

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 24 Issue 20 2016-05-20

Course Exam

English 384 - Creative Non-Fiction

Book Hoarder

The Remains of a Degree

AU's Quick Links

A New Service of AUSU

Plus:

*Canadian Education News
Council Connection
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

Hey! Did you know the Voice Magazine has a [Facebook page](#)?

No kidding! We also do the [twitter](#) thing once in a while if you're into that.

EDITORIAL

Over-compensating?

Karl Low



This week, I came across an interesting bit of news on Facebook, about how the Alberta government is passing legislation that will require provincial agencies, boards, and commissions (ABCs) to not only be forthcoming to the government about how much they pay their executives, but will also give the government the ability to require that those positions be paid according to a government pay scale. Any contracts in place will fall under the new legislation and compensation framework as they are renewed, or within two years, whichever is sooner.

The first phase of the review already eliminated fifteen ABCs, and merged another eleven into just three agencies, which the government says will save it over 33 million dollars over three years.

The final phase of the review will have the legislation and compensation scale made to apply to post-secondary institutions. As AU is in the middle of its presidential search, this could not come at a worse time. Without knowing the compensation framework that the government will set up, the search committee is left in a precarious position when attempting to negotiate salaries with promising candidates.

Not that this type of review isn't needed, both at AU and other institutions. Former U of A president, Indira Samarasekera is widely reported as having received a 1.1-million-dollar compensation package in her last year as president of the University of Alberta. And as reported here in *The Voice Magazine*, at a time when the net assets of AU have declined so precipitously, one has to wonder whether the corresponding rise in executive salaries may have played a factor.

The counter-argument, of course, is that to get serious talent, you have to pay serious money, and the government stepping in in this fashion could cause AU (and other institutions) to be unable to get top quality talent to help it navigate the troubled waters that it still has to deal with.

How this all plays out is yet to be seen of course, but I expect this is leading to some significant headaches for those on AU's Presidential Search committee. What do you think, though? Will this move by the government help or hinder AU? Does AU need to be able to pay whatever it takes to get the top talent, or are these restrictions what AU needs to get its house in order? Email me at karl@voicemagazine.org with your opinion, I'm interested.

And while you're here, be sure to read our Course Exam article on English 384, Creative Non-Fiction Writing, as well as other news, reviews, and insights, including an article from an unrepentant book hoarder (represent!) and her thoughts on how AU's e-text model is losing something important. Enjoy the read!

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

**Marie Well**

ENGL 384 - Writing Creative Non-fiction

Dr. Angie Abdou, the tutor and course coordinator of English 384, provides us a look at what's involved in English 384, and the type of people who succeed at it.

What is the course English 384: Writing Creative Non-fiction about?

In English 384, students learn the theory and craft of Creative Nonfiction (CNF). CNF is a genre that has increased in popularity in recent years. Most simply, CNF is "true stories well told." In CNF, writers use techniques often associated with fiction to bring life and emotional impact to their nonfiction stories.

When was the last update of the course? Of the learning materials?

I updated the course and learning materials this year, in response to the main text going out of print. The change in text was a good opportunity for me to add some Canadian CNF writers I admire. I'm happier with the new content of the course.

What do the books and supplementary materials for the course focus on about creative writing?

We study both the theory of CNF and exemplary essays from the genre. The students draw on both of these types of readings to write their own CNF essays. The course materials also provide writing prompts and exercises.

About how many students take this course, on average?

Last year, 24 students took English 384.

What kind of learning style is it? For instance, is it very open ended or does it give fairly detailed instructions?

The assignments are fairly open-ended. Each unit focuses on a specific aspect of CNF, and then the students write an essay with that particular focus. However, the content of the essays can be almost anything. The students are free to apply the skills learned in each unit to whatever material most interests them. The course material suggests a certain pace and order at which students might progress, but students can go at a different pace or, in some cases, even do they assignments in a different order, if they like. ENGL 384 is quite a flexible course. Students can approach it in different ways depending on their preferred learning style.

If this course isn't a requirement of their program, why should students take it as an elective?

English 384 is a fun course for students who like to explore their own experience and think deeply about the world around them. Any student who enjoys writing should enjoy this course. Some students take ENGL 384 because they want to record family history for future generations or because they have had a great trip they'd like to write about. Many students take ENGL 384 for personal development or, simply, for fun.

What part or concept in the course have they seen students have the most trouble with?

Sometimes students find that their writing is a little rustier than they thought. Even though the course doesn't focus on grammar, submissions still need to be well-written. Occasionally, students take the first few assignments to brush up on basic grammar and formatting rules.

What's a good way for students to deal with the more troublesome parts?

Students who have taken ENGL 353 (Intermediate Composition) fairly recently don't tend to struggle with the basic writing part. For the students who have maybe forgotten about major sentence errors or how to use apostrophes, I send links to help them review. That works. Students don't tend to struggle with the content – the feedback I get in that regard is that ENGL 384 is a truly enjoyable course.

Are the assignments fairly similar in the amount of work required, or are some of them much larger? (and, if so, which ones.)

There is no exam in ENGL 384. Students do six assignments. Some are not very big, like the first assignment in which they simply write a short fragment or the final assignment which is a peer evaluation of someone else's work. Each of those is worth 10%. The middle four assignments are more even (ranging from 15% to 25% of the course's final grade).

Do students from non-English majors tend to succeed at the creative nonfiction course?

Yes, definitely. Not only do we get non-English majors in this course, but we also get people who are not even doing a degree of any kind, people who simply want to learn how to write their stories effectively. I recently taught a graduate course in Creative Nonfiction (MAIS 617) and it also attracted a wide range of students, including ones who were not doing a degree at all but simply wanted to learn how to tell their stories effectively.

