillusioned with trying to impress the neighbours with an affluent lifestyle that includes multiple vehicles in the driveway.

One such family that has successfully lived vehicle-free is Peter and Andrea Tombrowski from Calgary. Peter is a videographer and filmmaker and Andrea is a writer. Together with their two children, they gave up car ownership over a decade ago and use transit, walking, and occasionally a car-sharing service to get around. They admit in their self-published book *Urban Camping* that "the learning curve has been steep at times, the adventure not for the faint of heart...life is often physically and mentally challenging without a car." They have also produced several short films detailing their experiences. In 2013, they also directed and produced a full-length independent documentary, "Car Less in Calgary", that follows two families as they go car-free for a week and examines the car culture in North America as a whole. The Tombrowskis say that the reaction to their efforts to get people to examine the car culture is a mixture of curiosity, resistance, and even slight animosity, but they hope to continue to open up the dialogue about society's love affair with cars.

However, on a larger scale, city planners are beginning to realize that creative solutions are necessary to create inclusive and healthier neighbourhoods. Organizations such as Carbusters, Undriving, and Walkscore are helping to rethink what it means to drive and be car dependent, and enable people who choose to be car-free to connect with one another. In Calgary, the Route Ahead initiative by the City of Calgary is working to incorporate public transit into city planning. Other cities and regions in Canada and the United States are beginning to do the same.

But perhaps the biggest influencer in the future might be the shifting of society's demographics. As the Boomer generation grows older, they may decide to give up their vehicles for health and economic reasons, but they will still require mobility and independence. However, the Millennials may be the ones who will influence this change the most in the future. Higher unemployment in this age group, their passion for environmental concerns, the hassle of obtaining licenses under graduated licensing schemes, the many expenses associated with car ownership, and the fact that they can connect with each other through the networks of the Internet and social media rather than the road network is leading to a decrease in the number of teenagers who are learning to drive and a shift in the prestige associated with driving and car ownership. This trend will no doubt be monitored by governments, businesses, and think-tanks alike to assess its impact.

Of course, anyone who goes against dominant societal norms has feelings about being "different". Perhaps, non-drivers will eventually be viewed not as misfits, but trailblazers. Perhaps drivers will eventually see them as the lucky ones, because they do not have to deal with the stress that accompanies driving on congested roads. Perhaps, eventually, those who drive will be viewed as the outsiders.

*Carla is an AU student majoring in English. She welcomes comments and discussion on her Twitter feed, @LunchBuster.*



## Only So Far

The October 19th federal election results changed the game and face of the country. To Justin Trudeau's credit he's bending over backwards to keep his election promises—even when conventional wisdom says slow down as in the case of Syrian refugee resettlement. Even when the promises should never have been made in the first place, some will argue.

The previous government has been described as inaccessible, mean-spirited, and fear mongering. Change, it seems was inevitable. I believe that when the Stephen Harper story is written, history will be kind. Certainly kinder than the rhetoric that characterized the days before and after the election.

Some of the Liberals' quick, cheap, and easy changes have attracted positive attention and hit the reset button. Trudeau's pedigree and GQ cover look have attracted a lot of attention at home and during the flurry of international meetings. The frenzy in Manila could have just as easily been for that other Justin (Bieber).

Any self-respecting personal development guru will tell you that changing our messaging, belief system, and intentions will change our results. But if we announce our new mindset to the brother-in-law, the boss, and the banker, we're likely to be ridiculed. What you do in the privacy of your own head is your own business.

If you're the young, perhaps shallow new prime minister your pronouncements are subject to even more widespread mockery. It can't all be chalked up to a cynical media. He's taking a huge risk. It's too soon to say if this is sincere and brilliant or political suicide proving forever that he is a lightweight.

I admit to more than a few eye rolls. Sunnier ways, really? All the gestures: hand over heart, praying hands, bowed head. The cynic in me cringes. It seems so calculated and bogus and superficial and Hollywood.

I thought it was just me. Then a mere two days after the election the National Post did an "Emoter's Guide to the New Trudeau" piece. They included the Hand on Heart, Prayer Hands, Selfie Reach, Baby Tricks, Ol' Shoulder Touch, and Lots More PDA. All the kissy, kissy face with wife Sophie after forehead touching and hands over hearts or alternately prayer hands is more than I can take. Is there any place for the head touch, him looking lovingly, her with eyes closed at a Remembrance Day parade? Get a room. Apparently Maclean's magazine counted twenty-two hugs and thirty-two kisses at the swearing in ceremony of the new cabinet.

I also think he's going to need to reign in his mother. I've seen interviews where the notoriously out-spoken Margaret Trudeau seems to be blurting out things that aren't hers to reveal.

