

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 25 Issue 12 2017-03-31

Listening to Students

The Third-Party Review in Review

Motivation

The Darker Side of Distance Ed

Survival in the Garret

Starving Artist Tips for Students

Plus:

*Book Review: Play the Devil
Chazz Bravado, Male Feminist
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

Karl Low

The Uncharted Future



This week, we have a couple of new writers who are testing the waters of The Voice Magazine. Sarah Joseph brings us a book review from a new New York writer, and Tara Howse brings us a story that I don't often see reflected in these pages, but I know happens to many AU students—the story of when a student starts wondering if the effort and years-long dedication required to graduate from Athabasca University are really worth it. As she's nearing her graduation this year, you can guess what the answer turned out to be, but she shares with us how she came to it.

So if you're a student who's starting to deal with those feelings, at least you know you're not alone, and perhaps her article, "Motivation" will give you just that.

Our feature article this week, however, is a wrap-up of the third-party review, this time from fellow student Barb Lehtiniemi. I know I've been writing a lot about this review, but it is possibly one of the most significant things that will direct what happens to AU in the future. With just over two years left until the next Alberta election, however, I'm worried that there simply may not be the time there to be able to

fully implement the changes before AU may be dealing with a new government. The NDP's current popularity is running extremely low, and though economists are predicting that 2017 and 2018 are likely to be strong years for the province, it remains to be seen what the political changes that are happening in Alberta right now will eventually lead to.

For those unaware, Jason Kenney, former Cabinet Minister in Mr. Harper's government, has been elected as the leader of the Alberta Progressive Conservatives, and is currently proposing a union with the Wildrose Party. Most right-wing commentators predict that such a union would then be able to oust the NDP in the coming election. I'm not entirely sure I agree with this assessment, but neither can I say it's improbable. Both of these parties lean ideologically to the right, and both have a history of looking to post-secondary education as one of the easiest places to cut funding from to deal with their priorities of deficit and tax reduction, as post-secondary students typically don't vote. As such, if this does happen, and the NDP are removed, AU can expect that any recommendations from the third party review that suggested additional funding will be quickly shelved to a back-burner, likely with assurances that they would be considered once the province was on a more fiscally sound footing.

It's also not a done deal that any such union will happen. There are a number of people in the PC party who are simply uncomfortable with some of the more socially conservative views held by a good portion of the Wildrose party, and it's been already acknowledged that any such union would see the PC party being dissolved into the Wildrose party, and not the reverse.

So it's still early days yet, there are far more questions than answers, and we're not sure what the review will say in any event. So, until we have more information, then, there's not much to do but enjoy the read!

Handwritten signature of Karl Low.

Listening to Students AU's Third Party Review in Review

Barbara Lehtiniemi



One error universities routinely make is ignoring their students' opinions. Universities are notorious for making ivory-tower decisions based on a business model, factoring in the dollars and cents and focussing on the bottom line. It seems they can sometimes lose sight of their reason for being, which is to provide a service to their students.

AU students have had a unique opportunity recently to help AU provide the best possible service to its students. The Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education directed AU's Board of Governors to hire a third-party to help develop a long-term sustainability strategy

for AU. And this third-party has been listening to students.

On February 28, every AU student received an e-mail invitation from Dr. Ken Coates, who is undertaking the independent third-party review. Dr. Coates invited students to participate in the review by sharing their "invaluable perspective on the operations, contributions, and challenges of Athabasca University." Students were invited to send their comments by e-mail, or join in one of three teleconferences the week of March 6 to 10.

Given the number of students who respond with social-media hand-wringing each time some media outlet runs a story on AU's sustainability, one would think the phone lines at Dr. Coates's teleconferences two weeks ago would have been jammed with students vying to have their voices heard. Instead, only a few dozen students chose to participate in this seldom-available opportunity to be heard.

The teleconferences were held on three different days (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) and at three different times of day (afternoon, evening, and morning.) I attended the Wednesday evening session. Only a dozen or so other students attended that session, consequently everyone had ample opportunity to speak.

Dr. Coates began the teleconference session to explain about the third-party review. The guiding principles of the review, said Coates, were provided by Alberta's Advanced Education Minister Hon. Marlin Schmidt. The review itself is intended to be a "broad brush" look at AU: there is nothing that can't be considered at this point. Dr. Coates emphasized the Alberta's government commitment to have AU continue, to keep the university in Alberta, and to avoid job-cutting as a short-term solution.

Dr. Coates explained that, prior to the series of teleconferences for students, he had conducted meetings and engaged in phone calls with AU faculty and other stakeholders including alumni and the student associations. Dr. Coates said he'd already received a few hundred e-mails from students in response to his invitation.

Dr. Coates then invited the students present to share their thoughts on what works well at AU, what doesn't, and what students see as the way forward. Here are some of the comments students shared:

A student from Winnipeg expressed concern about what would happen to programs in progress if AU ends up amalgamating with another institution. Dr. Coates replied that if such an amalgamation were to occur, students would typically be able to finish their program without interruption or major changes.

An Ottawa student pointed out that, contrary to what he expected from an open university, AU is very Alberta-centric. He suggested that AU could put more resources into developing the niche group of mature, life-long learners, regardless of where they are.

A student from rural Alberta said she got her first degree from the University of Alberta. AU gave her the flexibility she needed to go on to get her master's degree because she could study part-time, something U of A didn't permit. She suggested that AU could develop their master's programs more and build on that niche market.

