



# THE VOICE

Vol 25 Issue 50 2017-12-22

## Minds We Meet

Escape with AU and Robin Bleich

## Travelling Campus

Get Ready to Meet your Fellow Students

## A Holiday for One

When you Don't Need Mistletoe

Plus:  
Self-Rejection  
In Conversation  
and much more!



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**The Voice Magazine**

www.voicemagazine.org  
301 Energy Square  
10109 – 106 ST NW  
Edmonton AB  
T5J 3L7

**Email**

voice@voicemagazine.org

**Publisher**

AU Students' Union

**Editor-In-Chief**

Jodi Campbell

**Managing Editor**

Karl Low

**Regular Contributors**

Hazel Anaka, Barb Godin  
Carla Knipe, Scott  
Jacobsen, Barbara  
Lehtiniemi, Deanna Roney,  
Wanda Waterman,  
Xin Xu

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

***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

### Christmas Wrapping Up

Karl Low



This is it then, the final issue of *The Voice Magazine* for 2017. I hope you've had a good year, it's certainly been an eventful one for us, what with our snazzy new website and a whole host of new student readers and writers.

We've also had some great articles this year. I've already got a few votes for what people think should be in our best-of issue, and it looks like it's going to deserve the name. But it's still not too late to get your vote in. If you think there's a story that we covered that is worthy of a bit more attention, especially since our new readers joined up, by all means mail me your choices at [karl@voicemagazine.org](mailto:karl@voicemagazine.org).

We leave this year with a pretty good issue, starting off with our feature article, a Minds We Meet interview with student, AUSU Councillor, and winner of the Future Alumni Award, Robin Bleich. It's just the kind of inspirational story that strikes the right chord for Christmas.

We also take a look at what happens at one of the AUSU meetups. For the past several months these have been happening in various cities, and our own Barbara Lehtiniemi made her way down to one to give us some

idea of what you've been missing if you haven't gone to one already.

Plus, we have a look at something that a lot of AU students deal with, having Christmas on your own. Tara Panrucker gives us some ideas on why it might be something you want to do even if you don't have to, in her article "A Holiday for One." It's a bit of a different take on the holiday season, but certainly doesn't sound unappealing.

And while AU and AUSU may be closed for the next week, that doesn't mean that a lot of students aren't going to try to make some extra time to catch up on their studies. Marie Well is here to give some advice on ways to keep motivated and moving toward that goal.

We also close out the year with a look at Math 315, a look toward the future with Hazel Anaka's "From Where I Sit", and, if the obligations of the season just have you too stressed and you find yourself thinking *A Christmas Carol* had a sad ending, check out our latest Dear Barb for some coping strategies that might be just what the doctor ordered.

And just because it's a holiday doesn't mean everything has stopped. So we've got some events that are upcoming early in January (because, let's be honest, you're already too busy for anything until then anyway, right?) news, reviews, interviews, scholarship info, and even a little bit of philosophy to keep your brain active in the fog of Christmas cookies and hot chocolate, as the Fly on the Wall looks at nothing less than the nature of truth.

So, until next year then, here's wishing everybody a happy holiday season and that you, of course, enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl', with a stylized, flowing script.

# MINDS WE MEET



*Robin Bleich has been with AU since 2009. She is a mother of a six-year-old, Eily, and is from the Niagara Region, Ontario. Her education here is a continuation of her time at Niagara College, Ontario. In 2009, she transferred the diploma to AU to join our BPA-Criminal Justice Program. She finds that AU works well with her lifestyle, as you'll find out. She is also an AUSU Councillor. Her long-term educational goal is earn a graduate degree in organizational reform.*

**You are a parent as well as a student. Does the flexibility tap into a need there for you?**

Yes, absolutely. It's very important. I was going to AU before Eily was born. She's now six. The flexibility is nice because I can book one-half or a whole day off work to go write my exam while she's in school. Or I can be off on maternity leave for a year, which gives you the opportunity to raise a child and be committed to your schoolwork. This is just something the traditional brick-and-mortar institution would not have accommodated as a full-time mom and full-time employee.

**How did you become interested in being a police officer in the Niagra region?**

I was raised by my father, in addition to my two siblings, Zayna and Rebecca. We grew up in housing complexes owned by the province; they're designed to assist low-income families with some fiduciary responsibilities. These town-homes were filled with criminal activities; like bullying, break and enters, assaults, and mischief. That was just the nature of where we lived. Moreover, clothing and food were a struggle for us. We learned very quickly who community outreach resources were, and took advantage of the help. These outreach centers provided us with clothing and food.

I often say to people who raised me, "Thank you," because it does take a whole community to do it, especially when your family struggles and you need a lending hand. I guess getting into policing was my way of giving back, because without them I wouldn't have been able to develop into the individual I am. So, it's like a 360 in community contributions; they contributed to my lifestyle and now to my efforts, and I'm contributing back.

**You earned the Future Alumni Award of Athabasca University. How did you qualify?**

It's an award that looks at your contributions professionally, personally, and to the university. So, quite easily, the contributions to the university were the main qualifier. You can attribute that to being elected as councilor with the Athabasca University Students' Union, in October of 2016. Along with the other councilors, I advocate for the undergraduate membership, placing their

needs before my own. I'm currently the Chairperson of the Awards Committee, Chairperson of the Executive Compensation and Review Committee, and a director on the Finance Committee. I also participate in many Athabasca University projects as well, like some unique award opportunities, the redesign of web parts for accessibility for our members.

I also just signed an Agreement to sponsor a new award I created with AU, called the *Sunny Bleich Award*, that will be available October 2019, for the next five (5) years; honouring my nephew and late sibling, Bobbi-Jo Bleich.

Another component of the award AU examines is personal growth, GPA, and academic achievements overall. That's obviously based on what your overall GPA is, but personal growth and community contribution? I've done that my entire life. I've been volunteering since I was 11 or 12. Some things for many years, whether it's at the local food banks or shelters that clothed or fed me. I volunteer at soup kitchens in the wintertime and for the Special Olympics. In terms of serving the community abroad, I represent on regional committees and I was recently appointed to Chair of the Crime Prevention Committee with The International Association of Chiefs of Police. So, it's a broad spectrum. There's many things that I do even through the work. I am in the service of developing and implementing programming for our schools and focusing on the emergency management designs and strengthening collective efficacy social cohesion, and inter-agency collaboration through this program, as well as assisting other locations build this program in different countries.

### **So what did you have to do, and what has it meant?**

The only thing I had to do was provide an interview, but what was interesting about that interview is that it kind of led to some other stuff that they were working on. Some grief talks and they wanted to know how AU has worked for me, what I like most about Athabasca. The flexibility is one thing, but, just to go off topic for a second, I remember telling you it was about being able to escape reality—pushing you toward that goal or dream. AU has definitely achieved that, because their courses and programs on English and organizational behavior helped me to develop a better understanding on how my organization is designed: how it works, what to expect, how to communicate, and learn to get where I need to go using these platforms.