We may get used to and forgive the theatrics if Trudeau makes changes that really improve the life of Canadians. But if things so sideways, he's likely to become a laughing stock. His response to the Paris massacre already shortened the honeymoon. Hugs and selfies will only go so far, 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

## Apology Acceptance

**Dear Barb:**

*My son and his girlfriend spent Halloween night at our home helping to give out treats. A young girl came to the door with her mother and my son recognized her from years ago. They chatted a bit and he mentioned to her that she really looked good, which was fine. After she left, he kept going on about how good she looked and my son's girlfriend became angry and left. We thought he should go apologize to her. But he said he didn't want to. My brother-in-law supported him, while my sister-in-law tried to explain to him that if this bothered his girlfriend he should apologize to her and not continue doing this. But my son was adamant that he wasn't going to apologize, that he had the right to say whatever he wanted to. Eventually he did bring her back, but I don't know what he said to her. What is your opinion, should he apologize or not? Julie.*

Hi Julie:

Great question! I tend to agree with you that he should apologize. If something offends, or causes his girlfriend to be upset, it will ultimately affect the relationship. She seems to have a jealous nature and be a bit insecure, so why make her feel worse? This is just being considerate of another person's feelings. Some individuals would not be bothered by this, but I would think most people would not want to hear their partners going on about how good another person looks. Hope your son eventually comes to realize these are

compromises a person makes to maintain harmony in a relationship.

**Dear Barb:**

*My best friend was diagnosed with a chronic illness many years ago. Her condition was stable until recently but she is beginning to deteriorate. Her surgeon has suggested a few options: medication, surgery, or other procedures. But she's been going on the internet researching them and is now refusing all treatment. She won't even take the medication. I am very upset, as is her family. We all want to encourage her to accept some of these options but we aren't sure how to go about doing this. She is declining rapidly. I'm not sure what we should do? Thanks for your help, Tamara.*

Hi Tamara:

You obviously can't force someone to do something they don't want to do, but you can encourage them. First, searching the Internet for medical information is not always a good thing, each situation is unique. Your friend obviously needs to be motivated to take her meds and/or do the procedures recommended. I would suggest an intervention, where family and friends get together and show someone that they care and the reasons why they need to accept help. Your friend should begin with a trip to her family doctor, as she may be suffering from depression, which can impair thinking processes. Good luck, and I hope this helps.

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.



# CHAZZ BRAVADO: A WOMAN'S RIGHT



I wasn't always an openminded male feminist.

I used to degrade strippers by ogling, hooting, and throwing money, but now I give financial support to pole dancing and burlesque training programs for young coeds.



I used to try to get women at the bar drunk enough to take off their tops, but now I campaign for groups like "Go Topless" and "Free the Nipple."

I believe that now that we've achieved sexual equality we can focus on the final hurdle: a woman's right to be nude in public!



WRITTEN BY: WANDA WATERMAN  
CONCEPT: BEN 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 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 16:** [Edmonton Meet & Greet](#)
- **Dec 25-Jan 4:** AU Holiday Closure

## Student Lifeline – Help is Here

Are you struggling to connect with your partner, or having a tough time sticking to commitments? Maybe you're feeling overwhelmed at school or work. Or, maybe you have concerns about an aging parent. For all these issues, and more, **Student LifeLine** can help.

Contact **Student Lifeline** any time, 24/7, at **1-877-418-1537** to connect with a consultant who can provide expert advice, and point you to resources to help you take charge of your concerns

OR

Log in to [www.lifeworks.com](http://www.lifeworks.com) (username: **AUSU**, password: **wellness**) to access services that can help you, including:

- Professional consultation related to personal issues, family, work, legal matters, parenting, adoption, addictions, and more
- Online [toolkits](#) & [assessments](#) to measure your stress, build resilience, and plan for the future
- Various articles including:
  - [Coping with Stress in the Workplace](#)
  - [Managing Stress](#)
  - [Tips for Developing Resiliency](#)
  - [Relaxation](#)
  - [Managing Stress as a Family](#).
- [Video Counselling Services](#)

**1-877-418-1537 (TTY 1-877-371-9978)**

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

Username: **AUSU** Password: **wellness**



## AUSU Execs on CASA Committees

[AUSU Executive](#) just came back from the [CASA](#) conference in Halifax, and are proud to announce their membership in numerous CASA committees:

- National Advocacy Team (*Brandon Simmons*)
- Federal Policy Committee (*Shawna Wasylyshyn*)
- Code of Conduct Committee (*Shawna Wasylyshyn*)
- Mental Health Committee (*Colleen Doucette*)
- Trades and Tech Committee (*Brandon Simmons*)

Congratulations to our executives!



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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

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

## THE VOICE

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