Tom from Australia said he recently graduated from a master's program at AU. He selected AU after checking programs at universities in Australia and around the world. Tom said he was surprised that AU was a lot cheaper than other options—perhaps AU is undercharging international students.

Throughout the call, Dr. Coates listened to each student and asked thoughtful questions. The students participating seemed relieved that someone was actually listening to them and taking them seriously. Although there weren't many students there—the other two teleconferences were also lightly attended—students expressed passion for AU and a concern for its—and their—future.

The teleconference opportunities are now over. As of March 8, Dr. Coates said he'd received over 300 e-mails from students, and he encouraged students to continue to send him their thoughts on AU. A first draft of the report is due to be submitted to the Alberta Government and Board of Governors at the beginning of April, but the final, complete report will only be submitted at the end of the month.

For more information on AU's third-party review, read "[Athabasca University: The future starts now](#)" on the AU news page. You can reach Dr. Coates with your comments on AU's future at kennethcoates@gmail.com.

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



From the PSE News Desk

What's making the news in Post-Secondary Education.

Who wants a big fat salary, anyway? English majors and philosophers get shafted again on the salary scale. According to this RBC Royal Bank article, [Top Ten Most Valuable Degrees in Canada](#), a Statistics Canada [report](#) suggests that engineering- and business-related degree holders pull in the highest salaries after graduation. If your top priority is an average salary of over \$100K, you'll want to be studying Business (Management Sciences) or Chemical Engineering. If money isn't your primary concern, study whatever makes you happy.

Survival in the Garret

12 Starving Artist Tips for Cash-Strapped Students

Wanda Waterman



Should you find yourself at some point in your academic career in sore need of wherewithal, don't take it hard. After all, the student years are typically times of scarcity; it's the price you pay for getting the credentials you need to launch a career.

Besides, it's not such a bad experience. The money-saving lessons you learn during these lean years may not brighten up your résumé, but they will add to your arsenal of survival skills and may even help you fatten your bank account later. Simple living isn't just for the poor: It's a life-enhancing adventure that keeps you

focussed on the things that really matter.

Sure, your mom has probably given you great penny-pinching advice, as have your friends or even those housekeeping tips book, which are as fun to read as they are useful (the *Hints From Heloise* books are indispensable). But the *extreme* moneysaving tips come from the people whose poverty is rarely a temporary condition.

Most artists, given the choice, would love to freely create art while making stacks of money doing so. Unfortunately, the choice is usually between making art and making money, and any artist who's sincere will choose the art. That's how stupid we are.

Add to this that artists appreciate the finer things in life, like good food, chic clothing, cultural events, and travel, and you'll understand why the artist has such a strong motivation to spend wisely.

These tips can also be helpful to rich investors on the way to their next million, or to those who need to scrimp for a while to save enough money for a major purchase like a car, a new house, or even concert tickets. And if you ever do decide to become a starving artist yourself, you'll be good and ready.

1. Become a snob.

My theatre friends and I used to stop in front of a classy store on our way to the café just to mock the furniture in the window. It was nice furniture—the kind of stuff we would have bought if only we could. But because we couldn't afford it we called it bourgeois and pretentious. It sure felt good.

We didn't go out to dinner because a good meal couldn't be found anywhere any more. We didn't go to the cinema because the new movies were all crap. We made fun of the styles of new clothes so we could feel better about our worn-out togs, whose high quality and advanced age helped us cultivate the look of the shabby genteel. Yup, a little snobbery can save you a heap of dough.

2. Double Your Money

What's the best way to double your money? Fold it in half and put it back in your wallet, at least according to Will Rogers, also famous for this: "Too many people spend money they haven't earned, to buy things they don't want, to impress people that they don't like."

Stop worrying about keeping up with the Joneses, impressing the smart set, or possessing all those useless things the advertisers tell you you're lost without. Live life, and enjoy it on your own terms.

3. Become a hunter of thrift stores, yard sales, and online classified ad services.

Even many get-rich programs recommend this. Your clothes are going to look second-hand after a couple of wearings, so why not save at least 75% on your clothing bill by buying second-hand to begin with? You'll be able to afford better quality, which will mean less shopping in the long run. The second-hand marketplace is also a great place to look for kitchen appliances, linens, books, music, and movies.

Bring a list of the things you need to the thrift store and try to buy just what's on the list (unless of course you find something wonderful for under a dollar). Think ahead—if you know you'll need boots next winter and you see the ideal pair, force yourself to get them even if it's the middle of July.

4. Become a wardrobe minimalist.

Create a system. Keep only enough outfits to get you to wash day. Ask yourself what you would wear if you could only wear three or four outfits, and aim to stick to that, making sure you're ready for any occasion that truly does spring up in your life (yes to a nice outfit to wear to your best friend's wedding, no to the designer suit you'd wear if you ever got invited to a polo match).

5. Enjoy free entertainment.

Going for walks, talking, sitting on the grass, telling stories, visiting the library, taking in free events, and playing music are all examples of edifying ways to relax without having to pay anything. Think of what your ancestors did for fun before the digital age and do that. And remember, less money for entertainment gives you more time to study, thus upping the probability of academic success.

