

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 24 Issue 28 2016-07-22

Course Exam

History 338, Part II

The End of AU?

A Look at AU's 2016 Propsed Budget

Transitioning

Becoming a Non-Student

Plus:

AU Library's New Video Series

*Fly on the Wall: Islands of Education
and much more!*



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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

The End of AU?

Karl Low



Athabasca University has taken it's 2015-2016 proposed budget to the General Faculties Council for review and explanation. I say explanation because that's something this budget really needs.

Do you remember not long ago, just last year, in fact, when reports were coming out that AU was going to be facing insolvency? But our interim President, Peter MacKinnon came out to reassure us that "Athabasca University is not going to close down, but Athabasca University will have to do some business differently in the future." It turns out that what he meant by doing business differently is that AU would have to fire a lot of people. I conclude this because of the statement on page 2 of the budget that reads "The major constraint facing this budget is the government directive prohibiting job losses."

This strikes me as a huge admission of failure on the part of the Board of Governors and the top level administration of the university. Because even though the budget itself shows growing enrolment of 1.3% total, and that includes a slight decline in out-of-province students (which AU isn't funded for anyway), for that to require job losses indicates there was some sort of failure to plan for sustainability.

Because the responsibility for both hirings and wage negotiations ultimately falls to the Board of Governors, and when the Board itself is saying it can't afford the people and wages that it approved, you have to wonder exactly what, or perhaps if, they were thinking at the time they approved these things.

Now, in fairness, a portion of the blame for this should also be laid at the feet of the former Alberta Government, which announced loud and long that there would be increased funding for universities, and was assuring AU that they could rely on this 2% increased funding in their plans right up until then Minister Thomas Lukaszuk announced there would be a 7.2% funding cut instead. But that was almost three years ago.

There are already some who have suggested this might be a "scare" budget. Something drafted to attempt to shock the government into changing the funding model to recognize at least one of Athabasca University's unique features: that the bulk of our students are out of province and so AU receives no provincial funding for them, or that, unlike traditional universities, our information technology systems are our capital. Where other universities get allocations of money to build and maintain buildings that they serve their students in, AU needs money to build and maintain it's hardware and software to serve its students through. Unfortunately, not many politicians get that enthused about having their name on a new server.

In support of this is the idea that they've low-balled certain income numbers, such as predicting a 0% growth in graduate student enrollments, even though the year before saw growth of 7.6%, and predicting an equal 0% growth in the amount of donations and other grants AU will receive. (As an aside, I have to wonder what kind of strong-arming must have been involved to get the VP of Advancement to agree to putting out a budget that shows next to no growth in either donations or enrolment. Or, if the projections are real, what purpose the Office of Advancement serves, given that the VP alone is making over a quarter million dollars.) And a newly proposed comprehensive institutional plan (at the same link as the budget, at the bottom) that explicitly lays

out the case for AU needing its information and computing technology to be thought of the same as buildings for other universities, and so eligible for that kind of funding.

Unfortunately, if that's the case, then the introduction to the budget, that proposes the only solution to the problem as a reduction in staffing costs, does not help at all. That is, unless the goal of the document is to make it appear that the board is short-sighted and so allow the Minister who finds the obvious answer, laid out neatly in the Institutional Plan, to feel like a hero. Now that would be a masterful bit of politics, if I believed for a moment that a majority of the board members would be willing to put their own reputations on the line to help AU.

But getting away from the politics, what does this mean for us as students? Mostly, a big load of not much. The government has made repeated and public assurances that AU will not be allowed to fold. So it would be PR disaster of monumental proportions now if it did, and that's not even thinking about the traditional voter base of the NDP who would likely start to question whether the Notley government represents their ideals if any public post-secondary institution was allowed to close, or the always ready-to-ponce opposition, who, no doubt, would portray the closure of AU as an attack on rural students who are unable or unwilling to move to an NDP friendly urban area for their studies.

The worst case scenario is that the Board of Governors gets to do what it supposedly wants, and cuts staffing, something which would likely mean a reduction in service levels to students, or at very least, to the morale of those left working for the university. However, our degrees will be safe, our course options might become slightly more limited, but students will not be left in the cold. Regardless of the financial situation, Athabasca University still has full accreditation in both the US and Canada. The government simply can't afford to allow that to disappear. Phew.

Meanwhile, here at *The Voice Magazine*, this week's issue brings you a look at the new library orientation videos, pointing out which ones have the information you need so you can get it fast and get back to your work.

Also this week, when is a big word too much? I know that as a student, especially when I'm not 100% sure of what I'm talking about, there is a temptation to use large, complex words to make my writing seem more confident. This week, The Study Dude takes a break from interviews to look at that practice, and give us some advice on how, and why, we might avoid doing that. And while we're on the topic of writing, The Writer's Toolbox opens up a parenthetical discussion, and Deanna Roney looks at the transition between writing for her courses and, having graduated, writing for herself.

Our feature is the second part of our examination of History 338: History of the Canadian West. I'll be honest, history courses have never interested me. That's what the web is for, after all, right? But Dr. Eric Strikwerda points out the difference between what I think of what must be in a history course (what he calls an antiquarian view) and what his course actually is, and I'm wondering if perhaps I wasn't a bit too hasty in my judgement.

We round that out with a new Fly on the Wall, one that compares an AU education to a life on a deserted island, and of course our selection of interviews, music reviews, advice, and other entertainment that students are sending in, keeping you connected to the community.

So, enjoy the read!

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



Marie Well

HIST 338 - History of the Canadian West, Part II

Dr. Eric Strikwerda is an AU assistant professor in the Center for Humanities. He teaches a number of courses and this article is a continuation of our [interview with him](#) about History 338: The History of the Canadian West.

Is there a part of the course they've heard students really enjoy? What is it?

I have, yes: the course content. And them not learning just about the history of the region, but also how to do history. How do we do history? What kinds of things do we think are important? This has to largely be driven by the individual for example. So, we don't have arbitrary things that we say is the most important thing you need to learn.