The course consists of six assignments. What are the assignments like and how do students typically perform on the assignments?

Most assignments are short creative nonfiction essays. Students have an opportunity to write about people and places they know. Because students who take ENGL 384 tend to be quite motivated and interested, the course average is quite high.

What sets apart the best creative nonfiction writing students from the best?

The same thing that sets apart all good writing students: a willingness to rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. Writing is a process. My son came home from school the other day and said: "Today our teacher told us about all the steps of writing. One step is where you re-read what you wrote because you can never get it right the first time. I told him that part takes a *long* time and my mom has been doing that part for two years. I also told him: that part is way (WAY!) harder than most people think and the reason I can tell is because my mom is always shouting at her computer."

It's true. Writing well takes time. Students who rush will not do as well.

What kind of personality type or talent is required to succeed at this course?

I wouldn't say any personality type is required. Some people, though, do like to write, while others do not. Some people are drawn to writing or even compelled to write. Those people will likely be more successful in ENGL 384. It will be a very challenging course for people who do not like to express themselves in writing – though those people could certainly learn to like it.

Does this course qualify for any certificates or diplomas or degrees?

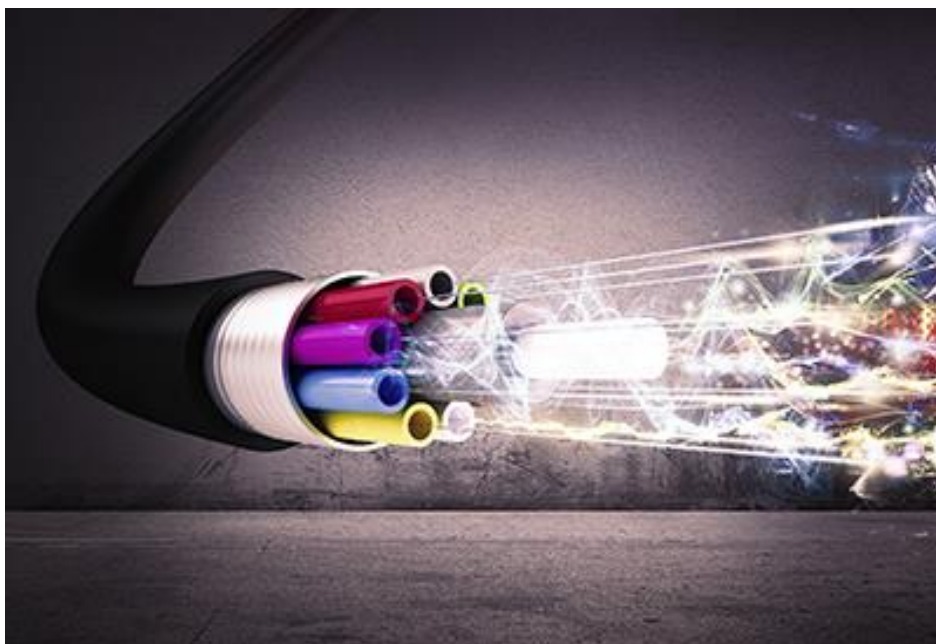
Yes, this course should transfer towards English or Creative Writing degrees at most institutions.

Should students taking this course have prior experience with writing nonfiction books?

No. Students attempting this kind of writing for the first time are fully welcome in ENGL 384. It is an introduction to Creative Nonfiction.

What type of students do poorly in the course? What type of students succeed?

To be honest, I haven't had any students do poorly in this course. Students who take ENGL 384 tend to take it because of personal interest. They're motivated and enthusiastic. They usually like to write. Those are the three characteristics students need to succeed. A competent writer who is motivated and enthusiastic can succeed in (and enjoy) this course.

**Get AU Info You Need Quickly with AUSU's Quick Links****Barbara Lehtiniemi**

Does it ever feel like searching for the page you want on a university website is like trying to swim through quicksand?

University websites are notorious black holes of information—so densely packed they just suck you in. It's not necessarily the fault of poor web design (although for some university websites you wonder), it's primarily the challenge of organizing a wealth of information in a manner most students will find accessible, most of the time.

Athabasca University's website is easier to navigate than many other university sites. Although I'd like give 100% of the credit to superior web design, there's another element at play here: AU's website isn't as densely packed as others.

With AU's activities being primarily online, there are whole categories of information not needed for the AU website. No webpages for student housing or food services, no maps for public transit or parking, no information on athletic facilities or the bookstore.

However, even with the reduced-density AU website, it can still be difficult for students to find exactly what they need, when they need it. The new website design does make navigating easier, but sometimes you'd like to get to the page you want without feeling like you're falling down a rabbit hole.

AUSU recently added an "AU Quick Links" page to their website to help students get to the AU information they want with fewer clicks. You can find the Quick Links page under Services on the AUSU [website](#), or click [here](#).

The AU Quick Links page currently lists links to approximately sixty AU webpages. The links are organized into six categories: *AU Primary Web and Social Media Sites*; *AU Faculties*; *AU Services*; *AU Exams and Exam Resources*; *AU Registration, Programs, and Related Resources*; and *Other Common AU Resources, Info, and Links*.

Donette Kingyens, AUSU's Communications and Member Services Coordinator, says the goal was to find an "easy way for members to find services and departments at AU, and quickly find the procedures and tips for common processes such as exam requests, course extensions, and graduation. We know that some of these services and processes are difficult to find on the AU website."