6. Cook in your coffeemaker.

Okay, so this doesn't apply to everyone, but if you ever do find yourself stranded somewhere without a stove and no restaurant

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

Business Undergraduate Info Session

Monday, April 3, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT
Online

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabasca.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-information-session-copy-copy/

register online at above address

AU Open House & Info Session

Tuesday, April 4, 10:00 to 11:00 am MDT
Online

Hosted by Athabasca University

www.athabasca.ca/discover/open-house/

register online at above address

second session: Tuesday, April 4, 6:00 to 7:00 pm MDT

AU Executive MBA Info Session - Calgary

Tuesday, April 4, 12:00 to 1:30 pm MDT

Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel, 110 9th Avenue SE, Calgary AB

In-person

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabasca.ca/event-details/athabasca-university-executive-mba-information-session-calgary-2/

register online at above address

The Use and Abuse of Paraphrases and Quotations in Academic Writing

Tuesday, April 4, 1:30 to 2:30 pm MDT
Online

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Graduate Studies

fgs.athabasca.ca/news/presentations/

e-mail fgseducation@athabasca.ca to register

AU Executive MBA Info Session - Calgary

Tuesday, April 4, 5:00 to 6:30 pm MDT

Delta Calgary South, 135 Southland Drive SE, Calgary AB

In-person

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabasca.ca/event-details/athabasca-university-executive-mba-information-session-calgary-3/

register online at above address

budget, you can get a lot of mileage out of a simple drip coffeemaker. Aside from making coffee and tea, you can cook eggs (soft-cooked, 25 minutes), noodles, white sauce, and soup in them. (I learned this when we got a great deal on an apartment because it had no fridge and stove— but then had to wait a week before getting our own.)

You can also get plenty of culinary use from just a hot plate, or just a microwave. I've heard of people cooking on steam irons but haven't tried it.

7. Sprout!

This and the next couple of items follow the understanding that you don't need to compromise nutrition to save money. Invest in a cheap sprouter or rig up your own and then buy a small bag of mung beans, alfalfa, or radish seeds. Do a little research to find out how it's done, and you can enjoy a constant daily supply of fresh organic veg you grew yourself.

8. Take a daily multivitamin.

Get a big bottle on sale. At \$10 a bottle (120 pills should last four months) it's one of the cheapest ways to maintain good health.

9. Consume whole foods and pay less for them.

Look for cheap but healthy alternatives to what you're eating now, moving toward more whole, natural foods. Switch from coffee to green tea, which can be had at amazingly low prices from many ethnic grocery stores. And if you've ever considered going vegetarian, now would be a great time. Cornmeal is one of the cheapest forms of protein, so replace your instant cheesy pasta with polenta. Peanut butter, hummus, and homemade granola are also good but cheap alternatives to meat.

10. Use luggage as furniture.

If you need to move around a lot you can't be bothered with the hassle and expense of buying and moving "real" furniture, especially if you'll only be forced to give it all away when you need to relocate.

Collect vintage suitcases that can both help you move and serve as furniture in the interim. A stack of three suitcases makes a great night table. A suitcase open on its side makes a great little bookcase for stacking your tomes. A guitar case can serve as a coffee table. Use your imagination and make your gear do double duty. Portable mattresses with their own carrying handles will always find a use, so are also a good investment for nomads.

More AU-thentic Events

Upcoming AU Related Events

AU Executive MBA Info Session - Edmonton

Wednesday, April 5, 12:00 to 1:30 pm MDT
The Westin Edmonton, 10135 100 Street NW,
Edmonton AB

In-person

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabascau.ca/event-details/athabasca-university-executive-mba-information-session-edmonton-3/
register online at above address

AU Executive MBA Info Session - Edmonton

Wednesday, April 5, 5:00 to 6:30 pm MDT
DoubleTree by Hilton West Edmonton, 16615
109 Avenue, Edmonton AB

In-person

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabascau.ca/event-details/athabasca-university-executive-mba-information-session-edmonton-4/
register online at above address

Looking ahead...

AU Student Town Hall with President Neil Fassina - Edmonton

Tuesday, April 11, 12:00 to 1:30 pm MDT
Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, 600-9990
Jasper Avenue, Edmonton AB

In-person/teleconference

Hosted by Athabasca University

news.athabascau.ca/news/student-town-hall-president-neil-fassina/
e-mail

EdmontonStudentRSVP@athabascau.ca by
April 3 to RSVP or request teleconference
option

11. Visit the bucket and plunger laundrette.

There will be days when you're sure not to have coin for the laundromat, so to be sure your vestments will be kept clean and fresh invest in a plunger (separate from the one you use for "harder" jobs) and a tallish bucket. Fill a third of the bucket with dirty clothes and a bit of detergent, then top up with water. The wash cycle will take 100 plunges, the rinse cycle 50. Two rinse cycles are recommended. Wring it all out and suspend it from hangers on the shower curtain rod to drip dry.

12. Do you really need so much soap, shampoo, and toothpaste?

I just heard a dermatologist on the CBC saying that except for our hands and our naughty bits, our skin doesn't really need to be lathered up all the time. As for shampoo, you can dilute a teaspoon with water and just lather your scalp. And by now you probably know that toothpaste doesn't have much use except for delivering fresh breath and fluoride, and that you don't need more than a pea-sized smidgen of it per use.