When my sister passed away suddenly and very unexpectedly, it was one of those things that you need to escape from, and then I was getting a divorce at the exact same time. It was the week before I left my home during the divorce period, I found out my sister, Bobbi-Jo, had passed away. But I was still going to school.

When I bought my new house, I fell through the bathroom floor. The house was falling apart. But I was still in school.

When I thought about doing my school work, it pulled me away from those moments and allowed me to be me, allowed me to build on me and remind me that I need to keep moving forward. So AU grounded me. I couldn't let my program stop. It was a challenging time, but I've been able to keep working on my schooling. That kept me grounded. Education reminds you every time you open a book, every time you take an exam, every time you're looking for that next course, that you're a step closer to your dream. AU, during a very turbulent time in my life, was my constant—it was my rock. AU is an amazing University with amazing personalities. There are some incredible people employed with AU, and I'm blessed to have crossed paths with them.

*Scott Douglas Jacobsen works with various organizations, and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, and In-Sight Publishing.*





## Travelling Campus: Meeting Students in Ottawa

Barbara Lehtiniemi



For AU students, meeting another student is a rare occurrence. We study in solitude.

Opportunities to meet other students are limited. Social media is one way to connect, but Facebook can't replace face-to-face. Organized gatherings tend to focus on Alberta, with occasional gatherings held in large cities elsewhere.

I was pleased to be able to attend AUSU's recent Meet & Greet in Ottawa. Although I don't live in Ottawa, mild late-fall weather made it possible for me to make the long

drive to our nation's capital to join AUSU council representatives and other AU students for a cup of cheer and some conversation.

The Ottawa Meet & Greet was held at the downtown Bier Markt, a popular Belgian-themed pub only steps away from Parliament Hill. AUSU council's VP External and Student Affairs (VPEX), Julian Teterenko, was the host for the evening. Julian was visiting Ottawa to represent AUSU at the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations' Advocacy Week.

Over a dozen AU students soon filled the table, most from Ottawa and area but some visiting from as far away as Alberta. As we introduced ourselves, we were delighted to discover that some of us already "knew" each other from Facebook posts or e-mail exchanges.

Once it appeared that all who were attending had arrived, Julian had everyone around the table re-introduce themselves and mention what they were taking at AU. Given the diversity of AU, we shouldn't have been surprised to discover that not one of us was in the same program!

The divergence of our study paths did not, however, stifle conversation. There was a steady patter of chatter around the table. We already had AU in common and we explored other topics at random and at a rapid pace. The only impediment to conversation was the high-volume bustle of the bar—I really could only carry on conversations with those seated nearest me.

Julian circulated a sign-up sheet, on which we could voluntarily share our e-mail address with the rest of the group. One of the lucky attendees also won a package of AUSU swag.

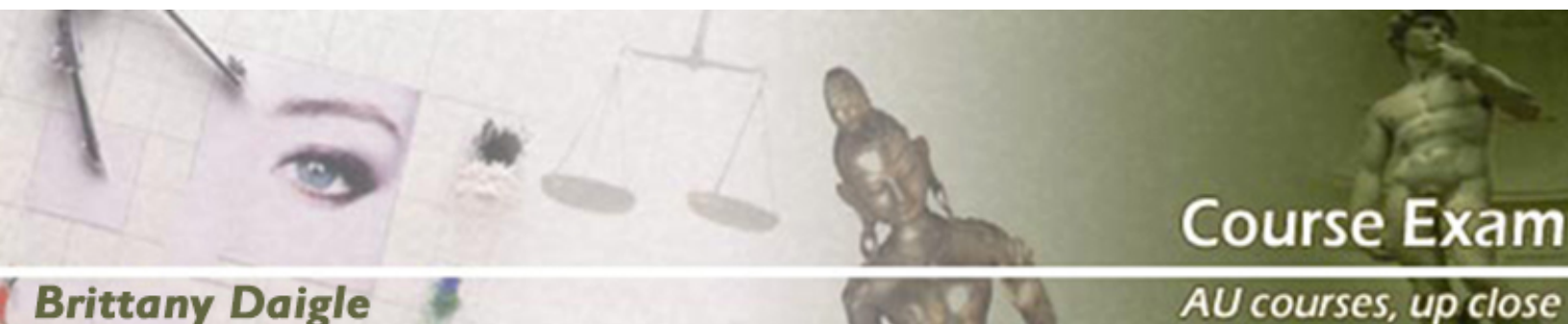
The meet & greet was scheduled to last one hour but most stayed for close to two hours. After the solitude of AU studies we were reluctant to lose the company of seldom-seen AU colleagues.

If you'd like to break your study solitude and spend some time in the company of your AU classmates, watch for the monthly AUSU e-mail newsletter or check the AUSU website for upcoming meet & greets events. *The Voice* also summarizes upcoming AU and AUSU events in its *AU-thentic Events* column each Friday.

*The next AUSU Meet & Greet will be in Edmonton on Tuesday, January 9. Visit [ausu.org](http://ausu.org) for details.*

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



**Brittany Daigle****Course Exam  
Math 315****Course Exam***AU courses, up close***Brittany Daigle**

According to the syllabus, MATH 315 (Methods in Applied Statistics) “is designed to enable students to develop familiarity with various parametric and nonparametric tests and to gain the knowledge and skills needed to apply statistical concepts to solve applied problems.” In this course “students will learn the logic, the procedures, and the use of common statistical techniques using one of the most commonly used statistical packages – SPSS for Windows.” For those unfamiliar with SPSS, it is a popular software used to analyse data. Students who want to enroll into this course “must lease the statistical package: IBM® SPSS® Statistics Standard GradPack 22 (or higher) from a reliable source.” The prerequisites for MATH 315 include MATH 215, MATH 216, MGSC 301, SOCI 301, or any equivalent introductory quantitative statistical methods course.

Methods in Applied Statistics consists of seven units, six tutor marked assignments, one midterm exam, and one final exam. The first unit is an introduction to research design concepts. The second focusses on nonparametric tests. The third unit covers the analysis of variance and multiple comparison procedures, while unit four consists of simple linear regression and correlation. The fifth unit covers multiple linear regression and the general linear model. Unit six expands on unit three with one-way analysis of variance for completely randomized designs. Lastly, unit seven covers analysis of variance for blocked designs. The six assignments, weighing five percent each, cover the seven units. The midterm, weighing thirty percent, covers the topics discussed in the first three tutor marked assignments; meanwhile, the final exam, weighing forty percent, is non-cumulative and covers the topics discussed in the final three tutor marked assignments. For the midterm and final exam students are allowed one double-sided written or printed cheat sheet and a non-programmable calculator.

Upon completing this course, students will have “an in-depth knowledge of basic statistical principles, a basic understanding of experimental design, proficiency in the analysis of a wide range of data sets selected from the biological, physical, social sciences, and from business applications, and gain skill with a wide range of statistical tests, including correlation, simple and multiple linear regression models, single and two factor analyses of variance, and logistic regression.”