Kingyens combed through the AU website to find the webpages most relevant to undergraduate students. "I also took leads from the most frequently asked questions that I have seen come in directly to AUSU, posted in the AU Facebook Forum, or mentioned in recent surveys," explains Kingyens, "and then tried to compile them in a format that would make them easy to navigate on our website."

The coordinators of the unofficial Athabasca University Facebook group [page](#) will be relieved to know the Quick Links page lists the two links most requested by members of that group: "Service Standards and Response Times" and "Course Coordinator Contact Info"; both can be found under the *Other Common AU Resources, Info, and Links* category. Two other AU pages frequented by students, "Awards" and the "Write Site" are among the links listed under *AU Services*.

AUSU's new AU Quick Links page makes it easier for students to find AU information quickly. Check out Quick Links at <https://www.ausu.org/services/student-resources/au-quick-links/>.

Have a suggestion for a link to add? Contact Donette Kingyens at services@ausu.org or 1-855-497-7003, ext 202.

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

Women Of Interest

Dr. Dormer Ellis was born on November 22, 1925. In 1984 Ellis became the first women to receive the Ontario Professional Engineers Citizenship Award. As a youth she worked at Woolworth Store as a cashier and could readily calculate the change for purchases before the time of cash registers. When she told her high school teacher she wanted to study engineering, she was directed away from that career but did not listen and went on to earn her PhD. in engineering. Ellis married in 1952 and, much to her family's dismay, she retained her maiden name. In 1982 she became the President of BPW of Toronto - Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women.

Further information, including the many accolades she's received can be found at the following websites:

<https://www.bpw-international.org/woman-of-the-week/191-woman-of-the-week-11>

<http://famouscanadianwomen.com/on%20the%20job/scientists>

compiled by Barb Godin

Canadian Education News

Scott Jacobsen



Alberta students will set the definition of their own gender

New guidelines released by the Alberta government on Wednesday. The 21 page document put out by David Eggen, the Education Minister, advised teachers to permit the children to pick their name and the washroom used by them.

In short, the students have the right to self-identify their gender expression and identity, according to the document. Other rights or stipulations include the right to pick your pronoun, where the document states, "...right to

be addressed by their chosen name and to choose pronouns."

Other stipulations relate to elimination of activities for students based on gender, the ability to use male or female washrooms – or neither, use preferred change rooms, and the establishment of gay-straight alliances are mandatory if wanted by a student.

Canadian universities need more women leaders

According to a group of university presidents universities lack female leaders or women leadership. At a recent meeting of university presidents in Toronto, they held a session on "how to advance women's leadership in postsecondary institutions."

The group considers it an urgent problem. Vianne Timmons, the president of the University of Saskatchewan, said, "We still have universities in Canada that have never had a woman president. I was the first woman president in Saskatchewan."

The session and meeting about women in leadership "comes at a time of renewed discussion around gender inequalities in Canada, from harassment and assault on campus to the persistence of the pay gap.

Holocaust education in Canada

The Holocaust was remembered recently with Yom Ha'Shoah or Holocaust Remembrance Day on May 4th and 5th. Canada became the home to 30,000 Holocaust survivors. Citizens from all of the Canadian political parties.

During the speeches at the event in Ottawa, the points were made about the prevention and response to genocide.

Naomi Azrieli and Alice Herscovitch said, "With the community of Canadian survivors fast disappearing, we have a responsibility to honour their steadfast work and take it up as our own."

A native British Columbian, Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AU undergrad and AUSU Councillor. He researches and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Music Review

The Flux Machine

Samantha Stevens



Photo by Kevin Whittaker

Band: The Flux Machine

Album: *Louder*

I may have found an album that can easily replace my typical pre-study coffee. Let's face it, nothing is more difficult for a distance education student than motivating yourself enough to get going. Some days I find that psyching myself up enough to hit the books feels something like you see boxers do before a fight, huffing and puffing while punching the air. Well, I am happy to say that I've found a musical solution to overcoming the procrastination-may-be-easier

feelings.

Louder is the newest album from NYC rockers The Flux Machine. The five-piece alternative rock band has become well known in New York for their energetic live performances, an energy that transfers over to their recorded music. Inspired by The Rolling Stones, The Ramones, and Foo Fighters, The Flux Machine's music pushes the boundaries of rock. The occasional crossovers into the realms of punk and metal makes the music on *Louder* unlike any alternative rock that is out there today. I especially love how their music reminds me of a combination of The White Stripes, Foo Fighters, Finger Eleven, Marilyn Manson, Guns and Roses, and good old AC/DC.

Louder starts with the best album and song intro that I've ever heard. The simple and captivating vocals, combined with amp-blasting drums and bass, taunt the listener. Not even half way into the first track, "Run Away", and I was fired up. My heart pounded with the beat and I had to work to stop myself from dancing.

"Square Up" is my favourite track on *Louder*. It begins with that strangely alluring dark beat and rhythm that I always associate with Marilyn Manson's earlier music. But The Flux Machine cleverly adds their own punk and rock influence, thereby creating something new and ingenious.

But then the song "Believe" completely threw me off. There is a wholesome feeling in this track. Tamer than the others on *Louder*, but still with an upbeat rhythm, "Believe" is a beautiful love song. It is in this song that the Foo Fighters' influence can be heard, and I would expect to hear a song like this on the radio. The softer pop influences create a song that is unusual, but beautiful in its uniqueness.

For lovers of Guns and Roses, be sure to check out "Wheels of Love." All of the best elements of rock music come together in this one. I think that music like this is perfectly at home live, on the road, or blaring from a stereo.