For more information and inspiration, check out these links:

- [Money saving tips from a not-so-starving artist](#)
- [Who better than 'starving artists' to offer advice on how to live within a tight budget?](#)
- [15 Simple Ways to Save Money on Real Food](#)
- [31 extreme money-saving tips from the cheapest of the cheap](#)

And if you have any tips of your own, we'd love to hear them!

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

Richard posts a milestone selfie as he submits the final assignment for his degree. Micheal seeks other students' thoughts on the Bachelor of Management Marketing Major 4-year program. Lena wonders if it's possible to reinstate a course she withdrew from by mistake. Other posts include the proof in the parchment, cats, murders, ethics courses, and study tips for IDRL 308.

Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets: "Transfer credits?! [#askAU](#) [#athaU](#) Learn about transfer credit here: <http://ow.ly/UXez30ae7FW>."

[@AthabascaUSU](#) (AUSU) tweets: "AUSU is hiring a new full-time executive director. The deadline to apply is April 3, 2017. Find out more or apply at <http://bit.ly/2mtXAOI>."

[@AthabascaUBiz](#) tweets: "The world's only hockey specific MBA, learn more about the [#AthaUBiz](#) [#HockeyMBA](#) <http://business.athabascau.ca/hockey-mba>."

Youtube

Watch [Simon Fraser University](#) prank their students with a chairless campus for AFD 2013 in "[SFU launches 'healthy campus' initiative](#)."



The Social Student

Thesis Research with Pinterest

Marie Well



Do you want to use social media in your thesis research? Many do. But maybe you see no point in learning social media research. I thought similarly—that is, until I realized that small tweaks can make for amazing transformations.

Take anxiety, for instance. A slight change in your thoughts can actually cure you. Similarly, a slight change to your social media learning curve can make your research faster, easier—and better.

Perhaps you want to do a study on how people in the mental health sphere view mental health pins on Pinterest. Whether or not you do, below is a snapshot of what such a social media study might look like.

Step 1: Set up a Pinterest business account for your academic profile.

If you have a Pinterest business account, you can promote your pin—in other words, advertise your pin.

Go to <https://business.pinterest.com/en> and sign up for your Pinterest business account. Give your business a name. I might name my business account after my thesis topic—for instance, "Perceptions of Mental Health Research."

You'll need to wait up to three weeks to get approved for a Pinterest business account. If you don't get approved, set up a personal Pinterest account and forget about advertising your pin. Instead, you will go gung-ho on step 6 below.

Step 2: Make the pin you intend to promote on Pinterest.

Make your promotional pin. Use free design software like that at canva.com to do so. Perhaps title the pin "Voice your concerns about mental health ... Click to participate in a graduate thesis survey." But be careful of your choice of promotional image—you don't want to bias participant views.

In less than five minutes, I created a promotional pin in canva.com using a free template with text I modified. This is what the promotional pin looks like.



Step 3: Link your pin to your online survey.

When you upload the above pin in Pinterest, edit it. Specifically, link your pin to your Google Forms survey URL or other online survey. This way, when people click on your pin, they will go directly to your survey.

Step 4: Gather your pins for your visual research.

You can start by going to Pinterest and doing a search for "mental health." Then, take the top five or so pins for your visual research. Here is an example of one pin: (Pin sourced at <https://themighty.com/2017/01/schizophrenic-nyc-what-people-with-mental-illness-are/> March 26, 2017)

Put the top five pins you found on a Pinterest board you create. But be sure to make your promotional pin (in step 2 above) the first pin you post—as the first pin posted gets featured at the top of your board.

By putting these pins on your board, you have a record of your research. You'll thank me come citation time.

Step 5: Make your online survey.

As a survey question, you could ask, "Do you think this pin leads people to view mental health with (1) a lot more stigma, (2) somewhat more stigma, (3) neither more or less stigma, (4) somewhat less stigma, or (5) a lot less stigma." You could follow up with an open-ended question like "Why do you believe these pins might lead others to view mental health with the level of stigma you indicated?"

Also, you can use Window's free snipping tool to take screenshots of the pins on Pinterest. Once you have the screenshots, add them to your survey questions in Google Forms or other online surveys. Google Forms allows you to add videos or photos to your surveys.

Step 6: Follow all the mental health pinners for thirty days.

This is especially vital if you didn't get approved for a business account. Whether you got approved or not, follow all pinners that show up for a Pinterest search of the words "mental health advocates" or "mental health practitioners" or simply "mental health." Follow all pinners in your target categories—following the daily maximum amount Pinterest will allow. Follow the maximum amount every day for about thirty days, advises viral YouTube blogger "Lazy Ass Stoner." In return, many will follow you back—and a portion of those might fill out your survey.

You can also message your followers to fill out your survey via private messages. Or you could use Pinterest's messaging feature to email the pin (or board) to mental health practitioners and advocates.

Step 7: Promote your pin if you've got a business account.

When promoting your Pinterest pin in your business account, use keywords like "mental health practitioners" or "mental health advocates" or "mental health patients." Then set a daily budget and a campaign start and end date. This will help you reach more than just the people who followed you on Pinterest. But, again, you need to get approved for the Pinterest business account for this to work.

Step 8: Put a link to your Pinterest board on all of your social media sites.

Advertise your Pinterest board or pin across your social media platforms. But, if you're weak on the social media, then consider Facebook advertising your pin image (in step 2 above).

Step 9: Await the responses.

