



# THE VOICE

Vol 26 Issue 41 2018-10-26

## **The Bargaining Continues** Is AU at Risk of a Strike?

## **Meeting the Minds** Interviewing AU's Educators

## **In Conversation** With Sydney Wright

*Plus:  
Six Pumpkins for Students  
Fear of Polymaths  
and much more!*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

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## Editorial Scary Times

Karl Low



Domestic terrorism is nothing new to most nations in the world, but usually we manage to frame it as an “us vs. them” phenomenon. Us, in the civilized, rational society, dealing with them. Them, the crazies who want government to be destroyed, or who want their God to be the only God worshipped, or who feel our way of life is despicable and must be stopped.

That’s part of what makes the most recent bombing attempts in the United States so troubling. They seem to be bombings done in support of the government. And while I don’t think it’s fair to attribute them to any members of any political party (even if they are, it should be pretty clear that these are really by someone who’s more sick than well, so looking at party affiliation isn’t a fair way of framing it, as mental illness doesn’t discriminate based on voting record) it gives us an uncomfortable dissonance in having to wonder, if only for a moment, if the them, the crazies, might just now be us?

Okay, fine, most people aren’t. As I said, this is some sick person, so we shouldn’t just attribute their actions to the larger society in general, yet in the same breath, isn’t there a part that

we play? And no, I don’t just mean those stoking the fires against media or opposing parties, I mean all of us. The polarization which makes for such great reporting on the news (after all, it’s always great when you can report two clear sides fighting. That’s a story we all know and can understand) is breaking apart our primary defense against this type of thing—communicating with each other.

When we’re all screaming at the other guys, perhaps part of what we need to remember is that why we’re screaming is because they don’t seem to be hearing us. But maybe that applies both ways. So maybe, rather than laughing at them, or trying to prove that they’re wrong, we just need to shut up and listen for a while. And that’s hard. It’s so hard to listen to something that you adamantly disagree with without stepping up to correct things, but I’m not sure there’s any other way that we’re going to get through to each other. If we listen, maybe they’ll stop screaming. And then we won’t have to scream either. And if they don’t, maybe that’s the warning we need to get them to seek professional help. And if that had been done for the bomber, maybe we wouldn’t be having this conversation.

At any rate, this is our Halloween issue, and we’ve got a few things on the scary side to get you into the spirit of the season. Starting with our feature article, a look at the ongoing contract negotiations between AU and AUPE. Mandatory arbitration has been removed from legislation, meaning that post-secondary unions have to use the methods that every other private sector union and employer uses. Which means, in the worst-case scenario, a strike or lockout. The question is, will AU have one, and what will that do to your courses? We look at what’s been going on in Carla Knipe’s report on the negotiations.

We also have a new Meeting the Minds, where we talk to Dr. Jeff Chang from the AU Psychology department, it’s a solid interview with some decent information if you’re looking at one of AU’s psych degrees. Plus, of course, advice, reviews, interviews, events, scholarships, and more! Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl", written in a cursive, flowing style.

## Athabasca University's Faculty Bargain Process Continues

Carla Knipe



Contract talks at Athabasca University have been ongoing for several months. However, most of the AU student community is unaware these talks are taking place and is also unaware of what they entail. They are between AU and AU's teaching faculty and professional staff, which include the IT staff, librarians, university relations, and the registrar's office. The collective agreement that covers the faculty and professional staff outlines the terms and conditions of work, including matters such as hiring, firing, wages, vacations and how

to handle disputes. The current agreement ended June 30, 2018 but continues to operate while AU and the AU Faculty Association (AUFA) negotiate a new agreement.

There are two other unions at AU; the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) represents support staff, and the Canadian Union of Provincial Employees (CUPE) represents tutors and academic experts. CUPE recently settled a new agreement, and AUPE contract talks are ongoing.

In the past, when AU and AUFA negotiated and could not come to agreement, the matter was referred to arbitration. A neutral third party, the arbitrator, would look at the offers and decide which would be incorporated into the new agreement.

According to Dr. Bob Barnetson, AU's Labour Relations professor who has been heavily involved in several contract negotiations at AU over the years, AUFA has had its offer—not AU's—chosen by the arbitrator as the more reasonable offer the last three times that contract talks reached arbitration.

In 2017, the government changed Alberta's labour laws in response to a Supreme Court ruling on the freedom to associate. One change is that any bargaining impasse between AUFA and AU is now normally resolved through strike and lockout.

For those who are not familiar with what happens with aspects of union negotiations, a strike is when workers refuse to come to work to pressure the employer to accept the union's offer. On the other hand, a lockout is when the employer says workers cannot work (and so won't get paid) to pressure the workers to accept the employer's offer. It is possible to have either a strike or a lockout or both a strike and lockout at the same time, but it is a difficult and complex dynamic to explain.