Dr. Thomas Varghese, Subject Matter Expert (SME) and a tutor for MATH 215, MATH 216, and MATH 315, stated “statistics and statistical expertise is needed in virtually any field of human activity, whether it is medicine, natural science, engineering, agriculture, business, industry or government sector, for efficient decision making. Hence, we introduced a second course which is a continuation of MATH 215 / MATH 216.”

Varghese continues, “the main goal of this course is to give students a comprehensive knowledge of the commonly used statistical techniques and its practical application in data analysis, using SPSS for windows. Throughout this course, students will gain the knowledge and skills needed to conduct and evaluate a research study.”



He adds, “the level of mathematical knowledge required for this course is kept minimal as the focus of this course is on statistical practice rather than the theory. This approach will attract students from non-mathematics majors as well.”

Lastly, Varghese states “MATH 315 is of considerable value to those who plan to take any courses for which collection and analysis of data are the key requirements. Furthermore, it is a pre-requisite for those who plan to major in statistics, business, agriculture, biology, and many other areas which require quantitative reasoning. This course is very useful to those who plan a graduate study in which some sort of data collection and quantitative analysis is a requirement.”

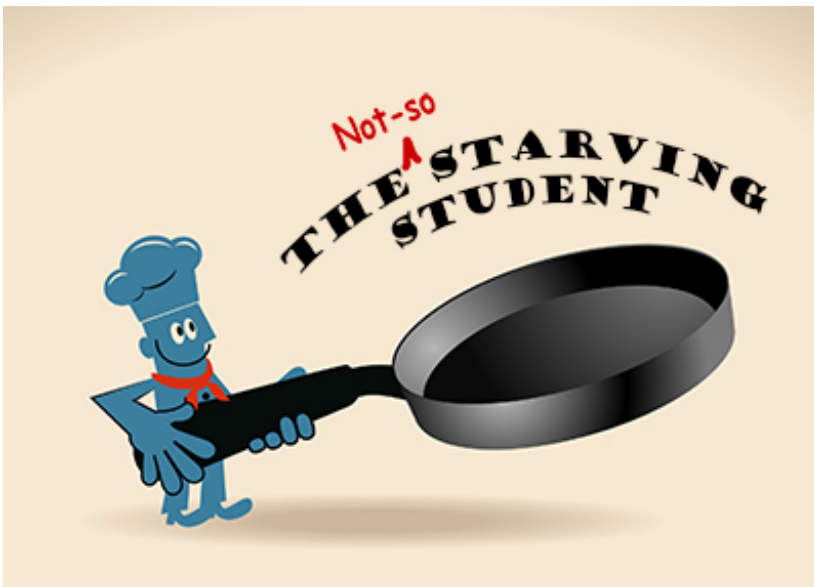
Whether MATH 315 is a degree requirement of yours or the topics above interest you, this course will have you learning a lot of useful skills, such as efficient decision making, data collection, and quantitative analysis that will further assist you in other courses and in real life scenarios. For more information on this course, visit [MATH 315’s online syllabus](#).

*Brittany Daigle is 22 years old and completing her BSc in Computing Science & Information Systems with AU from Toronto, Ontario.*



## The Not-So Starving Student Around the World for Christmas Dinner

**Xin Xu**



Having grown up overseas in the bustling city of Shanghai, China, Christmas was always a foreign concept. It symbolized a mysterious yet exciting festival, complete with vibrant LED lights, whipped-cream snow, and, of course, endless days of feasting. I used to equate this exotic festival with the likes of Chinese New Year, where family gatherings seemed never-ending. Reminiscing about that concept of Christmas made me ponder the various ways individuals around the globe celebrated this holiday. What would Christmas dinners look like for a Portuguese or a Venezuelan? They couldn't all be stuffing their mouths full

of turkey and sipping on eggnog. Perhaps the familiar, Canadian Christmas edibles isn't all there is to Christmas dinners. As cosmopolitan AU students, let's feast our eyes on what other countries have to offer at the dinner table; who knows, maybe one day you'll even get the chance to sample these delights.

### Tamales de Navidad (Venezuela)

This integral part of the South American Christmas dinner features “masa” or corn-based dough wrapped in corn husk (as shown) or banana leaf. The dough can be stuffed with vegetarian and meat fillings that add a burst of flavor in the centre of the dough. After steaming the raw tamale, the wrapping is removed before it is eaten. This dish reminds me of my childhood favorite: lotus sticky rice as a dim sum item. Rich and full of flavor.





### Panettone (Spain)

The Spanish, specifically the Milanese, prepare this sweet bread loaf during Christmastime. I'm personally a fan of the shape of these cakes, which are so aesthetically pleasing. The cupola shape, it's proper name, is a cylinder packed with sourdough. The dough is light and fluffy without being overly rich or sugary. Rumor has it that the reason it has become a Christmas favorite among the Spanish was due to the affordable price of these pastries following World War II. Immigrants fell in love with the panettone and soon enough, it became a holiday tradition.

### Rabanadas (Portuguese)

Not only do the Portuguese love these Christmas delights, they brought them all the way with them to Brazil (during the colonial era) and they are now enjoyed by locals in both countries. You might imagine these to be a sophisticated meat dish, but it is really a variation of French toast! To take this dish to the next level, the Portuguese add warm wine and honey over the toast, giving the taste of pure comfort.



### Cougnou (Belgium)

While you can sample variations of sweet bread around the world for Christmas dinners, none quite beats the Cougnou, a bread baked in the shape of baby Jesus. Besides the Belgian, the French and Dutch have similar versions of their own. The bread is rich brioche-type bread sometimes mixed with raisins. Tradition has it that Cougnou are given to children on Christmas day and typically enjoyed with a mug of hot chocolate.

### Vánoční rybí polévka (Slovakia, Czech Republic)

You might not be able to pronounce what you're eating, but you're sure to enjoy this traditional homemade Christmas soup. Fish and seafood is usually added to a broth and a cream base. The mixture reminds me of a variation of clam chowder except with Czech carp (or any of your favorite seafood item). Rumor has it that every year on Christmas Eve the same items, consisting of fish soup, fried fish, potato salad and apple strudel, are served.



*Xin Xu is a post-graduate health-science AU student, aspiring clinician, globe-trotter, parrot-breeder and tea-connoisseur*





## A Holiday for One

Tara Panrucker



Although mass media drums it into our heads that the holidays are meant for family and friends, there may come a time you find yourself facing the impending holidays alone. Moreover, millions of people *choose* to spend holidays alone. Whether due to divorce, school or work responsibilities, lack of cash to travel home to see family, or worse, the death or illness of a loved one, a year may come where you have nowhere to go for the holiday season other than where you are right now, by yourself. While being alone for a special occasion may sound horrible, it can be one of the most satisfying and enjoyable holidays you've ever spent.