That's a rough idea on how to make a research project on Pinterest. Pinterest is sprouting in academic research, so harvest that visual forest—one tweak at a time.



The Creative Spark

Read Not Just Minds, but Between the Lines

Marie Well



Do you try to read minds? Well, reading minds can hurt you or help you, depending on your style.

For instance, Judith Weston, in her book, *The Film Director's Intuition*, approaches script analysis by finding three ways to interpret character actions—line-by-line—kind of like reading minds. Yes, directors have it tough. Not only do they read Shakespeare, but they analyze Romeo's motives from multiple angles—line-by-line. But let's face it, directors and actors don't read scriptwriter's minds. Nor should they. Why? Because the director or actor has his or her own inner world.

For instance, you could read my motives in ways my loving papa never would. And the person who loves you most would read your motives differently than your arch-enemy would.

But my boyfriend often interprets my motives better than I could myself. He has the intuition of someone tied into a higher consciousness.

Yes, reading minds, when done with multiple possible explanations, can enhance awareness. But reading minds, when done as a knee jerk reaction, can get you into trouble. That's why you need to learn not just to read minds, but to read between the lines.

Judith Weston (in bold below) shows you how to read minds in script analysis. I show you how to read between the lines in your essays.

Typically, one or two facts define the character the most. For instance, if you are writing about King David in the Bible, the two defining facts about him include (1) he is a warrior King and (2) he loves God. Similarly, with any character you write about, find the two defining features—and react to them in your analysis.

Also, find the central facts that define the authors you cite. Perhaps the author on inclusive education has a grown son with a developmental disability. Once you find the central facts, react with your own insights. For instance, you could react by saying, "I read a book by a high-profile prof who had a learning disability. And he fought against a lifetime of segregation into 'special classes'." True story.

Find the defining facts and relate to them or resist them.

Ask yourself questions of characters, such as "What is omitted?" and "What are the characters' values and weaknesses?" and "What ugly truth do the characters hide about themselves?" We know that King David knocked out Goliath with a slingshot, but we know little about Goliath's story. Was he a shoddy shoe cobbler who had to rely on killing for a living? Did his wife plea for him to stop battling the day David shot him? Was Goliath macho with an intellectual inferiority complex? Ask the ugly truth.

Delve into the secrets and omissions of characters and authors you cite.

When reading dense Shakespeare, translate each line into everyday English line-by-line. Similarly, when reading feminist Camille Paglia, or other prolific academics, translate every dense paragraph into plain English. I think Camille likes to write intellectual gobbledygook—but that's how you get tenure. But, to understand her writing, simplify whole pages of thick prose to a handful of short ideas. Or go line-by-line, translating each sentence to something you'd say to a junior high kid.

But, the most mysterious line in a script may be the most important. If you're reading an article, and you just can't figure out a paragraph, dissect it. When you simplify a tricky paragraph, like cracking a code, you might expose a gem.

Now, go comment on Romeo and Juliet as if you were feminist Camille Paglia herself. As a thought experiment, take Paglia's feminist commentary and copy and paste it into three unique interpretations of Romeo's line-by-line motives. Then, psychoanalyze Camille. A paradox? I call it a creative spark.



Women of Interest

Amanda C. J. Vincent was born in 1960. She graduated from University of Western Ontario with a Bachelor of Science and earned her PhD from the University of Cambridge, England. Vincent is a Canadian marine biologist who spent her career studying, at length, the seahorse population. Vincent's studies led the seahorse population being added to the list of species that may possibly face extinction unless trade is controlled. Currently, she is the Chair of Marine Conservation at the Fisheries Centre at the University of British Columbia. Vincent has written scores of scientific and technical articles on seahorses and their relatives and has co-authored a book on international trade in seahorses. As well, Vincent's work has been televised globally in five full length programs. Her awards and honors are far-reaching. Further information on Amanda Vincent may be found at the following websites:

<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/marine-fellows/fellows-directory/2000/amanda-vincent>

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

<http://www.projectseahorse.org/amanda-vincent>

Motivation

Tara Howse



I registered for my first Athabasca course back in 2008 and, after nine years, I am nearly finished, anticipating a completion date this summer (2017).

Distance education is not easy. It requires dedication and commitment at a greater level than the standard on-campus post-secondary experience. I assume most students are quite like myself: juggling multiple responsibilities such as work and family.

I don't remember how many times I've wanted to quit. One of my greatest

difficulties with keeping motivated to complete my undergraduate degree is my perception of a lack of forward motion. Despite being able to transfer a significant portion of my diploma, by only managing one or two courses per year my graduation date was always some far-off date that was being approached at a snail's pace. It can be demoralizing at times. After spending the time and energy completing a course, to look at your graduation requirements and still see a large number of courses staring back? The feelings of defeat engulf you.

I often found myself questioning why I should continue studying. Trying to find the drive to sit down at the computer after a full day's work to read or write a paper can be daunting. With no one to talk to, no study buddy, no group to engage in any type of discussion, the distance education experience can be isolating and time consuming. It's easy to wonder what the point is of carrying on with the stress and financial burden toward a seemingly insurmountable goal.

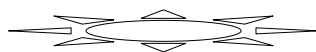
During one of these slumps, having calculated (accompanied by the inevitable whining) that I was still seven years away from completing my degree, I was feeling utterly dejected. What motivation I had experienced in my first few courses had evaporated. I had lost all desire to continue. Then I was reminded to step back and see the "forest through the trees." I received an excellent piece of advice: "In seven years, you can either have your degree or not. It's your choice."