Dr. Barnetson told The Voice that collective bargaining between AUFA and AU has been going on since late April, before the current contract expired, but talks have not progressed to the point of finding a resolution and ratifying a new contract. AUFA is seeking a small wage increase,

mostly to offset inflation, as well as better protection of professionals' freedom of expression, a spousal hiring clause, and reducing the use of contract workers.

However, Dr. Barnetson said that AU is seeking a two-year wage freeze and roll backs such as appeal committees being stacked in favour of the employer (which is AU), the elimination of most professional freedom protections, and new provision which will give the employer the ability to send sick members to company doctors for assessment. He notes that these proposals are viewed by the faculty as provocative, especially since AU's revenues are up and the university is in a healthier position now than it has been. Dr. Barnetson said that AU's attempt to weaponize sick leave is particularly contentious because of the underlying implication of questioning when and why employees take time off work and setting limits on sick leave.

Dr. Barnetson notes that the current status of contract talks is that bargaining has gone on throughout the summer and is not producing any real results. AUFA's assessment is that AU is stalling in the expectation that AUFA won't strike and will eventually cave in. Other settlements with contracts in the public sector are two years of zero wage increases but improvements in the language within the contracts, according to Dr. Barnetson. He notes that these other contract examples should form a template for a contract settlement deal at AU but he says that finding a settlement resolution seems to be difficult because of what he calls "totally unrealistic wage freezes and major language rollbacks."

To get bargaining moving, AUFA members are engaging in "days of action," such as hallway posters and social media postings. This is designed to attach costs, mostly reputational and social, to the employers stalling on finding a resolution. As the costs to AU escalate, the Faculty Association hopes to pressure AU to negotiate instead of the "surface bargaining" or going through the motions,

## AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

### System Upgrades

Sat Oct 27, 2018 7:00 AM – 2:00pm MDT

To ensure you do not lose any changes, please do not use any of these systems during this time.

OROS (Office of the Registrar Online System) including

- viewing electronic letters and grades
- creating transcript requests
- viewing of transfer credit and/or admission status
- change programs (graduate and undergraduate)
- course extensions and withdrawals
- course registrations
- exam requests

Faculty of Business PCI and MBA payment portals

Conference registration sites that take payment

### Undergrad Program Orientation for New Students

Tues, Oct 30, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[business.athabasca.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-new-students-information-session-oct30-2018/](https://business.athabasca.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-new-students-information-session-oct30-2018/)

Register online at above link

### "Frost and desolation": Athabasca U Frankenreads - Edmonton

Wed, Oct 31, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm MDT  
The Matrix Hotel, 10640 - 100 Ave NW, Edmonton AB

In-person and online

Hosted by AU in partnership with the Keats-Shelley Association of America

[www.eventbrite.ca/e/frost-and-desolation-athabasca-u-frankenreads-tickets-50929084262](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/frost-and-desolation-athabasca-u-frankenreads-tickets-50929084262)

For in-person, register online at above link; online at Facebook live from 10:30 to 11:30 am MDT at [facebook.com/AthabascaU](https://facebook.com/AthabascaU)

*All events are free unless otherwise specified*



that Dr. Barnetson says they have been engaged in up until now. He notes that “So far we’ve been pretty polite and low key about this.”

The Voice also reached out to AU President Dr. Neil Fassina and asked about his perspective on negotiations. In a lengthy emailed response to The Voice’s questions, President Fassina says that:

*“The bargaining process is progressing as AU had anticipated. The University has designated a bargaining team and has given them a mandate and the full authority to make decisions on behalf of the University. I can speak with confidence in describing the University’s team as willing and empowered to negotiate fairly, transparently, and in good faith on all issues at the table. To this end, the University’s team continues to approach each session of bargaining well prepared and proactive in adapting and amending the University’s proposals during each bargaining session. The University has been fully transparent about its in-going proposal and the rationale behind each item. So much so that the University shared its proposal early in the bargaining process. In all cases, the University has put forward proposals that it believes are in the best interest of the members of the Faculty Association and the University, but more than anything in the best interest of our learners.”*

Dr. Fassina also says that “[Voice] Readers should know that the bargaining environment is different now than it has been in Alberta’s history. The introduction of Bill 7 in 2017 created an environment in which a strike or lockout is a possible. As a result, it is anticipated that this would weigh heavily on the minds and shoulders of all members of the bargaining team.”

The Voice asked Dr. Fassina about whether the current political climate in Alberta, as well as the distance learning format of Athabasca University, has any bearing on the negotiation process. Dr. Fassina said that “I do not believe that our Open environment has a direct impact on the bargaining environment other than recognizing that some of the things the University and Faculty Association talk about in bargaining might be different than you might expect in a place-based university environment. AU is thankful for the support given to us by Minister Schmidt and the other members of the Government and Alberta Public Service toward our very positive future. With each step and decision, the University endeavors to allocate the resources provided to it by the Province and through student tuition in the most effective and supportive way possible toward achieving learners’ personal goals.”