All people coming into history come from different backgrounds and have different interests. That's great because that's why the story is constantly being challenged, sometimes revised, sometimes merely added to.

You asked before what was one of the challenges? Well, it's not really a challenge, but it's getting students to think about the wider context of things.

What I sometimes get from students is what I call, and not in any kind of negative way, a laundry list. This happened... then that happened... then that happened... then that happened.

That's more what antiquarians do: just collecting facts. As historians, we are much more interested in the context. How is the past a contingent place? How does what came before affect what came after? We are interested in continuity and change over time.

It's the wider context of things.

Frankly, it's a skill that one learns over a long period of time. But this is a great way to start. It can totally change the way that you see the world and the way that you see yourself in the world and the way that you understand the past.

Imagine what a bleak place it would be if tomorrow was always just tomorrow and nobody cared about what happened in the past or indeed how we got to where we are now.

You start to ask wider questions such as *Why do your cities look the way they do? Why is Calgary where it is? Why isn't it somewhere else? How did Calgary come to be one of the two dominant metropolises in Alberta? Why not Lethbridge? Why not Fort McMurray?*

Are there exams, and, if so, what are they like?

There is a final exam. It's written with an invigilator in the usual way. It is composed of three questions, but students have a choice and students have the questions going into the exam.

All of the questions we use in the final exam are found at the end of each unit. Some of those questions will appear on the final, but not all. Students have the questions in advance, and they can prepare their response to all of them and then go in and write the exam.

That reduces exam anxiety considerably. The alternative would be students believing they need to memorize everything and probably remembering nothing when it comes time to write the exam.

What would you change to make the course even better if you could?

I am in the process now of changing it, and I am going to hive British Columbia off from this story, and I'm going to incorporate Canada's North.

I am doing that for a couple of reasons: (1) Most similar courses offered by other universities in Canada tend to offer up a treatment of the prairies alone, and so this move would bring AU's offering in line with that (2) We are offering in MAIS a revised Canadian Studies program that emphasizes Canada as northern nation, and so I'm incorporating a northern focus to the course as well.

I think it's important that we have the historical context for the North for the MAIS program. But also, my friend, Josh Evans (who is a human geographer here at AU), and I are working on revising the Canadian Studies program at the undergraduate level, and it'll have a similar emphasis on Canada's North.

Those are two reasons. The third is that the North is going to become increasingly important in Canada's story in the future. It has been in the past, but it's going to become increasingly important.

Stephen Harper, our former Prime Minister really wanted to develop the North. He believed the North was going to be a big part of the 21st century. He's right, I think.

But, I would differ from him ideologically. The North is going to become a bit of a political football, too, because there are a number of circumpolar nations that also have eyes on developing that region. Canada is intending to move much more strongly in terms of establishing sovereignty over the region.

In your opinion, do you think this course is a harder one or an easier one than the average at AU?

It's not easier. It's like any course at AU or any course generally. You get out of it what you put into it. If you are just looking for the credit and you want to breeze through it, you'll probably pass. If you really want to learn about the region, you've got to put the time and the effort into it.

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

Just generally, as with all AU courses, it is the kind of person who is able to apply themselves largely on their own.

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

It's part of the History program. If you wanted to do a BA in History, this would certainly be a part of that. It's also part of the Canadian Studies program. If you wanted to do a BA in Canadian Studies, this would be an excellent course.

I can't speak for other disciplines, but if you are doing a science degree, for example, this would most definitely qualify for your arts component.

It is easily transferrable to all other accredited universities in Canada and elsewhere.

What take do you have with the assigned reading *Stupid to the Last Drop: How Alberta is Bringing Environmental Armageddon to Canada (And Doesn't Seem to Care)?*

I think it provides a critical commentary that in many ways goes against the mainstream media's commentary, which tends to be pretty superficial with respect to oil and gas.

We are seeing that now. It's very troubling and very disheartening to see people losing their jobs when oil and gas is in the tanker, as they say.

I think that this book offers up a critical analysis of the oil industry in Alberta and the ways that previous Alberta governments have dealt with things like royalty regimes and the environment and trying to strike a balance on those two.

It is pro-environmental and very critical of the boom and bust cycle that Alberta seems to be stuck in for the past century. You know... Times are good. There's lots of spending and very little planning, and then the bottom falls out and everything is terrible. Then it stays like that for a time.

If you are a Calgarian, born and raised, you know exactly what I'm talking about.



AU Library Launches New Orientation Video Series

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Image from AU Library's New Website



Athabasca University's library launched a new orientation video series earlier this month. This 9-part series provides students with a quick overview of how to navigate the AU Library website and how to conduct effective research.

The video series is presented in easily-digestible chunks of about 4 minutes each. Each video builds on the previous one for a natural flow, but students can choose to watch only those most relevant to them. A brief overview of each video follows:

Introduction. This two-minute video gives students an overview of the AU Library and its video orientation series, and introduces useful terminology.

AU Library Homepage. This five-minute video shows students how to find and navigate AU Library's

website. The video includes a brief overview of how to search the AU Library website for online, e-text, and print materials, as well as guidance on how to order physical materials from the library. Information on finding materials at other academic libraries is provided, including how to get a COPPUL card. This video also covers where to find help—such as research help and tutorials—on the library website, and how to log in to your library account.

Catalogue Searches. This three-minute video guides students on how to search the AU Library catalogue using the Books & Media search and demonstrates how to filter search results. Detailed instruction is given on how to access e-books online and how to request physical books.

Discover Searches. This 4.5-minute video demonstrates how to search for journal articles using the Discover search tool, and provides an overview of other methods of searching for journal articles. A discussion on the nature of journal articles is included, as well as tips on using advanced searches and filtering results.

Finding a Journal Article from a Citation. This four-minute video explains how to find a full-text article from a variety of AU databases by using the Journal Title search along with citation information the student obtained from a Discover search or from another source.