If, like me, you find yourself alone this year, it needn't be a time spent wallowing in self-pity or gorging on Peppermint Candy ice cream to fill the void. There are many advantages to spending the holiday season alone. First, you don't have to tolerate awkward relatives or sketchy sibling friends who tag along for family gatherings. Additionally, you don't have to spend a fortune on travel or risk getting stranded in an airport due to cancelled flights. Staying alone for the holidays simplifies cooking and cleaning burdens as well. Dinner for one is far simpler than dinner for twenty.

A holiday free of social obligations enables you to spend it doing whatever your heart desires. While getting a head start on your next school assignment may not initially excite you, the extra time you have in January can be spent getting fitter in the gym or speed learning courses with your free access to lynda.com through AUSU. I finally began the new acrylic painting I'd neglected to start all year, and it will be finished by the end of 2017. Take that procrastination! Perhaps you'd like to visit a local Christmas light show or indoor gardens in your city. It's easier to focus on all the details when you are alone and an ideal time to practice your photography skills. Binge watching a series on Netflix is easy when there is no one around to judge your taste in movies.

If you're longing for family and reminiscing about the good old days, get creative and take action to fend off the holiday blues. Write a poem or story about past family gatherings and send it to family members as a new year's gift, or refine it for next Christmas. Can't write? Create a collage out of old family photos and make copies. Nothing says you care like giving a homemade keepsake.

Volunteering or donating to a good cause is an excellent way to forget about your own little problems and focus on the bigger community picture. Since I'd recently moved and wasn't going to see my wonderful dog until after Christmas, I found out where the local SPCA was and went there in person to write a check and relish a few dog cuddles. Nothing is too small or insignificant to give this season, whatever your financial status. Your time could make all the difference in the



world to someone suffering unimaginable hardship this time of year. Witnessing the unfortunate circumstances people may be struggling with this season can swiftly put your current situation into perspective.

On another note, a few days alone to spend doing whatever, from reading a stack of books to traipsing up a new mountain trail, can be heaven for an introvert. Extroverts may need to open their minds to this perspective. In any case, don't feel obligated to tell others you'll be alone this year. Most will look at you like you've just told them you have a terminal illness. It's fine to say "I have plans", even if those plans involve lounging in your pajamas with a stack of magazines, school books, and endless cups of hot chocolate for three days in a row.

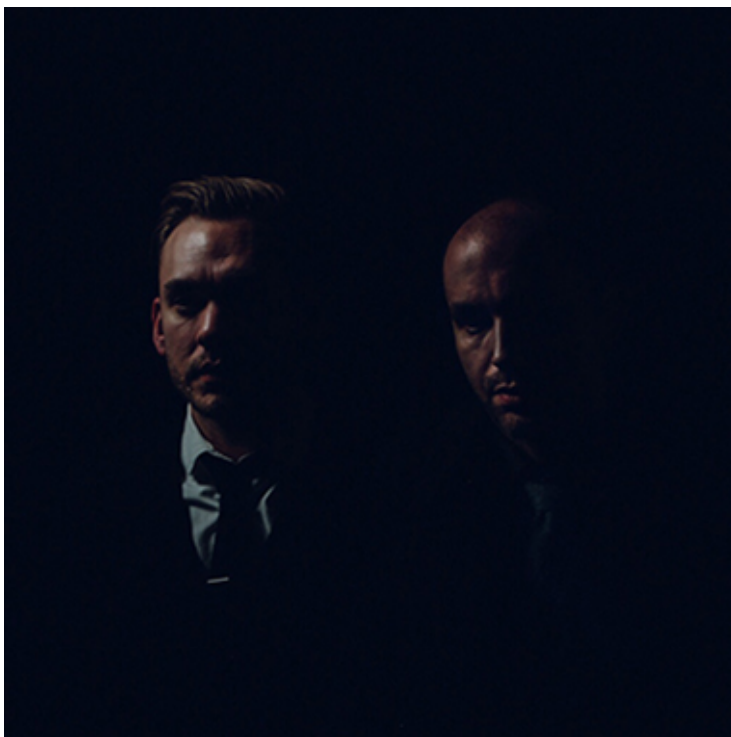
Lonely students take heart—many professionals work through the Christmas season taking care of the elderly in care homes, manning hospital emergency stations, and working busy retail and restaurant businesses. In the physical world, Christmas day is just another day. Cook up your favourite appetizers and enjoy them for dinner or order takeout. Whatever you choose to do, take a deep breath, keep your perspective, and don't judge yourself. Relish your alone time, contemplate what it all means if you must, catch up on sleep. Contrary to popular opinion, there are far worse things you could be facing than being alone for the holidays. Happy New Year!

*Tara Panrucker is currently enrolled in an AU online English course to help hone her writing skills and eventually achieve a General Arts Degree. She is a freelance writer and avid enjoyer of the outdoors, currently residing on Vancouver Island.*



## In Conversation ..with Given Names

**Wanda Waterman**



Given Names is an intellectually engaging electronic rock duo of two artistic designers, one from Brooklyn and the other from Chicago. *EP 2* is their four-song sophomore release (listen to the single "[East to West](#)" [here](#)). Recently duo-members David Raymond and Jeremy Perez-Cruz took the time to answer our questions about their history, the new EP, art, and creativity.

**Tell me a little about the role music played in your early life.**

Piano. All piano lessons—the Suzuki Method. Hip-hop tapes, soundtracks to various movies that I loved. I know I liked music, but I hated lessons. Lift the wrists, walk before you run.

**How did you meet? What made you decide to make music together? And how did you settle on your band name?**

2002 or '03, Melbourne, Florida, a small VFW

[Veterans of Foreign Wars] hall, at night, downpour, (now-) dead bands played together and Jeremy and I spent the next decade talking about playing music together. A few years ago, we did, in Brooklyn, NY, during the winter. "Given Names" is the second name we settled on. We

write fictional (mostly) narratives, so it seemed fitting that while pretending to be someone else, Given Names became a playful anchor.

### **How do those clever lyrics get written?**

Vulnerability, a lot of real-time editing each other, and a lot of whiskey. Jeremy and I are both designers, and designers need to speak emotively to describe obscure ideas before they turn to reality. It helps that we both see and navigate the world in similar ways.

### **What thoughts and experiences are behind "East to West?"**

We were playing with the idea of whether the experience of dying would be less lonely and disorienting if there were a veteran guide to take you through it. From there, we studied up on the (infinity) rituals of death and burial over time. A customary practice during the Egyptian Pre-Dynastic Period was to place the dead in a crouched or fetal position in rectangular boxes, facing the east (rising sun) or the west. The song is about someone who has already died teaching a dying person how to pass.

### **Has anything funny or bizarre ever happened to you while recording, performing, or touring?**

Lots. Truly, more than I can pick one from. We've shared miserable tour experiences that turned into fond memories. Recently we rented a car in Chicago and drove it to the center of a remote corn field in rural Kentucky to see Jeremy photograph an eclipse. We explored the Freedom Tunnel [NYC], got filthy, and then got into an exceptionally white car.