This little thought has kept my spirits up and enrolling in "just one more course." Whether we want it to or not, time will pass. We—as distance education students—have a choice in whether to engage and continue our studies or stop. Sure, it can be painstakingly slow. It can be hard to convince ourselves that it's worth it. Frustrating that the degree (or diploma) appears forever out of reach. It's not. It's there, you just need to keep at it. What I found amazing was the snowball momentum that occurred as I kept completing courses. I began to speed up my pace and soon was completing 3 courses per year. The more I continued, the more I wanted to achieve, and the better, more efficient student I became.

Successful distance education students have a unique set of aptitudes and abilities that translate well in both the workforce and at home. We have strength, determination, independence, self-motivation, and passion. Whether it takes two years or fifteen years, keep enrolling in one more course. Keep heading toward your goal

and know that the closer you get, the greater the momentum will be. Years will pass and, at the end of it, you can either be further ahead or stuck in the same place. The choice is yours.

Tara Howse is in the BPA - Criminal Justice degree program with AU. With aspirations to continue her education, she is looking into AU's Master of Arts - Integrated Studies degree.



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: TransCanada Community Leaders Scholarship

Sponsored by: TransCanada

Deadline: April 15, 2017

Potential payout: \$1000 (up to 100 scholarships available)

Eligibility restriction: Applications must be from a community near a TransCanada project or proposed project (see [map](#)), must be a citizen or permanent resident of Canada or the U.S., and must be enrolled or planning to enrol full-time at a post-secondary institution. See full eligibility requirements.

What's required: A completed online application form, including personal, student, and financial information, a 400-word essay describing your community involvement, and a 400-word essay describing your education and career goals.

Tips: You have the option to upload up to five supporting documents, such as reference letters from employers or community groups. The application requirements are imbedded in the multi-page online application. This means you'll need to complete each page before seeing what the requirements are for the next (and the essay question info doesn't appear until the fourth page.) However, you can return to previous pages and the form appears to retain completed info even if you exit the site.

Where to get info: www.transcanada.com/7111.html



Book Review Play the Devil

Sarah Joseph



Book: *Play the Devil*

Author: Scott Laudati

In his first novel, *Play the Devil*, Scott Laudati tackles the common coming-of-age story with a refreshing take on the classic cliché. Using dark humour (sometimes bordering on the macabre) to reveal some uncomfortable truths, this contemporary novel takes place in at the beginning of a modern New Jersey summer, with Laudati introducing us to two childhood friends trying to survive one of the hottest days of the year as pool cleaners.

The main protagonist, Londi, has just dropped out of college and, for reasons I won't give away, becomes homeless after his not-so-triumphant return to his parents' home. In one of the only cases of good fortune in the novel, he is picked up by an old friend, Frankie Gunnz, the suburban rebel, and given a job as a pool boy.

The novel takes places over a 24-hour period as the two 20-somethings go from home to home, using alcohol, drugs, and deepening resentment of their social station to fuel their systems and see the day through. Both Frankie and Londi complement one another well, with Frankie as the all-American kid with an obscene work ethic and company loyalty, and Londi as the

disillusioned drop-out struggling with self-pity and a sense of entitlement. During the course of the novel Londi encounters an old high school crush, deals with absurd clients, faces some of his own demons and begins to comprehend a familiar lesson most of us must also learn – life gives back only what's put into it.

Play the Devil gives a brutal look into the mind of these directionless youths, who are grappling with being the instigators of their own lives and hunting for a sense of purpose. Although the majority of his commentary uses humor as a platform, Laudati also takes gritty looks into the lives of some of the supporting characters Londi and Frankie encounter—including an alcoholic cop with a skepticism of love and women, and an exhausted single mother starved for scraps of affection. Although each encounter is only a few pages long, these characters are so expertly developed that they could easily be people the reader has encountered in their own daily grind.

If the idea of truth illuminated in harsh light, with a heavy dose of comedic tragedy appeals to you, pick up *Play the Devil*. Maybe even pick it up if you're unsure—without pulling punches in his storytelling, Laudati is able to relate to a reader in an uncommon, rarely experienced sort of way. With an ending that breathes hope into an otherwise bleak outlook of Londi and Frankie's future, the only disappointment to be found in this novel is having it end primarily unresolved. That shouldn't deter the reader, though, as the story is most definitely one worth investing in.

Sarah is a psychology major at Athabasca University. With a keen interest in story telling she spends most of her free time consuming fictional media in the forms of novels, music and gaming.

Canadian Education News

Scott Jacobsen



First Nations House will celebrate 25th anniversary in 2017

Toronto Metro wrote about Diane Longboat's graduation from the University of Toronto (1978), which was seen as a "significant feat." Longboat said, "being an Indigenous girl and going to university was pretty unheard of."

Longboat founded the First Nations House, which is celebrating the 25th anniversary in 2017. Her goal was to "revolutionize" Indigenous students' education.

"There was no curriculum that specifically spoke to our history and culture," Longboat said, "You could really see that our traditional languages were severely endangered if nothing was done to preserve them."