My second favourite song from *Louder* is the blues-infused track "Jack, Jim and Johnny". I can't even begin to explain how bad-ass and amazing this fight song is. If any track on this album was going to get you pumped up, "Jack, Jim and Johnny" is it.

Whatever your plans this summer, I highly recommend adding *Louder* to your summer playlist, especially if you are going to need that extra oomph and energy to haul out the books. *Louder* is now available for purchase, and if you find yourself in NYC this summer, maybe think about checking out The Flux Machine [live](#).

Samantha currently uses her skills as a writer to promote independent musicians and raise awareness and support for many global, environmental, and humanitarian issues. Check out her website and blog at: <http://sstevenswriter.wix.com/writer>



Book Hoarder

Deanna Roney



I have seen people selling their textbooks online. With many courses going to the e-text model, it has meant a lot of people are looking for the physical textbook. When I see these I, albeit briefly, consider whether I should move some of my textbooks from my shelf to someone else's. But I'm a book hoarder. While many of my textbooks will likely never be looked at again, there is the possibility that there will be a piece of information in there that, one day, I will want. I have referenced back to textbooks I got while attending a bricks and mortar university in 2005. It may not happen often, but it does happen. I am also one of those strange birds who loves the look of books on a shelf. I can barely walk by a bookstore without going in. And if I go in, I am coming out with at least one book.

There is something about a book that is a wonderful thing. Perhaps this is part of why I hated the e-text movement so much. I like a book I can flip through, feel the weight, and reference again. I like to be able to look at my shelves and discover something new in them. Many texts I got with courses I found interesting, but I only read the required material. There were many chapters which sounded interesting that I simply did not have time to read. I even have duplicates (or triplicates) of some books and have not yet found the heart to give them away.

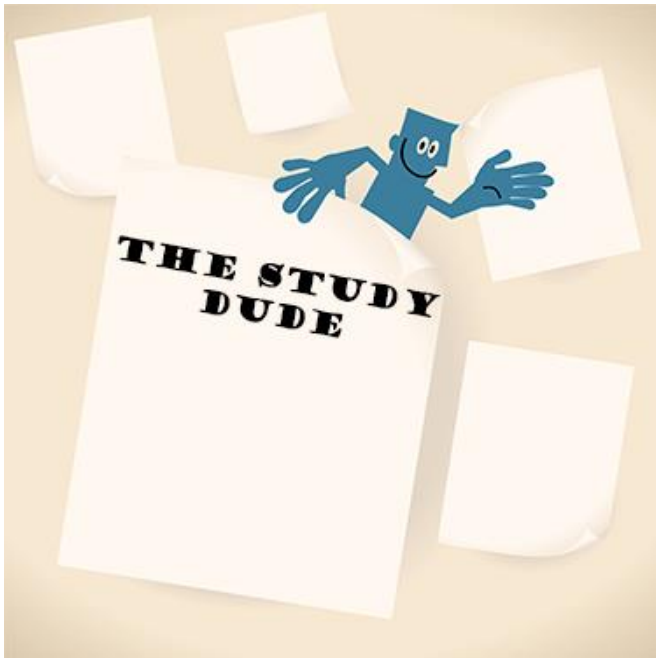
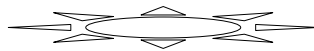
I did take a few books and rehomed them at the cabin. And I took several and boxed them up to send to a friend. These books, though, were from my children's lit course and I did not predict myself reading them again (though I've kept several from that course).

There is something about sitting in a room surrounded by books that I find inspiring. I dream of filling my small office space with more books and creating a wall-to-wall(-to-wall) library. So it is not surprising that I have a difficult time sending a book along, even if my shelf space has run out. Often in my courses I was happy to be

done with the books by the end, especially the dry courses. However, even those I have picked up again and found something interesting in them, something that was (or was not) a part of the assigned readings. I have looked to my textbooks for comfort, knowing that one day I may need to know something, and even if that day isn't today, I will be able to find it: professional ethics, for example. While I commend those that are able to gather what they need from a book in one go and send it on to someone else, I cannot bear to separate from a majority of the books in my collection. They are a wealth of information: whether on particular subjects or possibly just as inspiring reading material.

One of my favourite parts of ordering courses was to see what books I was adding to my shelves. What books are now in my possession that, without AU, would not be. These books have inspired new purchases, and in different genres. I have developed a variety of reading material and reference material and I will continue to add to it. I will just have to keep adding bookshelves, when that space runs out, then let the stacking begin.

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



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

Cope with this Crazy World

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to give your friends therapeutic interviews.

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.

This week's Study Dude explores *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* by Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale. Brinkmann and Kvale try to make a science of interviews, but lifting up the phone and

asking grandma what she ate for lunch doesn't count as a research interview. So, what does?

Lie Down on my Therapeutic Couch

Therapeutic interviews count as one approach to interviews. I never had a therapeutic interview where I'd lie on a couch and spout my problems. But I understand that people with multiple personality disorders would love to have therapeutic interviews. Yet, these interviews don't get government funded, so many people with multiple personality disorders go untreated. Instead, they live with people other than themselves taking turns inhabiting their body.

I once had a friend with multiple personalities, and when she gave a public speech, her face lit up and she unleashed spectacular charisma. Whenever she gave a speech, she looked more beautiful than Margot Robbie. Yet she was overweight by at least two hundred pounds. Her charming public speaking personality—one of her multiple personalities—would take over her body and draw in the crowds. Got to love that.

I like the therapeutic interviews. They seem non-confrontational—gentle even.