Searchable Keywords and Boolean Operators. This four-minute video demonstrates how to break down research topics into searchable keywords. Also covered are how to connect your search terms with boolean operators such as "and", "or", or "not", and how to use the truncation symbol "*" and quotation marks in your search.

Database Searches. This four-minute video guides you through how to search the AU Library's databases and shows you how to preserve your search results so you can retrieve them later.

Accessing Journal Articles. This three-minute video demonstrates how to access journal articles found in your search results. Also covered are how to obtain full-text articles not held in AU Library's database, and how to extract citation information in a variety of citation formats.

Contact the Library. This two-minute video concludes the series with information on where to find research help and how to contact the AU Library.

Each video is jam-packed with useful information and research techniques that will help students get optimal results when conducting research. Videos have optional closed-captioning, and a transcript is provided for each video.

For more AU Library information, students can join live webinars (the next one, on Google Scholar, is scheduled for July 25) or watch previously-recorded webinars. All are available from the [Orientations](#) page.

The new AU Library Orientation Video Series provides students with even more tools for library research success. Like it says in the last video, "AU Library is here to help you get the most out of your Athabasca University education."

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



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

The Right Amount of Big Words

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to find the middle ground between formal and informal writing.

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

This week's Study Dude starts fresh with Stephen Wilber's book *Mastering the Craft of Writing: How to Write with Clarify, Emphasis, & Style*. Have you ever wondered when

to omit the word "that" and when to leave it in? If so, this article will answer that and more.

Too Obfuscated? The Right Amount of Formality in Your Essays

If you've read past Study Dude articles, you should know that I adore Dr. Helen Sword, an author and advocate of clear academic writing. And you might also know that best-seller Steven Pinker endorses Helen Sword and also idealizes clear writing.

Helen prefers writing with punchy verbs and fewer multisyllabic nouns (which she calls zombie nouns).

But, I had some apprehensions. For instance, don't universities require you to use multisyllabic stuffy nouns? And don't universities give you higher grades when you show off a vocabulary known only to you and the editors at Oxford?

Well, I have found an answer to those questions: one that helps you flaunt a great vocabulary without muddling your message.

Helen and Steven would be proud.

Stephen Wilber lets you know when a bigger vocabulary serves you best:

- Simpler words don't necessarily mean "easy" words. Instead, simpler words are the most precise words.
- (But if you are writing for the GMAT or some other standardized test, use stuffy multisyllabic nouns. You'll get higher grades.)
- Bigger words don't lead to better writing. But do expand your vocabulary as much as possible.
- Why expand your vocabulary? Because some words are just more precise in certain sentences. Instead of saying "I read a wide breadth of material for tons of hours every day," say, "I read extensively."
- If you slip in a big word just to sound impressive, then you probably used a poor choice.
- Instead of writing a wordy, stuffy sentence, make it more precise. And avoid using clichés.

- Strike a balance between a formal and an informal tone. Find the middle ground. Instead of "It is concerning to the authorities whether the grandiose claims of the most economically well-to-do citizens are more prominent than the claims proposed by those announced by the economically burdened citizens," say, "The authorities are concerned whether the claims of the wealthy overshadow those of the poor."
- Use more precise words. Instead of saying "unquestionably nebulous and without merit" (p. 29), say "unwarranted."
- Say "babble" instead of "talked incoherently."

Get the Details... But Don't Overdo Them

Has anyone ever commented that you should "show" instead of "tell"? I puzzled over such a comment. So, I peered at some advanced writing books that talk about showing scenes from a character's point-of-view. Yet, I didn't quite grasp how to show instead of tell.

Many fiction-writing books advise on "showing" through seeing the world as the character immediately senses and experiences it: "He slowly pulled the sheet over his head while letting out a long groan, blinding himself from the morning image of his wife's hairy pits and mascara-stained eye-sockets."

Wilbers comes up with a simpler formula for "showing" instead of "telling":

- Instead of saying "She saw the sunrise," add some juicy detail: "She saw the Valentine-red sun spill its color onto the overhead storks and the below rippling ocean."
- Instead of saying, "I do certain exercises every day," spice it up with specifics: "Every day, I bench press 90 kilos and hammer curl until I sweat."
- Instead of saying, "The people voted for Brexit," again, add detail: "The tight race for Brexit was secured by a 2% vote in favor of leaving."
- Use powerful verbs. Name people and places. Use alliteration (such as a "ferocious feline followed me"). Sensory details create a "show" not "tell" feel.

When to Omit "That"

Whenever I use the word "that," I often think it sounds unskilled. Moreover, I think the sentence sounds better without it. Yet, I also wonder if removing the word "that" would make the sentence ungrammatical. You see, I wondered if removing "that" sometimes created two independent clauses connected without a period: "He was sure ~~that~~ [...] he got it right."

But, after reading Wilbers, I realize that I can usually drop "that" when the sentence sounds better without it.

Wilber's explains when the ins-and-outs of when and when not to use the word "that":

- Delete "that" to tighten your sentences, and keep "that" to add clarity.
- For instance, cut out "that" in sentences like "I recommend that you take an umbrella." In other words, just say, "I recommend you take an umbrella." By deleting "that," you tighten up your sentence.
- However, you want to keep the word "that" for most "thinking verbs": "I thought that you liked my articles." Thinking words include "believe," "decide," and "realize." Again, keep "that" after thinking verbs.

- The reason why, for instance, you would keep the word "that" following "believe" is simple. "I believe Susan didn't read the Bible" can initially confuse the reader as to whether you believe Susan or you believe Susan didn't read the Bible.
- Most of the times you can cut out "that," but sometimes leaving it in makes the sentence clearer. For instance, you could say, "I worry Susan doesn't understand the problem" can initially sound like you cause Susan worry: "I worry Susan..." If leaving out "that" leads to ambiguity, then leave it in.