Michael Ignatieff makes a call for support against legislation

The Globe and Mail reports that the Michael Ignatieff is making an appeal to Canada. Ignatieff, the former Liberal leader and current rector of Central European University in Budapest, denounced legislation from the Hungarian government. Claiming that the legislation targets his institution. Ignatieff made the call for international support from the international community, and Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland. "[The legislation] is a piece of vandalism, and we believe it must be stopped, not just for our sake, but for the sake of Hungarian and European academic freedom," Ignatieff said.

The legislation, or the bill, Ignatieff argues, has the explicit goal of shutting down the university, as it requires foreign universities to have a campus in their home country if they wish to be accredited in Hungary. Ignatieff's university, based in the United States and Hungary, is the only foreign university in Hungary to not already meet that requirement. Over two dozen Canadian students study at the school.

Alberta Education Minister calls out Jason Kenney

Herald News reported that the Progressive Conservative Leader's, Jason Kenney's, comments have "set back" the "cause of gay youth," according to the Alberta education minister David Eggen.

"Jason Kenney has shown that once you scratch the paint off a little bit, you find the extremist that he actually is," David Eggen said. Kenney argued parents should know when a child joins a gay-straight alliance, and school officials should inform parents.

Kenney said, "I don't think it's right to keep secrets from parents about challenges their kids are going through." Kenney said he will not repeal legislation. Eggen said, "If the government is compelling people to out those students (who are) in a very compromised situation, then they're only serving to make the situation even worse."

Scott Douglas Jacobsen is an AUSU Councillor. He works with various organizations, and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.

Learning From "Spring"

Deanna Roney



Like this spring/winter weather we have been getting, sometimes we have a hard time making up our minds. When I started with AU, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do at the end of it. I knew what I hoped to gain, but I wasn't sure where I would apply it, or how I would apply it.

I hoped I would have it all figured out by the end, but I didn't. I had an idea, an unrealistic goal (as some would say) and the plan for achieving that changed faster than the weather has been this March (and here, that has been hourly, or just by driving for twenty minutes into the bush). Is it plus ten and sunny, or minus ten and a blizzard?

The thing is, we don't need to have a concrete plan. The night I enrolled in AU I created a flow chart. Every course I was going to take was plotted (before looking and seeing exactly what the requirements were, and talking to an advisor). I was planning which courses, and which months I would start and finish each one. I guess you could say I was excited to start. But, the plan I made then, while beneficial as I learned which courses I found interesting, was not realistic—not even close.

From that night until the end, the courses I planned to take changed rapidly. Some of the core interest courses stayed the same, but with each new course I took I found a new interest (or an area I didn't want to spend any more time in). The whole of my course plan changed rapidly—like this weather. My plan to reach my goal since I graduated from AU has changed as well. But being able to shift focus and roll with the weather changes is important. Like dressing in layers this time of year so you can add or subtract as needed, being mentally prepared for a change in direction is important.

If you get too set on one idea, thinking it is going to stay +10 and sunny, then when the blizzard hits you are going to be freezing and wildly unhappy. Don't lose sight of the end goal, your dream destination (be it summer, or winter) but don't be stubborn with how you get there, pack the layers so you don't suffer. Keep your options open and allow yourself the chance to change directions if the inspiration strikes you.

Some students can't decide on a major, their interests change drastically from when they enroll to when they graduate. Sometimes that means taking extra courses to fill credit requirements for the final degree. And that is okay, at least you are finishing with something you are excited about. Don't stick it out with a major just because it is the one you started on. Preferences change, ideas change, and the weather changes. Nothing should be stagnant, keep moving, growing, and changing with it. University is the time to find your place, to find your passion and push for it. You don't need all the answers once you graduate; you will learn new ways as your focus shifts from completing the program to finding out what that next step is for you.

There is no sense in stressing yourself out if you have changed programs, courses, or found you aren't interested in a subject like you thought you would be. When the shift comes, when the sun ducks behind that cloud, pull on your hoodie and keep moving forward.

Deanna is an AU graduate who loves adventure in life and literature. Follow her path on the writing journey at <https://deannaroney.wordpress.com/>



Last I Heard

It's almost the end of March and it looks like we'll make it through another winter. Woohoo. With spring in the near distance, it seems we're a bit late planning a getaway to break up the long, frigid brutality of winter.

Last fall we talked to my sister and brother-in-law about a Vegas quickie. Not because we're huge gamblers (we're not) or because we have tickets to some big act (we don't). We were hoping to use the 'rewards' from the My Vegas Slots game Sherry and I have been playing on our phones for years. She used some on a previous trip so we know it actually works. Because Jim's health isn't great and out-of-country travel is risky, they pulled back.

The regular family trip to Palm Springs didn't happen. Roy and I didn't leap at a trip to an all-inclusive Mexican resort partly because of our schedules and partly because of the weak Canadian dollar. My Banff writers' retreat was aborted by my fall and subsequent injuries.

And so we find ourselves at the end of March. What has become our default position is taking mini breaks. Tonight we'll be attending the first of a three-part theatre mini-pak at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre. Before that, we'll watch Grady play hockey in an Edmonton tournament.

There is no doubt there are many options for scheduling small distractions, no matter your interests. The Citadel Theatre has been deluging me with regular sales mailers. The latest pitch is for six plays in the 2017-2018 season. I sit firmly astride the fence so far.