Let's find out what you think of therapeutic interviews after reading what Brinkmann and Kvale say about them:

- Carl Rogers came up with the idea for a client-centered interview. These interviews focused on empathy and acceptance of the subject's views.
- If the subject accuses the therapeutic interviewer with something, the interviewer does not take offense or get defensive.
- The therapeutic interview doesn't ask any questions nor put his or her spin on what the subject says.
- The subject eventually makes a connection with the non-confrontational therapist.
- Knowledge comes from these therapeutic interviews, although the focus is on alleviating suffering.
- A therapeutic interview differs from a research interview. A therapeutic interview aims for change while a research interview aims for knowledge gains.
- A Freudian psychoanalytic interview has the subject free-associate ideas.
- Freudian psychoanalytic interviewers avoid any judgements. Instead, the interviewer takes a deep interest in the subject and the subject grows attached to the interviewer. These interviews take years to come to a healing conclusion.
- The Freudian psychoanalytic interview examines dreams and abnormal behaviour. The patient will resist making his or her subconscious thoughts conscious, although that transition is the aim.
- Psychoanalytic interviews have led to lots of knowledge gains for psychology and philosophy.
- Free association interviews (developed by Hollway and Jefferson) require the interviewer to know psychoanalytic interviewing techniques.
- Elton Mayo's approach to interviewing also developed from psychoanalytic interviews. In Mayo's style of interviewing, you listen only. You don't disagree or offer suggestions. You only paraphrase what the interviewee says. [That type of agreeability marks a good way to keep friends.]

The Philosopher's Stone: Interview Epistemology

Interviews can be categorized by the philosophies (epistemologies) they follow. Epistemology is the study of knowledge: so, what counts as knowledge? How do we gain knowledge? Those kinds of questions matter in the study of epistemology.

During graduate studies, I bought a book on epistemology. Too bad for me, though, the book's first chapters focused on anything but qualitative philosophies. Instead, the book seemed to dive into logical diagrams. So, I didn't learn what I needed to learn about epistemologies for my communications degree. In other words, I didn't learn about hermeneutics, pragmatism, phenomenology, dialectical view, and postmodern theory—all of which you are about to learn.

The book confused me, and I really didn't learn much. Yet, the idea that people studied knowledge in its own right fascinates me to this day. Recently, I vowed that, before I left this earth, I would know more about epistemology. (I also vowed that I would know what Paul Feyerabend meant by the title of his book *Against Method*.) Put learning about *epistemology* on your bucket list.

So, now by learning about interviews, I'm getting first-hand knowledge of epistemology, the study of knowledge. On that note, Brinkmann and Kvale have much to say about interview philosophies:

- When you take a philosophical position with your interviews, you assume certain views on the process and quality of the knowledge you gather.

- If you take a hermeneutic philosophy to interviewing, your big focus lies on interpreting meaning. You want to make sure both you and the interviewee have agreement on your interpretation. Hermeneutics highlights history and context.
- If you take a pragmatic philosophy, you focus on finding ways of coping with this world. The practical amounts to the end-all-be-all to pragmatists. Pragmatists want to collect useful knowledge. Pragmatists include Pierce, James, Dewey, Rorty, and Putnam. Pragmatists see knowledge as a craft and not as a representation of reality.
- If you take a phenomenological perspective, you don't focus on the unconscious—just the conscious. You look at the interviewees experiences and their perspectives. You leave out your own understanding of the topics the interviewee discusses.
- If you look at a dialectical philosophy, you focus on contradictions. You relate the contradictions to the social and physical world. You don't want to dig up the same old; instead, you want to discover new stuff.
- If you look at postmodern thought, you focus on relationships. You believe that this world is socially constructed and that "universal systems of thought" don't exist: multiple meanings exist. Some postmodernists think that the language we use builds our reality. Knowledge doesn't exist within you; nor does knowledge exists outside of you: knowledge exists in your interactions with others and the world, postmodernists would say.

What to Know about Knowledge

If you interview someone, make sure that what they say helps you cope with life. Yes, according to Brinkmann and Kvale, knowledge that helps you cope marks one of seven characteristics of good interview knowledge. Make sense?

Possibly. I think the knowledge from an interview with the Dalai Lama might help you cope. But would the knowledge from an interview with Madonna help you cope? Maybe if the topic focused on music performance. But, an interview with Madonna on morality might reduce your ability to cope—especially if karmic laws come into play.

So, who decides what counts as worthwhile interview knowledge?

I think God does. But Brinkmann and Kvale might disagree. They decided on seven features that make up interview knowledge (and what they miss out on in the spiritual, they halfway make up for in the social):

- You produce interview knowledge: The interaction between the interviewer and interviewee counts. The social part is what creates the knowledge.
- You create knowledge that is inter-relational. On one hand, there is the inter-relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. On the other hand, there is the knowledge that has been created. You can focus on either one or the other, the knowledge created or the interrelationship, but not both at the same time—like focusing on the optical illusion that looks like either a vase or two faces. If that makes sense to you, then at least one of us learned something.
- You and your interviewee talk your way to knowledge gains. You both negotiate what your experiences mean. No scientific method or objective reality applies to such knowledge gains.
- Your knowledge has context. What you know in one circumstance might not apply in another.
- Knowledge is based on language. Spoken words or written words can lead to knowledge. Beware of problems with converting the spoken word to written word and vice versa, though.
- Stories lead to knowledge. Stories help us to understand our experiences and our world.

- Knowledge should be useful (in other words, pragmatic). Knowledge should help you cope with this crazy world.