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

Wilbers, Stephen. (2014). *Mastering the Craft of Writing: How to Write with Clarify, Emphasis, & Style*. Blue Ash, OH: Writer's Digest Books.



Music Review Of Clocks and Clouds

Samantha Stevens



Musician: Of Clocks and Clouds

Album: *Better Off*

Get ready for some intense alternative rock. Brooklyn-based rockers Of Clocks and Clouds have just released their self-produced album *Better Off*. Inspired by The Black Keys, Pink Floyd, Beck, and Queens of the Stone Age, musicians Joe Salgo and Ross Procaccio "pride themselves on standing apart from the shoegaze indie rock scene, which has erupted throughout their hometown" (<http://www.ofclocksandclouds.com/bio/>).

Founded in 2013, Of Clocks and Clouds has achieved a moderate level of success. The band was listed among the "Top 25 New Music Critiques by music Connection" in 2015. Their music has also been featured in online publications such as Artsy Magazine where Huguette Ulysse writes "with a classic punk sound, Of Clocks And Clouds

delivers an enchanting arrangement, accompanied by intensifying interludes and attention grabbing guitar riffs" (<http://www.artsymagazine.com/of-clocks-and-clouds-brings-what-you-need-to-life-with-new-video/>).

Joe and Ross played several venues around New York and Brooklyn prior to the release of *Better Off*, and an album release show at the Studio at Webster Hall on July 16th. But no future dates for live shows have been listed as of yet.

And the music? It's an interesting combination of alternative rock combined with the trippy and ethereal feelings of psychedelic rock. Fans of David Bowie, Radiohead, Beck, and Queens of the Stone Age will love the

genre defining guitar, electronic effects, and bewitching vocals. Although the general theme of the album is of loss and heartache, the feelings brought on by the music are not exclusive to those themes. There is an odd feeling of relaxation while listening to *Better Off*, and audiences may find themselves getting lost in the captivating sounds and rhythms that flow forth in each and every track.

Each track on the album is distinct, bringing listeners a new and unique spin on alternative rock. From the futuristic and heavy "Burn A Hole Pt. 2", which would be perfectly at home in some science fiction movie, to the beautifully mysterious "Untitled Bonus Track", which blends the best elements of techno and psychedelic rock to create a heavenly melody. Even the exotic-feeling tones of "Komorebi" offers listeners a light and uplifting instrumental piece in which Joe and Ross somehow make the typically gruff guitar and electronic effects soft and sensual.

The only downside to *Better Off* is the briefness of the songs and the fact that there are only 8 tracks on the album. For those who are interested in checking out Of Clocks and Clouds's *Better Off*, the album can be bought and streamed from the artists on their [website](#).

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>



In Conversation with Brother Hawk

Wanda Waterman



The Atlanta-based blues-rock quartet Brother Hawk has just released a new album, Big Medicine, a selection of songs from their earlier EPs, and is now promoting it with a summer tour of the USA. J.B. Brisendine (vocals and guitar), Nick Johns (keyboards and vocals), James Fedigan (bass), and Allan Carson (drums) got together in 2010 and by 2014 had made a number of recordings, toured the USA, and founded their own festival in Atlanta called "Brother Hawk's Big Medicine Festival." Recently J.B. Brisendine agreed to answer some of our questions about his musical background, the band, the new album, and the touring life.

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

My parents are huge music lovers. There was always music playing in our house, good blues, Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen. Then in the early

'90s my uncle Kevin (one of our biggest supporters and a generally amazing dude) starting sending us CDs of all the good shit coming out then: Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Nirvana, Alice in Chains ... I was obsessed with all that

stuff at a very early age, and Nick and I actually bonded over that when we met. We were the only two seven-year-olds at our school who knew or cared who Nirvana were.

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?

As a composer and musician, definitely Neil Young. He's my absolute favorite songwriter, and he always does exactly what he wants musically, regardless of what anyone thinks. Personally, I celebrate the guy's entire catalog.

As a human being it's definitely my parents. I am who I am and where I am because of their love and support.

What was the most mesmerizing musical experience of your life?

Seeing Neil Young at The Fox Theatre in Atlanta in 2010. I'd wanted to see him for so long, when the show was about to start I could feel the anticipation building in the crowd and especially in myself. He walked out on stage and the place went insane. He sat at the front of the stage and started singing "My My, Hey Hey," and I just get completely overwhelmed.

When he started the harmonica part I started crying. It was incredible. My entire family loves Neil Young so I always feel them so strong when I listen to his music. I cried a few more times before the show was over. I told my mom about it the next day and she said she saw him twice in the '80s and cried so much both times that her shirt was soaked. His music is just so powerful and special I can't describe it.

How did the band-members meet?

I met Nick in elementary school. We started our first band shortly after with his older brother, Myke. I met James about 10 years ago through some mutual friends trying to start a hardcore band. He was a guitar player at the time, but I talked him into getting bass gear so we could start a band. We played and wrote with a bunch of different people for years but couldn't ever get the right thing going. Most of that time I was telling him about Nick and how insanely good he was. I bothered Nick for about three years until he finally agreed to jam with us, and it just clicked.

Describe a typical rehearsal.

In a typical rehearsal we'll start by running the set for whatever the next show will be, and if we don't fuck it up we'll start working on new songs. We love to work on new material, as I'm sure anyone does. It's always so exciting to be present in that moment where everything comes together.

What inspired the lyrics of "Half Empty?"

"Half Empty" actually came about when I was watching *The Grapes of Wrath* one day. I'd seen it plenty of times but for whatever reason it hit me hard that day and just got me thinking that I truly have no idea what it's like for life to be that rough. Not even close. It's just a song about having some perspective and appreciating what you have.

"Midnight in Tifton?"

The credit for "Midnight in Tifton" goes to my dad (who also plays harmonica)! I was working on the guitar parts for that song on my parents' front porch while they were working in their garden, and my dad started making up and singing this song about how my mom has him locked away in a dungeon. It got into my head immediately and I just started writing lyrics about how they met and their relationship from my dad's perspective.