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

Also, lots. Jeremy more so, I think; the list of books he's read is vast. We do pull lines from books (often), remove them from context, and imagine new stories around them. Lots of classic American literature, from Salinger, Hemingway, Faulkner, and Whitman to more modern writers like Ellis, Roth, and Gladwell. Film nods to David Fincher, Jeff Cronenweth, Emmanuel Lubezki, Darius Khondji, and Roger Deakins.

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

I don't know how it is for everyone. I realized not long ago that creatives need some type of support system to continue creating. That's not to say that struggle isn't part of the equation, but if you're constantly arranging your life just to get back to creating, then there's a lot of wasted energy. Personally, I just need to know that I'm not holding anyone up or letting anyone down. It's a bit like being invisible, but it's how I need to feel to feel free to make [my own art].

## **AU-thentic Events**

### **Upcoming AU Related Events**

#### **AU Open House & Info Session**

Wed, January 3, 10:00 to 11:00 am MST  
Online

Hosted by Athabasca University  
[www.athabascau.ca/discover/open-house/](http://www.athabascau.ca/discover/open-house/)  
register online at above address  
second session: Wed, January 3, 6:00 to 7:00 pm MST

#### **Zotero and Mendeley Citation Management Tools Webinar**

Tues, January 9, 12:00 to 1:00 pm MST  
Online

Hosted by AU Library  
[library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html](http://library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html)  
No pre-registration required

#### **Edmonton Meet & Greet**

Tues, January 9, 5:00 to 7:30 pm MST  
Brewsters, 2335 111 Street NW, Edmonton AB

In-person  
Hosted by AUSU  
[www.ausu.org/event/edmonton-meet-greet-5/](http://www.ausu.org/event/edmonton-meet-greet-5/)  
e-mail [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) to RSVP

#### **Doctorate in Business Admin (DBA) Info Session**

Wed, January 10, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MST  
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business  
[business.athabascau.ca/event-details/doctorate-business-administration-dba-information-session-8/](http://business.athabascau.ca/event-details/doctorate-business-administration-dba-information-session-8/)  
Register online at above link

**Do you embrace a religion, ideology, or spiritual practice that informs your work?**

We're all ritualistic. Say you're not, and you are. Little rituals, traditions. If you work for anyone else, the same applies. Planning of any sort is ritualistic. Spirituality, that's a bit more abstract, and I haven't much to comment on it. Religion, however . . . I believe we share the exact same sentiments on religion. There are a lot of conflicting egos at play, and from that jagged chaos comes an endless well of inspiration for writing songs or painting paintings or fighting with relatives or starting and stopping wars.

**Do you have a desire to use your art to alleviate suffering?**

It'd be awfully arrogant to think that designing a song (or any art) could alleviate someone else's experience that I know fuck-all about. Art can be healing. It can be awakening, controversial, beautiful, ugly, inspiring, unsettling. If people relate to something we make and it helps them or rewards them in any way, that's amazing. However, we're not writing with that intention.

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

Be mindful of the past and ultra-aware of the present. Fuck the future; it doesn't exist. The only thing we're certain of is uncertainty. Also: The work we do is evidence of the relationships we have.

**What will you be doing after the EP is released?**

Art, photography, video, whatever gets Jeremy and I together more often, not that we need Given Names to be the reason.

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



## Scholarship of the Week

### Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** Matinée Multilingual College Scholarship

**Sponsored by:** Matinée Multilingual

**Deadline:** January 5, 2018

**Potential payout:** \$1000

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be enrolled at an accredited college or university in Canada, the U.S., or the U.K.

**What's required:** An online application form, along with a link to your 250-500 word blog post on how video enhances the user experience on a webpage. You must link [Matinée Multilingual](#)'s website in your blog post.

**Tips:** Boost your application by drawing some social media buzz to your blog page.

**Where to get info:** [www.matinee.co.uk/voice-over-agency/matinee-scholarship/](http://www.matinee.co.uk/voice-over-agency/matinee-scholarship/)





## The Fit Student Smoke Shows

Marie Well



Did your dreams ever go up in smoke? A waitress called my dyed hair a smoke show. But I desired more than smoke shows—I craved Nobel prizes, Saddledome events, half-a-million-dollar television shows. Crazy?

Yes, desire swallows all.

I desired to win a Nobel prize for measuring the travel of thought. Let me explain.

Years ago, I heard a long-lost friend's voice, but I was home alone. So, I searched her Whitehorse, Canada number and phoned her. Shockingly, she expected my call: she squealed, "You got my message!" She said she signals her aunt the same absurd way—through thought. Given this earful, I later claimed thought travels on "asymptotes"—paths which forever flow. Coincidentally, a news article featured a mathematician making the same claim—a decade later.

Big deal? Nah. Today, thought triggers motion in robotics. So, my Nobel-worthy idea now seems humdrum.

But back during my Nobel days, desire grew unwieldy. You see, I aimed to host a charity event at the Saddledome. I'd hire talent, orchestrate light shows, produce Vegas-style video backdrops. Excited charity reps met with me at local cafes. Did I go overboard? Maybe not. One guy hosted the Dalai Lama at the Saddledome—racking massive debt. Enough to make Bill Gates cry. He then launched a winning campaign for Allison Redford. So, if he can flub and flourish, surely, so could I.

But I lacked cash, volunteers, and a backing society. So, I floundered and failed.

Despite fumbling, desire ballooned. I plotted to produce a third-of-a-million-dollar animated film. I armed myself with lists of Canadian film funders. I even had a Disney animator and his team on board. But a vice president of a production company couldn't get the gist of my script, so I balked.

Broadway wasn't built in a day. But with bankruptcy—I mean backbone—anyone can build a smoke show.

Stefan Klein talks about the brain's smoke shows—desire and pleasure—in his book *The Science of Happiness: How Our Brains Make Us Happy and What We can Do to Get Happy*.

- Desire dances with dopamine: "There's some fresh fruit in the supermarket that at that moment happens to appeal to us—dopamine is released. We feel a surge of happiness, a joyful and excited 'I want it!'" (p. 88).
- Too little dopamine depletes desire; too much drives obsession and lust: "Dopamine deficiency robs people of their drive—even to the point of being corpse-like ... But too much of it is also disastrous! Desire becomes obsession; determination a lust for power; self-confidence, megalomania; and a rich imagination, madness" (p. 89).

- But don't lose yourself to desire: "If stimulus triggers desire repeatedly, the functioning of large parts of the brain is changed. Becoming super powerful, desire transforms people into driven creatures who know no limits and have lost their sense of reality" (p. 119).
- And pleasure dances with opioids: "Every enjoyment is a kind of rush. Whether it's a hot shower on a winter morning, a massage, a good meal ... opioids are involved in the creation of every experience of pleasure" (pp. 105-106).
- The sad part of pleasure? "Pleasure cannot last. As soon as everything is back in order, the sense of pleasure dissipates" (p. 113).