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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In Conversation with Heavy Static

Wanda Waterman



"Heavy Static is a Toronto-based alt-rock trio with a sound inspired by the roots of punk and new wave, '80s slasher films, and Swedish pop music. The band, comprised of Christian Patrick (lead vocals/guitar), James Young (drums/backing vocals), and Dave Vasey (bass/backing vocals) has just released the track Andromeda from their second EP Here Comes the Fear, due out this summer. Recently frontman Christian Patrick took the time to answer our questions about the band's history, experiences, and influences.

What elements in your childhood and early years pointed you toward music? Toward alt-rock music in particular?

I was always drawn to being a musician, even before I knew how to play an instrument. I'd sit and draw fake band names on the back of my school workbook every day. I'd have fake concerts in my bedroom. And, I *loved* writing lyrics to songs I hoped one day to bring to life.

I think MTV— when they used to actually play videos— really drove home the idea of a rock star, and seeing bands like Twisted Sister made me want to play in a band. I loved The Smiths, The Cure, The Clash, The Cult, and everything that had cool guitar solos and catchy choruses. I also loved the clothing styles of these bands.

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

I've always been a self-taught musician, though for many years I was an average guitar player and was content doing the limited things I knew well. About five or six years ago I went through a break-up, and that really lit a fire underneath me. It gave me focus, and I started taking guitar lessons to broaden my knowledge and hone my skill.

It opened up a whole new world and I advanced really quickly in learning because the fundamentals had already been there for years. I really became the guitarist I'd always wanted to be. Our first EP was the result of that break-up and those guitar lessons.

I'm a much better musician now, but I think that decision to focus on something other than my break-up was amazing. The funny part is that my ex is a musician as well and the guy who gave me the guitar lessons was a member of her band at the time. I never really realized the irony of that at the time.

What was the most mesmerizing musical experience of your life?

I used to go on tours with this Swedish band named The Ark. They were really huge back in 2009. Anyway, they once played a show and asked me to come onstage in front of 30,000 people to sing backups. That was insane.

How did the band members meet?

I've known Dave (the bassist) for years through mutual friends and old bandmates. He bothered me for like two years to form a band with him and I always said no. One day I said yes, and here we are. As for our drummer, James, we were having auditions in 2014 because our original drummer had left the band. James was like the second guy who came out, and I knew right away he was our man. Fantastic drummer that James Young is.

What's your favourite instrument to play and why?

It's going to sound strange, but I love playing the bass. I've never played bass in a band, but I love writing bass lines. There's something really cool about the sound of a bass locked into a drumbeat. Bassists get a lot of crap about being bass players, but they really are the unsung heroes of a band.

Did anything funny or bizarre happen during the recording, performing, or touring of *Here Comes the Fear*?

Recording HCTF was unlike any recording we've ever done. Aside from drums, the entire EP was recorded at my home. I needed some place to really explore my ideas without being stressed and looking at a clock and knowing every minute is costing us money.

Though it alleviated some stresses, it added a lot of stress in other areas. For one, I never knew when a song was truly done because I was on my own for the final parts. Like, how many guitars does a song need? Is 10 enough? 20? Because I could lay down layer after layer after layer and it never felt like enough. Because of this, the EP took way longer to record than it should have.

Describe a typical rehearsal.

We're all business in our rehearsals, aside from a few jokes between songs. For the most part, we just run through the set or work on new songs. We aren't a jam band and we don't jam out ideas. I've thought out all the parts to the songs way before I bring them to the other members of the band.

I don't understand wasting time on an idea that hasn't been sussed out already. Rehearsal is for refining things, not for writing songs. Not for me, anyway. If we had unlimited time at the rehearsal space it might be a different story, but we're busy guys with only have so much time to work on things, and so we just work on the set and songs we have.

What conditions do you need in your life in order to continue with being creative?

For me, I need solitude. I'm very, very social; I'm also very much a hermit. Everything I do is on a whim and that includes writing. I've never been one to assign time to write music; it just happens when it happens and that can't occur if I'm not alone. I've never liked roommates for that very reason. It's not that they prevent me from creating, it's that I prevent myself from playing, out of guilt. I bet I'm the most annoying roommate in the world, playing guitar at odd hours of the night just because I have an idea.

Is Toronto a positive or negative influence on your work?

Toronto is like any other city. It's full of people and when you live someplace long enough you become numb. Toronto hasn't been an influence on me in many, many years. That being said, I've lived in enough places and have enough experiences to draw from that I always have some sort of inspiration. I lived in Prague, Czech Republic for a few years and that place will always have a special place in my heart and will give me a lifetime of influence.

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

I was and still am very influenced by Bret Easton Ellis's classic book, *American Psycho*. It's such a clever, underhanded look at society. People see the violence in the words, but you have to read between the lines. I think it's one of the funniest things I've ever read.

I'm also very influenced by bands like The Ark, Kent, Bowie, Queen, The Darkness, and Manic Street Preachers, all trailblazers in my mind. As for films, I've always had an affinity towards campy horror movies like *My Bloody Valentine* and *Maximum Overdrive*.

To me, *Maximum Overdrive* is just perfect. It's also one of the last times a movie was sort of a platform for a band to promote itself. In this case, it was AC/DC. They weren't even promoting an album or anything. They were just asked to do the soundtrack and they're all over that movie. It's brilliant.

What music have you been listening to lately?

I haven't been listening to much, really. But I'm still keen on listening to The Smiths and Swedish band Kent. Oh, I'm also really into this band called Waters.

What's your next project?

We're writing new songs and working on the next EP or album that will come out in the fall. We're always three steps ahead of the music that's released. *Here Comes the Fear* hasn't even come out yet and we're already thinking about the next thing.