And I obviously ripped his song for the "she's the one who holds my key, and now she's set me free" line, although with a new sweeter meaning.

How do you manage to balance such a virile rock sound with such amazing passion and tenderness in your songs?

It's nothing intentional, though we do take that as a big compliment. It's just the kind of music we make and the kind of lyrics I write. It's the only way we know how to do it.

Has Atlanta been a positive or negative influence on your work?

I think Atlanta has been a very positive influence. For all its faults it's an amazing city with a lot of wonderful and supportive people that have had a huge impact on us. I can't imagine where we'd be without Atlanta.

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

We're here to share our love with you.

Tell us a little about your day.

I'm at home in bed, but when I wake up tomorrow, I'll take the van and meet the boys at James's house in East Atlanta. We'll hit Aurora Coffee in Little Five Points, then drive to Tuscaloosa, Alabama to play with our buddies, Steels. Should be a killer show!

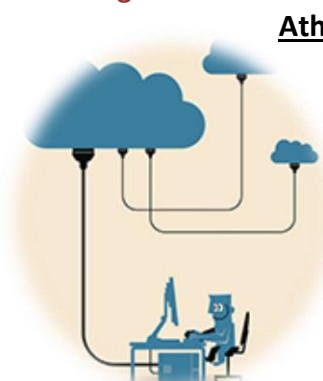
What's your next project?

The biggest thing on our plate at the moment is our fall European tour. We're there September 29 to October 29, mostly Spain but also Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Holland, The Netherlands, and Italy. We're all nervous but very excited!

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

Student Sizzle

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Jay wonders if requests for paper exams are being processed as usual. Zuzie wants to know how to obtain a letter of permission to take a course at another institution.

Other posts include completing that last AU course and courses EDPY 470, LGST 369, MKTG 396, and PSYC 347.

Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets: "...ALL of the Convocation videos from [#AUGrad16!](#) Watch them now: <http://goo.gl/53rQVA> [#AthaU](#)."

[@AthabascaUSU](#) (AUSU) tweets: "Depressed? Try the online Depression Center program - FREE for AUSU members (AUSU/wellness). <http://bit.ly/2a6kHpr>" and "Got exam anxiety? [@AthabascaU](#) has resources that might help! http://counselling.athabascau.ca/exam_anxiety.php ..."

Youtube

Up to your neck in studies this summer? Escape to the beach with this "[Relaxing 3 Hour Video of A Tropical Beach with Blue Sky White Sand and Palm Tree](#)."

AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Fly on the Wall Islands of Education

Jason Sullivan



The classic film *Papillon* illustrates the life of a convict who, immured on an island, counts waves crashing onto the shore and eventually realizes that one out of every seven will carry his raft to freedom. Distance education likewise recounts isolation in a way that no other life experience touches. We students choose our sentence, and when things go well we even adore it. Face to face with our course material we are reborn, like a butterfly out of its cocoon, and there is nothing more liberating to know than that it wasn't the classmates or even the professor who brought us to fruition. It was us and us alone, with help from our tutors along the way. In a sense being marooned is

the essence of both the power and the pitfalls of distance education.

'Wilson!' was a call to arms for people who always wanted an imaginary friend. Love him or hate him, Tom Hanks portrayed something essentially human in the film *Castaway*. The script author, William Boyles, writes of a man whose impeccably authoritarian desire for structure and order falls to pieces when he survives a plane crash. Swept onto an island, he faces his mortality and discovers himself. Most humans would starve in short order and the isolation would be unbearable. So, too, would most students. But 'Chuck' survives his ordeal by systematically rediscovering how to survive. Unlike students in brick and mortar universities, whose hands are held by wonderful mentors at many steps along the way, we distance students must go it alone and forge our own methodologies for academic survival. We become better for it and it isn't easy. But it *is* rewarding.

Lucky to be alive, and arriving on an island the he makes into a home, Chuck learns to use his credit card to scrape limpets off of a rock (Boyles, online). His nourishment comes not from the symbolic power of money but from the visceral power the card provides. Where time had hitherto been his Lord, and the Northern Lights something he ignored, he becomes aware of meteor showers (Boyles, online). When we students are face to face with our course material, with no preponderance of other people physically in our setting, the textbook becomes a direct reflection of our intellectual visage. We are forced to meld with it and it becomes part of us. We learn to see our mental horizons anew. Somehow, as students, we succeed in our courses because the tools of daily life are framed in a new way. And isn't education supposed to be about learning to see the world with new eyes?

Rebirth comes in many forms, and critical thinking is the touchstone. For consideration let us ponder the "truth" of statistics as they relate to the film *Papillon*: "Statistical calculations, however, suggest that in a chaotic sea one wave in every 20 may be about twice the average height; one in every thousand, three times the average height; and that one in every 300,000 waves may be a monster four times as big as usual." If one were to reduce a story of survival to that level, life might become impossibly dull. Yet we students live not in fiction but in a real world, on an island of our own making. We know in our hearts and minds that what we are accomplishing has value that is incommensurable, at times, with social expectations. We learn to assess and understand the world around us in a way that others may not be privy to.

Arts majors in particular are faced with cursorial allusions to "life smarts" over and against "book smarts". Yet

how many people who preach this gospel shift rapidly and vividly to complaints about their own existence? We distance students know well that sometimes virtue is its own reward, and the virtue of a post-secondary education outweighs the dull thud of the mathematical equations that many seek to reduce the universe to. We learn this alone. And the learning empowers us as a star empowers its solar system. We become constellations of intellectual beauty. If that seems a bit overblown just consider how you felt as a person before you began your journey with Athabasca as compared to how you feel today.