For my birthday I got a gift card for a month of unlimited classes at Lifestyle Meditation, 'Edmonton's first meditation and mindfulness-only based studio'. Dontcha feel better just thinking about it?

We know dining experiences galore exist. There are continuing education classes in every subject under the sun. I've got a gift certificate for a special room rate at the Best Western Camrose Resort and Casino that expires in September. There are spas, greenhouses, museums, galleries, libraries, shopping malls all wanting a piece of our disposable time and money.

So we know choices exist. The critical thing is to actually choose. We need activities that provide a mental, physical, emotional reprieve from our daily grind. And we can't leave it to chance or hope they fall into our outstretched hands. It's a matter of safeguarding our mental health, of resting and renewing so we can summon the courage to face our real life with all its must-do obligations.

With unemployment hurting so many and with a weak dollar and safety concerns, foreign travel may not be feasible. I implore you to find ways to get the break you need within the reality of your circumstances. It may be as small as a free outing lasting a few hours. Unless you're a total useless lay about who hasn't worked a day in your life, you need this. Last I heard there are no medals for martyrdom, 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

Differences in Comfort

Dear Barb:

My boyfriend and I have been dating for two years. We've always had a difficult relationship because we seem to see the world differently. For example, I am a saver, he is a spender. I am open and communicative and he is a quiet brooder. I love kids; he's kind of so-so about them. I am very affectionate, but he isn't demonstrative at all. He smokes drugs quite often, while I don't use drugs at all. Through all of these we have managed to stay together, but now we are beginning to talk about marriage and I'm a little hesitant to commit like that. I don't want to spend my life fighting and arguing with my husband and I fear that would happen. I love my boyfriend and we have a lot of good times. I just don't know what to do. Kim.

Hey Kim:

Partners who are very different can still have a successful marriage if they share similar core values. Some examples of core values include honesty, trust, commitment and caring for others. You and your boyfriend should have a serious discussion about these issues; you will then be able to detect any problem areas. If the problem areas are concerning you I would suggest you both go to couples counselling before you commit to marriage. Your physician would be able to recommend a reputable counselor for you to see. Hope this helps Kim and thanks for writing.

Dear Barb:

My wife and I have been together for five years and I feel the passion has died. I still love her, but our relationship has become more comfortable than passionate. I try to be affectionate and considerate to her, but I just don't know how to get the passion back. Any suggestions, thanks Ken.

Hi Ken:

Great question. In a relationship people often mistake comfort for boredom, although in reality it is not. It is normal for a long-term relationship to become comfortable. The passion is still there you just have to work a little harder to bring it to the surface. Take your wife out for a special dinner, maybe somewhere you went early in your relationship that will trigger some memories. The simple addition of candles to the dinner table, with the lights turned down will change the whole mood. Write her a poem or a romantic letter. Make all the arrangements for a weekend getaway, by that I mean not only book the room, but if you have pets, make sure they are taken care of, make reservations at a nearby restaurant for dinner, perhaps have flowers delivered to the room. If a getaway is above your budget, how about a gift of lingerie, it doesn't have to be expensive, it is the thought that is romantic. Comfort is a good thing as long as it is not indifference, as that would cause you to grow apart. Happy romancing Ken.

Follow Barb on twitter @BarbGodin

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: The Trumpism Tactic

I've noticed that admitting you're a Trump supporter tends to get you lots o' shade from feminists.



So instead I insert disguised Trumpisms into the conversation, in order to win the feminists over in a covert manner, as it were.



I say things like, "How'd you like to come home with me and help make my waterbed great again?"

Or "I always insist on being politically correct, so I won't mention how ugly your friend is."



Or "I'm gonna build a hot tub and make my upstairs neighbor pay for it."

Yeah, I expect it to start working real soon.



WANDA WATERMAN



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AUSU wants to get Results! #AUGoals

Are there things you would like to see Athabasca University do differently for students?

Do you have ideas for topics you would like your AU Students' Union to advocate to AU for?

AUSU wants to hear from you about your advocacy priorities for AU!

How to send us your ideas:

- Email ideas to augoals@ausu.org
- Text ideas to 780-900-0908
- Post ideas to social media with #AUGoals

The deadline to respond is April 1, 2017.

In the past year, AUSU has advocated on behalf of students for improved communications from AU, removal of retroactive program changes, revisions to the academic misconduct policy, e-text choice and cost-savings sharing, shorter marking times, improved contact with tutors and academic experts, and more. To read more about our most recent advocacy efforts, visit our website [here](#).



IMPORTANT DATES

- **Apr 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting May 1](#)
- **Apr 11:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Apr 28:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for June](#)
- **Apr 30:** [Deadline to apply for 2017 Convocation](#)
- **May 5:** [Deadline to finish courses for 2017 Convocation](#)
- **May 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Apr 1](#)
- **May 14:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)

AU Student Mobile App

Want to connect with other students? How about an easy way to access services and resources available to you? Or perhaps a study timer?

Download the [AU Student Mobile App](#) to help you stay on top of your studies, access resources, and chat with other students!

Download the AU MOBILE APP

FREE courtesy of your AU Students' Union

Connect with other AU students, get quick access to services, links, deals, courses, and programs, and stay on top of your classes!



AUSU Career Resources

AUSU's careers page includes links for resume building, interview preparation, career fairs across Canada, national and provincial job search engines and more!

Check out AUSU's Career Resources page [here](#).



CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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