A friend pined. She failed to feel desire—no pleasure in pursuing dreams. My tip on desire? *Flee the coming smoke show in Canada—'cause cannabis may kill the will to win.*



## Handmaidens of Untruth Scholarly Custodialism?

Jason Sullivan



"How Fwap, splash, fwap! Imagine a dream where you are ambushed and smacked across the face with a sopping filthy mop. Why this assault, and from who? A few feet away leers a dour figure. It's the janitor of the building. What does s/he want from you? The answer is spat out in syllables at once terse and refined: to be seen as more than a mere cleaning person scrubbing away unsightly realities with asinine vigour. The shadowy assailant proclaims that their job entails more than making things appear neat and tidy for the status quo. And, s/he adds with a sly grin, *it is you* who are the janitor.

This is what the Fly on the Wall has uncovered as an elemental danger of academia: we risk becoming mere cogs in an unschooled machine if we consider our education only as a necessary drudgery towards career furtherance and not also as an edifying form of personal enlightenment. We are learning to ask not only the right questions for others but also to dream our way into new realms of thought. While we don't automatically deserve amazing jobs, we ought to retain the most creative urges that propelled us to stay in school in the first place. The mop may be metaphorical but our assigned task, to do the intellectual dirty work of others, is very real. Perhaps we, as scholars, have, too easily and for too long, allowed ourselves to see things as they appear to others rather than as they are in reality—and, in particular, as they are to our educated selves. As the folk-punk band The Meat Puppets once sang, "there's nothing at the top but a bucket and a mop and an illustrated book about birds" (Meat Puppets, online). It's when we gaze aloft that our intellectual potential truly takes flight.

Friedrich Nietzsche, with characteristically acerbic wit, wrote that "the scholar, the average man of science, always has something of the *old maid* about him...To both of them, indeed, to the scholar and to the old maid, one concedes respectability, by way of compensation as it were...and experiences the same feeling of annoyance at having been constrained to this concession."

(Nietzsche, P. 132). Sexist epithets aside, we may ask if scholars are mere minions of respectable prosperity called upon as experts to testify on behalf of the ruling class and to mop up messes with tarry globules of jargon and gobbledegook? It's conceivable that we are all in training for jobs that gloss over alternative possible approaches to issues of the day. After all, who would hire someone with a degree in a field so as to have the expert disagree with them?

Nietzsche sees academia as a bland veneer out of which gurgles a pious vernacular that mouths a dull secular theology. He asks:

*"Let us look more closely: what is the man of science? An ignoble species of man: he possesses industriousness, patient acknowledgement of his proper place in the rank and file, uniformity and moderation in abilities and requirements, he possesses the instinct for his own kind and for that which his own kind have need of...constant affirmation of his value and his utility with which his inner distrust, the dregs at the heart of all dependent men and herd animals, have again and again to be overcome."* (Nietzsche, 133)

For Nietzsche the real task of philosophers (who he defines as anyone who cares to learn and expand their minds, preferably on a voluminous multitude of subjects) is to exert all of our passions and wiles, and every ounce of our intellect and calculation, toward a project of self-improvement. His concept of *will to power* and the *Overman* do not imply egoistic glorification, but rather an expressive flourishing that brings betterness to ourselves and others. Yet how do we, as scholars, often find ourselves to be perceived? Nietzsche suggests that we appear boring, dolefully so:

*"He is trusting, but only like one who sometimes lets himself go but never lets himself flow out; and it is precisely in the presence of men who do flow out that he becomes the more frosty and reserved-his eye is then like a reluctant smooth lake surface is disturbed by no ripple of delight or sympathy"* (Nietzsche, 133).

We must, then, flow out into the ocean of society like an estuary teeming with the organic staff of academic life, misted through and through with manna from the ivory towers of learning such that all we encounter, professionally and academically, note our radiance and take us not as a tool for their utilization but as a veritable talisman of truth and justice. To Nietzsche, our overpowering possibilities are for the good of all if only we truly believe in what we learn and what we are.

So, given how intellectually-minded students may be underestimated and unappreciated for our abilities, we might consider how to change this state of affairs. What would we say if we could say anything; how would we wield our weaponized knowledge? The philosopher Slavoj Žižek states that "more important than to give the right answers is to ask the right questions. And here philosophy can be of some use. We are dealing with serious problems today. But what if we analyse the extent to which *the very way we formulate these problems doesn't resolve them, but reproduces the problems.*" (Žižek in Steinbauer, online). Perhaps the questions we ask anticipate and preclude certain answers in advance, such that we need to consider underlying drives that lead questioning down certain truth-seeking paths. Is it possible that truth itself may be impossible?

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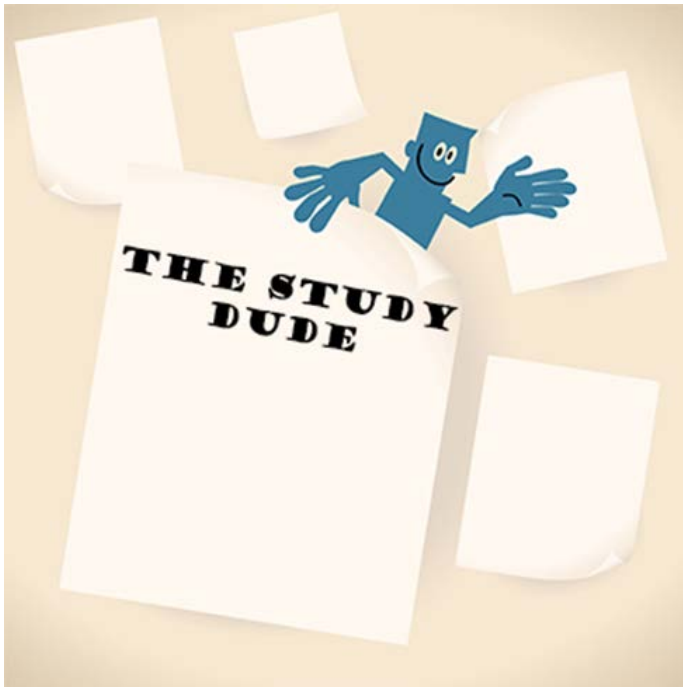
*Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.*





## The Study Dude Washboard Bellies Get A-Grades?

Marie Well



How do you reward your study spurts? With ten-minute washboard-ab workouts? Ten-minute zombie zone-outs? Or ten-minute roasted prairie dog pig-outs? I'll opt for all three.

But rewards mean little when lacking structure.

During my undergrad, I studied steady: 30-minute sessions; 15-minute breaks. I scored the highest grade in most every math class. To quash resentments, I reassured classmates I had no life. I revealed I'd visit a nursing home Saturdays followed by Greek pizza. And study. Nothing else.

When cramped in a cubbyhole studying seems easy, organizing easier. I'd peer at the same calendar, the same books, the same four walls. Steady.

But then I joined a ballet troupe, which led to weightlifting, boxing, and cycling to school. Plus, I began part-time work. Pressed for time, my near-perfect GPA dipped. And my study time turned cram-session.

Some of us thrive on last minute. One barista wrote five papers in one night. She researched her papers before the cram, but typed them all in one sitting. She got A's and B's—even an A+. One of her high school teachers taught brilliant English, she said. Worked for her. Wouldn't work for me.