Absolutely there are pitfalls to distance education, even when we are successful at it. At the best of times we learn and engage with new material but we rarely do we have direct contact with others of our cohort. I am reminded of Robinson Crusoe who, upon encountering a set of footprints along the beach of his own desert island, is unsure whether they are of his own making or another person. (Defoe, online). Easily we can circle ourselves to death, like a puzzled panther. This is why, as a MAIS student, the online forums and interactions are so vital. At the undergraduate level students probably could use more such interactions because sometimes your daily life and Facebook friends are not going to engage with the material you are immersed in. Yet, the pride and prejudice implicated by our studies is surely outweighed by the absolute joy of accomplishment which the completion of each and every course entails.

I hope I've given a fair testimony to the pleasures and challenges of distance education. In all honesty, my time as an Athabasca University student has been, and continues to be, one of the most enriching experience of my life.

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

Women of Interest

Isobel Moria Dunbar, was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on February 3, 1918, and died November 22, 1999. Isobel immigrated to Canada in 1947 and worked as an ice research scientist. She was one of the first women to be taken on a Canadian Government Icebreaker Cruise. She began her career in Canada working for the Joint Intelligence Bureau, where she gathered information on the movement of ice in the Arctic. Through Dunbar's persistence she was able to overcome the resistance to allowing women on Military Aircraft and Icebreakers, and was one of the first women to fly over the North Pole. As a result of her research: studies on ice conditions in the Canadian North, and later in the USSR and Finland, Isobel wrote many papers and coauthored "Arctic Canada from the Air" with Keith Greenway. Isobel Moria Dunbar received many honors and awards, including the Royal Canadian Geographical Society's Massey Medal in 1972; as well, she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1977.

Additional information about this outstanding woman can be found at the following websites:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moira_Dunbar

<http://www.science.ca/scientists/scientistprofile.php?plD=346>

compiled by Barb Godin



Council Connection June 26, 2016

Alaa Salih

On June 26th at 10:00am, council held its in-person meeting in Edmonton, but members were also allowed to join via teleconference. The meeting was called by President Wasylyshyn. Five councillors attended in person, and one by teleconference, but there were three Councillors who were absent including Philip Kirkbride, Dixie Tolver, and Josh Cross. The meeting was almost exactly one hour long, and brief discussions were made.

The first motion on the agenda was appointing Scott Jacobsen as the AUSU Council representative on the joint AUSU/Voice Action Committee.

The agenda and minutes of previous meetings passed quite quickly, with Council then moving to look at the action plan for AUSU. The time spent reviewing the action plan for the previous meetings was very brief.

The first policy that was reviewed was regarding executive accountability and compensation. This policy is made to ensure the accountability and compensation of AUSU executive Councillors. The policy speaks of time commitment and scheduling, reporting and accountability, and compensation benefits for AUSU executive Councillors. The suggested revisions relate to the banking and taking time in lieu for excess executive hours. For example, executive Councillors will receive equivalent time in lieu for all work, as sanctioned by the executive committee, performed in excess of the base hours per week. Also, another change states that when an executive councillor travels away from home overnight on behalf of AUSU, each full day shall be counted as 10 hours of work, instead of the previous 12 hours of work.

This change to the policy was made retroactive, to deal with the problem that sparked the discussion in the first place, and some Councillors shared their personal views on how this policy will affect them.

On a lighter note, the Councillors were munching on homemade chocolate chip cookies. Andrew Grey, who was attending via teleconference from British Columbia, even joked about sending him some of those delicious cookies. However, we all know that by the time the cookies reach BC, they won't be that delicious anymore.

Moving on, the next policy revision was regarding the joint Council/Voice action plan committee. I think this policy is very important as it directly involves The Voice Magazine. The AUSU Council unanimously passed a motion to work collaboratively with The Voice to help create a meaningful action plan to improve the publication and increase readership by providing non-financial support to The Voice Magazine. The Voice Editor, Karl Low, was even welcome to share his opinion regarding the policy. However, since the policy was very clear, there was little discussion to be made.

During the weekend prior to the meeting, the Councillors spent a great deal of time reviewing AUSU position policies. They discussed possible motions to adopt new policies as well as review or repeal some policies.

Finally came the question and answer period, but there were no questions being asked as it was a brief meeting. The Councillors then started talking about what happened on Friday's June 24th meet and greet. They said it was a huge success, some of AU's faculty members attended and even an AU student. The Councillors were happy to see him, rushing to hand him cookies as a form of welcome, and were impressed at how aware the student was about various student issues and how he was not afraid to question the faculty present about these items. This seemed especially helpful as the student was asking about many of the same things that Council has been asking about as well. The Councillors noted that this meet and greet was nice as it brought distance education students together. I believe these meet and greets should be held more often as they make students feel less alone. Also it helps students understand that there are other people who share similar concerns.

Overall, the meeting was one-hour long, and there were brief discussions throughout the meeting. It was mentioned that the next AUSU Council meeting will be on August 9th, as July will be very hard to book with various holidays, and is also generally a slower period for AUSU. With that, at 11:06am the meeting was adjourned.

Transitioning

Deanna Roney



When I started my last few courses I had an image in mind of what life would be like after graduation. There was an image of writing all day, completing my manuscript, and finding time to garden, kayak, and hike. Images of relaxation with no deadlines, no looming assignments, and no longer counting credits and trying to see how many I can cram into a short amount of time in order to reach convocation. I wrote articles with the intention of talking myself down from striving for graduating in 2016 because of the intense pressure I was putting on myself to get there.

The articles didn't work. The pressure won out. But I did achieve my goal. Degree in hand, I prepared myself to spend my days writing, researching the business, and having some well earned downtime. These things did, and are, happening. However, I found myself experiencing many emotions and reactions I did not expect with graduation: uncertainty, fear, and doubt.