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

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group

Debbie wonders what a "reopened" status means on a submitted assignment. Jesse wants to know if courses will cost more while she's living outside of Canada. Carrie seeks input on whether it's possible to finish one course every two months.

Other posts include ProQuest ebrary, tuition refunds, writing exams early, and courses ADMN 404 and HRMT 387.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "[#AthaU](#) [#Nursing](#) & [#HealthStudies](#) Library Orientation [#Webinar](#) next Wednesday. Sign Up Now → <https://goo.gl/NnyqP8>." And also "Did you know that

both @WestJet and @AirCanada are offering flight savings AU graduates attending

#AUGrad16?" Details here: <http://news.athabascau.ca/news/flight-promotion-augrad16/>"

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "AUSU is looking for a member-at-large to join our MEC Committee! Find out more at <http://bit.ly/1XjoEtx> [#AthaU](#)."

Youtube

Athabasca U posts a tutorial video: [AU Request Transcript](#).





Council Connection

Karl Low

This week, the Council Meeting brought us a return of the echo chamber. I mean this in a literal sense, as once again the meeting was plagued with people's voices echoing in the teleconference. You can imagine how distracting it is to try to speak to a group and being constantly interrupted by your own voice.

Fortunately, Council once again handled it rapidly, as the individual councillors are learning to be quick with muting their phones. Once that was sorted out, the rest of the meeting was fairly uneventful, with the two primary points of interest (for me, anyway) happening at the very beginning and the very end.

The first point of interest was a change to the agenda. President Wasylyshyn asked that an additional motion to deal with a budgetary overage be placed on the agenda. I'm always interested in these types of motions, especially when they aren't included in the original meeting package as those are the types of motions when skullduggery is most likely to occur.

In this case, however, the skullduggery was on the part of the international finance community. To be specific, each year, AUSU purchases a bulk license for SmartDraw, a piece of software you can use to easily create flowcharts, floor plans, mind maps, Venn diagrams, SWOT analysis, and various other charts or graphics that students sometimes have to create for their classes. With this license, you, as an AUSU member, are entitled to a free copy of the program. But the company is in the US, and when AUSU created their budget the exchange rate wasn't taken into account. SmartDraw has since billed them, and Council realized they needed to budget an extra \$849.00 (Canadian) to make up for the currency conversion.

Council minutes were adopted, with two of the new Councillors, Andrew Gray and Julian Teterenko choosing to abstain from approving the in-camera minutes as they were not present at that session.

Following an update on the action plan, which noted only two action items outstanding from the previous Council, discussion proceeded on the upcoming Council in-person sessions that will be happening in Edmonton. This is a new development for AUSU Council, as it has been over 14 years since AUSU Council held a meeting of the group in person. Gathering the various members in Edmonton is a significant expense, but one that Council has determined is likely to give a lot of benefits in helping the group to develop new plans and move forward quickly to improve services to its members.

The first motion on the agenda after the discussion about the in person meeting was the previously mentioned approval of the overage in the budget. Then adjustments were made to the policy on how council goes about changing policy. Significantly, changes were made so that the entire Council no longer has to approve every policy AUSU has if there are no changes made to it that term or the changes are extremely minor, and additional assurances were put in to ensure that if any councillor had concerns about a policy they could make sure it is brought forward to a full meeting.

A new policy on email voting, giving specific guidelines and timelines as to how AUSU conducts these votes, was then passed, and the terms of reference for various committees were updated, primarily for consistency, although the Finance and Member Engagement & Communications committees were also given the ability to seek out AUSU members at large, rather than just council members, to fill the seats on them if there was space.

It was in the discussion about the terms of reference for the Finance Committee that it was noted that Council is also moving forward with plans to make more of their financial information and activities available on the AUSU website. This, along with the addition of the minutes and various reports from executives and committees that are already being put on the site, is an excellent thing, in my opinion, as many of the problems that Council encountered over the course of early 2015 would likely not have happened had there been this type of transparency in place to begin with. As I'm generally among the first to criticize council when I think they're doing something wrong, I also have to give credit where credit is due. So kudos, folks.

All of the motions passed unanimously, and generally with very little discussion beyond the initial explanation of the changes.

For the reports section, President Wasylyshyn noted that her work with the AU Presidential Search committee continues, but everything about this committee is kept in strict confidence, as (having been on one before) I can tell you that often the applicants the committee considers are currently serving other institutions, and so who is being considered must be kept confidential so as not to inconvenience these people.

Vice-President External, Brandon Simmons, noted in his report his meeting with Minister Schmidt, who again gave confirmation that the government is committed to working with AU and not letting it cease to exist, although lots of uncertainty remains as to how things will be fixed.

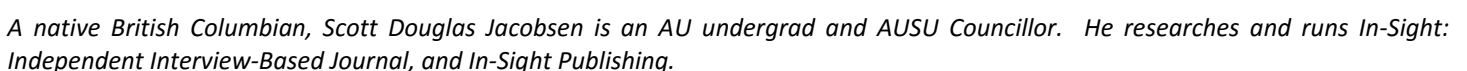
The Awards Committee report noted that this year AUSU has received more applications for awards than any previous year, six times the number of applications from the years previous, according to the staff report, which also noted the AU Quicklinks page has been launched (and you can see our own [article](#) for more information on that.)

Finally came the question and answer period, and it was in this free-roaming discussion that the most interesting bit of news came, when President Wasylyshyn spoke of contacts AUSU had received from students who were concerned about the retro-active changes being applied to the post-LPN nursing program. A retro-active change in a degree program is an extremely unusual thing, as it has the potential to add hundreds of dollars and months onto a student's program plan. Possibly costing them their degree or scheduled employment. Other universities were contacted about retro-active changes to their programs and generally noted that such a thing simply isn't done.