Brimming with extracurriculars, I barely ended with a master's degree.

But that was over a decade ago. Now that I've returned to school, I barely find time to focus. Instead, I work freelance, seek full-time work, and exercise. I exercise over an hour each day, my fitness routine inching toward two hours. My reward for pre-bedtime study? Ten-minute ab workouts. Nothing like nighty-night hard abs.

In other words, I've got little time for study. I focus on readings and projects, but assignments get sidelined. The day I add full-time work, I won't need hard abs; I'll need a facelift—to my study time.

Thomas R. Klassen and John A. Dwyer help us focus and stay organized in their book *How to Succeed at University (And Get a Great Job!): Mastering the Critical Skills You Need for School, Work, and Life*.

- A student's biggest obstacle? Motivation. So, choose courses you love.
- Don't waste time. Instead, (1) get a routine, (2) schedule exams and assignments, (3) focus on biggest priorities, (4) review progress every week, and (5) "aim for steady improvement rather than perfection" (p. 34).
- Schedule exams and assignments, breaking them into subtasks, estimating the time each subtask takes. The more you plan, the better you estimate.

- Dream up rewards for each completed subtask.
- Leave no assignment unfinished.
- Read and research beyond the texts assigned.
- Befriend likeminded people—the ones spending countless hours studying—just like you.
- Make study-time off-limits to visitors. Let the crew know the gate shuts when the books open.
- Avoid cramming. Cramming never reaps your best work. “Would you like to be operated on by an overly stressed and exhausted surgeon who does her work while mainlining coffee?” (pp. 33-34).

A while back, I bought a paper day-planner, but it sat untouched. Instead of dogging the paper planner, I downloaded two A-class study apps:

(1) The Productivity Challenge Timer app, timing 25-minute study sessions and 5-minute breaks, and

(2) The School Planner app, organizing study schedules, deadlines, and tasks.

Now that you're armed with apps, prioritize. All-nighters versus nighty-night hard abs? Surely, steady studies beg for washboard bellies.



## Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

### Following What's Hot around AU's Social Media Sites.



#### **AthaU Facebook Group**

Amanda scrambles for options to re-write two missed exams before the December 31 course end date; looks like ProctorU will be her best bet. New student Shoshana seeks and receives tips for tackling MATH 215. Chanelle is looking for a study partner for SOCI 231, Sociology of Religion.

Other posts include AU holiday closures, and courses MATH 376 and MUSI 267.

#### **reddit**

User Renegade\_August thought it would be easier to ask on Reddit whether student cards are available to all AU students than searching for "student cards" on AU's website. In a separate post, user awesum\_ seeks recommendations for finance courses.

#### **Twitter**

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "AUSU is now accepting applications for the Chief Returning Officer for AUSU's upcoming 2018 general election. Deadline to apply: Jan 1. <http://bit.ly/2AeokF8>."

@AthabascaUBiz tweets: "New year, new you! Bookmark our upcoming graduate & undergraduate info session to learn more about furthering your education: <https://business.athabascau.ca/calendar/>."

## Self-Rejection

Deanna Roney



Sometimes you have to ask for what you want. When I got my first internship it was through a live chat event that the Literary agency was hosting and I “kiddingly” asked if she wanted an assistant. She didn’t, but they were going to be looking for readers soon and I was invited to email her directly.

The latest internship I’ve gained is with a Canadian Literary Agency that I had been keeping an eye on. I watch their sales and acquisitions. I took a chance and cold e-mailed them back in August. The initial response was no one was looking at the moment, but to keep them in mind in the

future. I took that suggestion to heart and as I neared the end of my second internship I emailed again.

When sending a cold e-mail it is important to keep it professional, approach it like you would if there was a job-posting but state in there exactly what you are looking for: why are you emailing them? And it is best to do that within the first few sentences, so they have some context moving forward. After the second email, I didn’t expect much of a response, I didn’t think enough time had passed, and I started making other plans when I got an email from one of the agents. I was ecstatic and a bit surprised.

It is important to take risks when going after what you want. There were more reasons to not e-mail the agency than there were reasons to. I did not expect much of a response. I did not think the odds would be in my favour. And, initially, they weren’t. However, the response I got to the first cold e-mail was so kind that I made a note to try again—. even though my expectations were that I would not hear anything back. I have discovered through job applications and writing novel queries that it is so important not to self-reject. I thought my odds with this last email were slim, but, as the old saying goes, if you don’t ask the answer is always no. So why would I tell myself no? If I get a pass or no response then that is okay, but at least I took that chance, I gave myself the opportunity to succeed—or fail.

I can’t control what anyone else is going to do. I don’t know when I send out emails if the response will be positive. I cannot control that response, but what I can control is what I do. I can make them tell me no. At least then I know that I am doing what I need to do to move forward.

When I read stories about people landing jobs, internships, agents, it always feels like it is done quickly. Even as I read back through my article it feels like I have just stumbled on these opportunities. But beyond the three yeses I got from agencies that welcomed me as an intern there were many I never heard from or that told me no. I spent days researching agencies and seeking out opportunities. I got through the initial screening on a few to be passed on later in the application process. But I never let these bring me down for too long, I kept moving forward and making them tell me no: until I got a yes.

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







## A Better 2018

Have you ever been warned off a particular store because it's 'dangerous' in there? That very thing happened to me during my last acupuncture appointment. During the roughly-hour-and-a-half I'm there there's plenty of time to talk about things other than my knotted body or blocked chi.

Ruby is a Chinese woman who's been in Canada for decades but returns at least twice a year to see her family. She's a registered massage therapist and acupuncturist who also does cupping. Because she moved her practice to her home it's easier to see how she lives. Her house is squeaky clean and filled with crystals. She sips on green shakes during lulls in the treatment and drinks water from a Santevia dispenser. The relaxation music, crystals beneath the massage table, and aromatherapy diffuser in the treatment room may seem like hokey touches but are in fact therapeutic.

Because I'm a curious soul, I'm always asking questions and adding to my knowledge base. I've got umpteen feng shui books and wondered if she knew of a source for Chinese coins, which are a potent wealth generator when they are activated with red thread and hung in the right place. (I've had a set of three for years but who can't use a bit more wealth?) I assumed she'd send me to some obscure shop in Chinatown. Not so. Instead she mentioned Ascendant Books. Her warning that it's a dangerous place to go ensured I'd be there on my next visit to the city.

What's not to love? Five thousand square feet full of metaphysical stuff. Books, crystals, jewelry, essential oils, singing bowls, CDs, yoga pillows, scarves, candles, incense, salt lamps, bookmarks, Chinese coins, inspirational banners and wall plaques, tarot and oracle cards, and more. Yes, I left with three new coins and a gift certificate that Roy, ahem, will be giving me for Christmas. My next trip back will be less exploratory and more acquisitory.

So whether your 'dangerous' place is Cabela's, Indigo, Princess Auto, Simons, Michael Kors, Giant Tiger, Winners, Home Depot, or you name it, proceed with caution. Most of us want for very little.