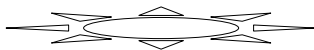
While I worked towards the completion of my degree I was focused, I had an idea of what I wanted at the end, but I did not plan beyond the degree itself. After I completed it, my options were open and that was exactly the way I wanted it, or so I thought. Doing it this way also meant that the first couple months after completing my degree I was left flailing. I had a direction, and a finish line, but I was left looking at three pathways and trying to decide which path would be the best for me to get there. I found anxiety where I thought I was going to feel excitement. Oddly enough, participating in convocation only made this feeling more pronounced. I was throwing ideas and options at myself that I had never before considered, ideas that did not fit into my "end game". I think this came from the overall excitement created around convocation, the feeling of accomplishment, and the pride that seeped through my bones. I didn't want it to end.

Part of what complicates this transitioning period for me is that what I want to pursue is not considered realistic by many standards. Success within it comes with time, patience, persistence, and thick skin. I have a new appreciation for the days it took to get assignments back, because there was (comparatively) instant feedback. Now, I have learned that with writing, feedback (if there is any) takes months. And the feedback will generally consist of a simple yes or no. Occasionally writers get more beyond that but this seems to be the exception to the rule, more often there is none at all.

This transition was something I didn't expect, but it has been a learning experience. I have learned to be patient with myself, to give myself the time I need to make a decision, and to allow myself to obsess over the choice for awhile. In allowing myself this time to breathe, to work on my garden, to write, to research, I trust I will make the right-for-me choice. I do not believe there is a "wrong" choice, per-se, which makes it that much harder. In this struggle I reached out to a tutor for advice, and within a thorough and thoughtful email she quoted Joseph Campbell, and said to follow your bliss. This has perhaps been the best advice. And it is something which echoes through my mind with each path I consider. I ask myself, is this choice the best path to lead me to my bliss? To the thing I want most? If the answer is no, I put a ribbon across that trail and consider it closed. Being able to

ribbon paths off is a privilege which comes with this education, though it is one which I still need to get comfortable with.

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



The Writer's Toolbox An Aside, Part I

Christina M. Frey

Stumped by parentheses and parentheticals? In this mini-series we'll look at parentheses and when and how to use them in your writing. In fact, once you've got their capitalization, punctuation, and nesting rules down, you'll find that they're quite easy to use (easy to overuse too, but we'll get to that later).

Though parentheses are also used for citations in running text, in this series I'll focus on parentheses used to interject, to insert a thought or explanation or clarification—in other words, used to convey information that's not necessarily at the same level of importance as the surrounding text. That's not to say the information is unimportant. Sometimes parentheses contain an important clarification, even if it's less central than the word or phrase or concept it's clarifying. But in many cases, especially in informal writing, parentheticals truly are parentheticals in the colloquial sense: nice-to-know information, a bit of whispered now-you-know it gossip whispered in the ear.

How Short Can You Go?

First, to dispel a myth: there are no rules on how long or short the material in the parentheses should be. Parentheses can enclose a full sentence, a single punctuation mark, or anything in between.

Example A: He agreed to do the job for "as much vodka as I can drink" (!), but he completed it on time and to my satisfaction.

Example B: He completed the job to my satisfaction. (And yes, I did give him the vodka.)

This also applies to situations where the parentheses enclose information that performs more of an explanatory role than offering an aside—like giving a common abbreviation, especially one that might be used more frequently than the full phrase:

Example C: He wrote about the constant fear of encountering improvised explosive devices (IEDs).



When?

Parentheticals really aren't tricky to use, as long as you keep the punctuation right. It's the *when* that is often the tougher call.

And that's a matter of register—like most stylistic choices.

Parentheticals offer a little something extra to the reader. When that something is an explanation or clarification (as in Example C), parentheses might not be out of place in, say, academic or business writing.

But parentheses enclosing casual asides don't make sense in that context, because they're just too informal for the nature of the piece.

In fiction or more informal pieces (like this article), you have a bit more flexibility—because you're engaging the reader on a more casual level, the conversational tone is expected. But be aware that even in this situation, parentheses can be overdone.

Because (as this sentence shows), a lot of parentheticals back to back (or side by side or in nearby paragraphs) can break up the sentence (or make the flow choppy) and get incredibly annoying (and/or read like a middle schooler's diary). They're like italics—a well-placed parenthetical can be very effective to shift the tone of a sentence or paragraph. But they should be used sparingly, a finishing touch rather than the main event.

Nested Parentheses

It's rare that you need to include a parenthetical within a parenthetical, but it can happen, especially if you're working with references. Know your style guide here, as practices differ. *Chicago* style prefers square brackets nested inside parentheses:

Example D: Set up multiple sets of parentheses like this (main text [and the nested parenthetical like this]).

Other styles, particularly in UK English, use sets of nested parentheses:

Example E: Set up multiple sets of parentheses like this (main text (and the nested parenthetical like this (and still further nested parentheticals like this))).

Either way, treat the parentheses like a Matrioshka doll—each complete set within the next biggest. Count them up and don't leave off the closing parenthesis!

Now that we've gotten some of the basics out of the way, it's time for a look at a few of the more technical aspects of using parentheses—how they interact with capitalization and punctuation rules. In next week's installment we'll take on when to capitalize parentheticals, where to put the punctuation, and what to do when you need to fit two sentences into a single set of parentheses.

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



Saved the Day

We spent Sunday celebrating at our son's house near Sherwood Park. It was Greg's suggestion that we do something bigger than just dinner out to mark Hilary's latest achievement. They have a large house that is very conducive to entertaining large groups. After clearing it with Hilary, we were happy to begin planning.

It's been a tough slog but our girl has a way of finishing what she starts. While working full-time for a national company she earned a Master of Arts degree in Professional Communication from Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC. This two-year program coincided with the Fort McMurray wildfire and some of the biggest challenges in the Alberta economy to face industry in a very long time. Communicating the company's plans during a contraction in the economy and amid hundreds of layoffs required a lot of meetings, overtime, and travel. Through it all, she performed beautifully.

As for many of us, Hilary's path from Point A to Point B isn't always the shortest or most direct route. Like many eighteen year olds she began her studies at the University of Alberta. By the end of her second year, she had a full-time dream job at the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation. To her credit, she didn't quit school. She took a smaller course load and juggled a demanding fulltime job, school, and the usual young-woman-in-the-city activities. Eventually, she decided that earning her MA would broaden her options and so she set her sights on that goal.