AUSU has met with the Dean of the Health Disciplines and the VP Academic of the university to discuss their concerns, and President Wasylyshyn spoke of having contacted AU President MacKinnon about these changes, who she said told her that he was going to investigate further, and that there likely was no policy about this currently as it is a basic tenet of a degree program.

In the AUSU council meeting it was noted that if one faculty can make retro-active changes, what does this mean for any other faculties, and what protections do any students have about the consistency of their degree programs? *The Voice Magazine* is also looking into this, and we'll be bringing you further coverage as we find out more details.

With that, at about 6pm, the meeting was officially adjourned.





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

The Quiet One

Dear Barb:

My husband and I have been married four years and it is mostly going well. Problems arise when I try to talk to him about things he doesn't want to talk about. Sometimes he will give me a short answer and claim he doesn't have anything else to say. If I try to get more information to find out how he feels about something then he gets mad and erupts, yelling and screaming. I find this so frustrating! I rarely talk to him about anything anymore because of this. I am a communicator and I need to talk about family, friends, the future, the past, everything, it helps me to feel connected to another person. I fear if this continues we will grow so far apart that we won't have a relationship anymore other than sharing the same house. My husband says everything is fine and this is my problem not his and that he doesn't want to talk about it anymore. Am I supposed to just accept this? It doesn't seem right to me. Helpless Hanna.

Hi Hanna:

This is a very common issue in many relationships. As you know men and women are very different people. Studies have shown that men speak 12,000 words a day while women speak more than 25,000 words per day. There are many reasons why husbands don't talk to their wives. For example, they simply don't know what to say. Some men

don't think too deeply about things, therefore they really have nothing to contribute to a conversation. Men who don't think deeply about things probably have some difficulty expressing themselves and may fear being misunderstood and causing even more problems. Also they may not want to rock the boat. Men often try to maintain the peace and assume the best way to do that is to remain silent. Women often think about their relationships and how they can make them better, this is not an issue most men ponder. As well, some men don't want to talk about their feelings because they don't want to appear weak. Some of the reasons why your husband chooses not to talk may also be related to your responses to him. For example, if a man has difficulty expressing himself, he may fear that you will laugh at his awkwardness. You may simply talk too much and he can't get a word in edgewise, or when he does talk, you constantly interrupt him and he feels you are not listening, so why continue talking? If you are attempting to talk to your husband while sports are on TV, you most likely will get a quick answer, if that. These are some of the reasons men don't talk, but in addition there may be underlying problems in your relationship, but since you said your relationship is generally good, I would assume that this is not the case in your situation. You cannot expect your husband to become an eloquent conversationalist overnight, any more than he can expect you to keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself. Perhaps you can spend more time with your girlfriends discussing things. If this situation with your husband is totally unacceptable to you, perhaps you could investigate some couple enrichment classes in your area. Thanks for your letter Hanna; I'm sure many people will be able to relate to your situation.

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

CHAZZ BRAVADO, MALE FEMINIST: POSTER CHILD



Donald Trump is the best thing to happen to us Male Feminists!

By using and discarding a series of trophy wives, commenting lasciviously on his own daughter's body, attacking female reporters and then lying about it . . .



. . . and claiming that women who get abortions should be penalized, Donnie has become the towheaded poster child for masculine obtuseness!



All we male feminists have to do is come along and mop up after him.



And chicky-poops,
my mop
is ever
at the ready!

WRITTEN BY: WANDA WATERMAN



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

Apply to Join an AUSU Committee!

Want to get more involved with your Students' Union?

Do you have ideas for engaging with other AU students?

Looking for a chance to get experience in committee or governance work?

Apply to be a voting member of the AUSU Member Engagement & Communications Committee!

The MEC committee is a standing committee formed by AUSU Council to develop a strong connection between AUSU and its members, and ensure that all AUSU communications are representative of our goals and mission. The committee strives to promote content to provide members with a sense of community, a stronger connection with fellow students, a better understanding of AUSU, and a well-rounded university experience.

Typical duties include developing the AUSU communication plan, discussing and implementing means for member engagement, reviewing and assessing communication and service usage statistics, trends and demographics, as well as brainstorming and proofing AUSU communications.



IMPORTANT DATES

- **May 23:** Ottawa Meet & Greet
- **May 31:** June course extension deadline
- **June 9-11:** 2016 Convocation
- **June 10:** Deadline to register in a course starting July 1
- **June 14:** AUSU Council Meeting
- **June 15:** July degree requirements deadline
- **June 30:** July course extension deadline

MEC Time Commitment & Honorarium:

Members should expect to devote approx. 1-3 hours per week for email and related asynchronous tasks, and approx. 2 hours per month for a teleconference meeting.

The term for non-councillors on this committee will be approximately one year.

Non-councillors on this committee will receive an honorarium of **\$50 per month**.

Application Process:

If you are interested in joining this Committee, fill out the [application form](#) and submit it to ausu@ausu.org.

You can apply no matter where you live - meetings are by teleconference and committee work is done online!

The deadline to apply is Friday, June 3, 2016.

If you have any questions, email ausu@ausu.org or call 1-855-497-7003.

Ottawa Meet & Greet!

Come meet with AUSU executives and other AU Students in Ottawa on **Monday, May 23!**

Date: Monday, May 23 from 3-4pm UDT.

Place: Grill 41 in the Lord Elgin Hotel, 100 Elgin Street



CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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