Choosing a select few things that really speak to or uplift us is preferable to acquiring stuff for the sake of stuff. And believe me, I ain't no damn minimalist. Do I have too much? Yes. But as long as each of these things serves me, brings me knowledge or insight, pleases me, I will continue to love buying/receiving well-curated gifts for Christmas, birthdays, Mother's Days and whatever other Days you have.

So, my lovelies, as a year like no other draws to a close take stock and take care as you celebrate the holiday season with loved ones, and prepare for 2018. With the world as we know it under threat from unhinged leaders, sociological tsunamis (Black Lives Matter, sexual predation, racism reignited to name some), we will need courage, common sense, and a commitment to each other to get us through. Heartfelt wishes for a better 2018, 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

## Catharsis for Christmas

Dear Barb:

*I hate Christmas! I know I shouldn't because "it's the happiest time of the year" but I do. I hate the money I have to spend for people I rarely see. I am already living pay cheque to pay cheque so I have to go in debt for Christmas! If I'm lucky I will get these gifts paid off before they all come back for more gifts next Christmas. I have been the lucky one who was nominated to be host of Christmas dinner again this year. Thankfully my wife doesn't hate Christmas as much as I do. Oh, and I just can't wait to see all my family, who fortunately I haven't seen since last Christmas, which by the way, turned into a big fiasco! My sister arrived with some guy who no one had met, with his two kids in tow. Since I didn't know about the kids coming, I had to find a couple of twenties and put them in an envelope, so they wouldn't feel left out. My other sister's husband had just left her, no doubt he's an asshole. She spent Christmas day depressed and trash talking him to anyone who would listen. My mother is in the early stages of dementia and my dad had just been diagnosed with cancer. Unfortunately, my dad passed away six months later. Mom is still here. Sometimes. So what's to be happy about? I think about all the poor souls who have no one at Christmas. In fact they have no one all year, but all the build up to Christmas just makes it seem that much worse. Religion is not a*

*part of Christmas anymore, so what does the day really mean anyway. To me it's a day to get together with family members I would rather not see, buy gifts I can't afford, and have a meal that no one really appreciates. My question is, does anybody truly enjoy Christmas anymore? Thanks for allowing me to vent, Michael.*

Whoa Michael!

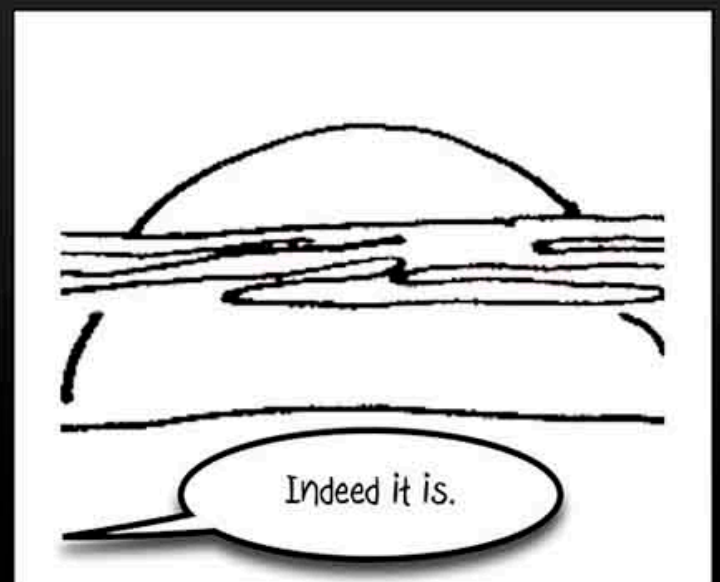
No doubt your story is a sad one, but you are not alone, many people are feeling the way you do. My advice to you would be to change your thinking. Rather than see everything as a negative, try to see the positives. Since you are the host you will be setting the stage for the day. When things start to turn negative with your sister, turn it around or change the subject. She will get the hint and I'm sure others will follow your lead. It is sad that your mother has dementia, but on the bright side, she is still with you, as many other people's mothers are not. You and your family can make this a special Christmas for her, as you said she is still aware at times, so make the best of those times. Religion is still a part of Christmas, it is people who are not celebrating the true meaning of Christmas. If you believe in the religiosity of Christmas, then return the focus of your day to celebrating the birth of Christ. Make the best of this Christmas and begin to change things up for next Christmas. Talk to your family members and, if you cannot afford gifts for everyone, don't buy them. You should not have to go in debt for Christmas. Draw names and put a limit on the amount to spend on each gift, this way everyone has a gift and no one is left out. Do not allow yourself to be pressured into hosting Christmas dinner, take turns with your siblings. The only way things will change is if everyone in your family communicates how they feel. The alternative is to continue year after year with the same scenario and feeling the same resentment and frustration. Merry Christmas to you and your family Michael and thanks for sharing your story.

Follow Barb on twitter @BarbGod

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## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Dec 15:** [January degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Dec 22:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Feb](#)
- **Dec 23-Jan 2:** AU & AUSU holiday closure, inclusive
- **Jan 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Feb 1](#)
- **Jan 15:** [February degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Jan 15:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Jan 21:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Mar](#)

## Now Hiring CRO

AUSU is now accepting applications to fill the role of Chief Returning Officer (CRO) for our upcoming 2018 General Election.

**Application Deadline: Monday, January 1, 2018**

The CRO, working with AUSU staff, is responsible for monitoring all aspects of the election process.

The CRO duties will span from January 26, 2018 to approximately March 15, 2018. In the event of an appeal, the position may extend 1-2 weeks longer to conduct the appeal. The anticipated time commitment is approximately 35 – 55 hours within the 7- to 9- week period.

The CRO position can be performed from any location, but requires telephone, email, and internet capability. The CRO must be available to respond to inquiries within 1 business day. Proficiency in Word and Excel is required.

The successful candidate will receive a \$1000 honorarium on completion of the role.

Visit our website [here](#) to find out more about the role, including instructions to apply.



## Holiday Help from Lynda.com

Got holiday challenges? Lynda.com can help with these great playlists!

### [Holiday Dinners with the Family Playlist:](#)

Features Managing Conflict, Conflict Resolution Foundations, Improving Your Conflict Confidence

### [Meeting New Relatives Playlist:](#)

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### [Visiting Multiple Homes in One Day Playlist](#)

Features 5 Ways to Control Your Time, Teamwork Foundations, Time Management Tips Weekly, Time Management Fundamentals, Efficient Time Management, Managing Your Time, Managing Your Calendar for Peak Productivity, Coaching for Results

### [Managing your Holiday Shopping Playlist:](#)

Features Project Management for Creative Projects, Project Management Foundations, Project Management Simplified, Insights from a Project Manager

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301 Energy Square - 10109 - 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7  
Ph: 855.497.7003

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

**Regular Columnists** Hazel Anaka, Barb Godin, Scott Jacobsen, Carla Knipe  
Barbara Lehtiniemi, Deanne Roney, Wanda Waterman, Xin Xu

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