Hence the party. We chose to simplify our lives somewhat by getting most of the meal catered. I ordered a DQ ice cream cake. I brought vases from home and did four different floral arrangements. The most fun was selecting and printing fourteen different grad/success type quotes that I stuck to the wall with painter's tape. From a goofy one (Thank you Google, Wikipedia, and whoever invented copy and paste) to solemn ones, I loved the search and the selection. When Dr. Seuss says---" You've got brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You

can steer yourself any direction you choose."---you know you've hit pay dirt. When Ellen Degeneres says, "Life is like one big Mardi Gras. But instead of showing your boobs, show people your brain, and if they like what they see, you'll have more beads than you know what to do with."

The guest list consisted of our smallish family, her godfather and his wife, and just four of her friends. The crowd ranged in age from eighty-four years to about six months. Two of the men are engaged. One of the other guests is a confirmed curmudgeon who rails against anything less than mainstream narrow-mindedness. Luckily, there were no fireworks in this diverse crowd. It helps when the group and space are large enough for several small group discussions on a variety of topics. On Sunday, Trump talk saved the day, more than once, 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

Separate Paths

Dear Barb:

I have a friend of about fifteen years, Maureen, who, up until a few years ago, I got along great with. But then she said something about my boyfriend that I really didn't appreciate. We discussed this and I thought we would but able to move on, but the relationship has never been the same. That event changed my opinion of who Maureen is, to the point where I am not sure she is a person I want to spend a lot of time with. I have struggled with this, as we were such good friends prior and I hoped we would be good friends again, but I am beginning to doubt that will ever happen. Should I be able to get over this? Am I at fault? Looking forward to your opinion, Sylvia.

Hi Sylvia:

I don't think who's at fault is important in this scenario. Often long term relationships change over time. Sometimes nothing happens to trigger this change, people just change and require something different from their relationships. If you have both talked this over and you continue to feel differently toward your friend, maybe some distance would be a good thing for now. You may end up coming back together or growing further apart. The important thing is to accept this change and not look for fault in either of you. Thanks, Sylvia, and I hope this helps.

Dear Barb:

My wife and I have been married five years and we both work full time. We have no children yet, so we have a lot of free time. The problem is that I want to go out and do stuff with my wife while she wants to stay home and read! Sometimes I feel totally ignored by her. I have mentioned my feelings to my wife, but she says she loves to read and that I should go out and do what I want to do without her. Do you think she's using reading as a way to avoid spending time with me? Thanks Tom.

Hi Tom:

Reading can become an escape, or an addiction for many women, while some simply enjoy a good book. When you say you want to do stuff with your wife, do you mean stuff that you want to do, or stuff that she wants to do. If she doesn't enjoy the activities you are suggesting, then I can see her rationale that you should do what you want and she will do what she wants to do. I think you might want to take the time to sit down and decide what type of activities you both like to do, whether that is bike riding, bowling, golf or hiking, whatever. You can still do activities separately that you each enjoy and come together for mutual activities. Relationships are all about compromise and acceptance on the part of both individuals. Thanks for your question.

Follow Barb on Twitter @BarbGod

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: ON MONOGAMY



IF I say I'M AGAINST monogamy a single chicky-poo will ditch me like a a bad cheque.



On the other hand, if I say I'm FOR monogamy a married chicky-poo will ask, "IF you're for monogamy, why are you hitting on a dame who's hitched?"



So now I say I'm for ME-nogamy, and when they ask me what that means I just say, "Come back to the Chazz-pad and I'll show you!"



I should be getting some nibbles soon.

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



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Advocacy Efforts with CASA

Every year, CASA (Canadian Alliance of Students' Associations) gathers its 21 member schools together from across Canada to prioritize issues students are facing to advocate about to the federal government. AUSU members have very unique challenges, so it is important for AUSU to be at the CASA table to raise concerns that might otherwise would not be raised.

This year, AUSU has seats on two CASA committees as well as a CASA board position. In June, CASA had a working retreat for the board to meet in person and discuss the plan of action for the coming year. The AUSU VP External (VPEX) attended this retreat as a member of the CASA board to raise issues important to AU students.

One topic that was addressed was the "Pan Canadian Accord". This is discussed every year by CASA, but never became a priority because it is a long term goal. This could greatly benefit AUSU members, however, by addressing the need for inter-provincial agreements to help regulate tuition, make it easier for students to transfer between schools across Canada, and could help AU eliminate higher out of province fees. AUSU VPEX Brandon Simmons was able to get the board to identify this as a long term project that can be worked on in various committees.

This is only one instance where AUSU's heavy involvement with CASA has allowed the unique needs of AU students to be heard. AUSU is capitalizing on our elected positions with CASA's Federal Policy and Trades and Technology Committees to create policies that reflect the values of students at AU. If you have any questions, contact the VPEX at vpex@ausu.org.



IMPORTANT DATES

- **July 29:** August course extension deadline
- **Aug 4:** [AU Open House Webinar](#)
- **Aug 9:** AUSU Council Meeting
- **Aug 10:** Deadline to register in a course starting Sep 1
- **Aug 15:** Sept degree requirements deadline
- **Aug 31:** September course extension deadline
- **Sept 6:** [AU Open House Webinar](#)

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The Mobile app features lots of campus activity, so it's a great way to talk to other students, get support, and share your experiences at AU!

In the past 9 months, there have been **over 10,000 conversations, 6,000 chats, and hundreds of friendships made** in the Mobile App! There are numerous chat groups, such as study buddy, meet-ups, and overseas connection.

You can also use the app to build study habits, find links to AU and AUSU services, links, and discounts, view courses and programs at AU, find out more about your AU Students' Union, keep track of events and deadlines, and more!



CLASSIFIEDS

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

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