Dr. Jolene Armstrong, who is president of the AUFA, and a key negotiator, echoed this sentiment. “I’m not sure about the distributed workplace necessarily being a barrier to effective bargaining, but since this is the first time bargaining under the new legislation, I guess we’ll find out. I think that over the past few years, AUFA has worked very hard to cement the solidarity of the membership, and more recently members have really come out in support of its bargaining team. It’s an exciting time, as we’re basically inventing how to collectively bargain in a brand new lockout/strike regime in a distributed work force. There really aren’t many models to look to. I think there’s a tendency to feel rather singled out in terms of the various pressures that faculty face at AU. But then you attend other labour conferences and you talk to people from across Canada and you realize that the pressure and challenges we are facing are pretty much universal.”

Dr. Armstrong also felt optimistic about the current political climate in Alberta, which affects university funding, but noted that AU will take time to recover from years of post-secondary

cutbacks. “I think that the funding troubles that we are experiencing are due to a legacy of unstable, unpredictable funding under forty years of conservative governments. The cuts were brutal, and the damage is still felt today. I don’t think institutions ever really recovered, even when things became more stable. So many people were laid off, and worse than that was the inability of institutions to be able to plan because the funding was so unpredictable. The last couple of years under the NDP have been a bit of a relief, but it will take many more years of stable and incremental funding increases to recover what has been lost due to those bad years. AU has unique challenges due to its heavy reliance on IT, and the fact that a larger proportion of our students are from out of province and, to date, no government has been willing to address these funding challenges that are specific to AU despite numerous attempts on the part of the university administrations to find a sympathetic ear and convince the government to address what amounts to a pretty serious inequity in the funding for AU.”

For those who don’t know, what Dr. Armstrong is talking about is how the Alberta government allocates funding to universities in part based on how many Alberta students that university serves. The government does not provide funding for out of province students, but rather allows post-secondary institutions to charge whatever fees they feel appropriate. However, AU has, in the past, felt that increasing these fees to the full cost of delivering the course would make them uncompetitive.

While Dr. Fassina is unable to discuss specifics about the process, citing confidentiality and respect for negotiating in good faith, he wishes to highlight that “the current negotiations have given me and other members of the University’s leadership team a chance to continue demonstrating our willingness to be as transparent as possible as we respond to many of the tough questions that come out of bargaining. As we transform our university for the betterment of learners and society overall, transparency is and will continue to be paramount.”

Dr. Barnetson said that at present, bargaining is continuing and there is no talk of a strike or a lockout. If there is no resolution to contract negotiations, eventually there will be an impasse where further bargaining is pointless. The worst-case scenario for the AU community is that a strike or lockout takes place. This would affect employees but would also trickle down to students as many AU services require AUFA members to function. The process of a work stoppage is laborious and only occurs after all avenues of mediation and negotiation are exhausted and a strike vote and notice to strike are issued. Dr. Fassina noted that in the unlikely event that negotiations are not successful in creating a mutually agreeable result, the Labour Code provides for the potential for a strike or a lockout. In either of these cases, the University would go out of its way to continue supporting students in their learning journey. Before either a strike or a lockout could take place, there is a series of steps that must be taken by each of the parties involved.

Dr. Armstrong also hopes it doesn’t come to that [a strike or lockout], and says that AU’s faculty bargaining team is working very hard to achieve a fair agreement.

But if a work stoppage should occur, will students be affected? “In the short term, yes. But in the long term, they will benefit from the types of gains, or protections that faculty might be willing to walk over—consider that if a labour dispute occurs, it will be over something really serious, and often over protecting core academic values or about attempts to improve working conditions



that have degenerated so badly that it is difficult for effective teaching and research to take place. I think that what needs to be avoided at all costs are wedges between bargaining units, and this includes the students' unions. After all, the faculty's teaching conditions are the students' learning conditions. How close are we to a labour dispute at AU? Without a crystal ball, it's hard to say, so while things have not been going particularly well at the table, there is still a lot of time left, and anything can happen that would bring the parties to an agreement."

Dr. Fassina's response was also optimistic about the outcome. "While the worst case is difficult to define due to the complexity of the bargaining process and potential outcomes, is important to highlight that the University continues to approach bargaining proactively, transparently, and willing to find a mutually agreeable settlement in the best interest of the students, the faculty association, and the university. Given our current context, I do not see us moving toward a work stoppage."

How can AU students show their support for the teaching faculty and other university staff who are engaged in contract negotiations? Dr. Armstrong said "We would love to hear from the students' unions and create opportunities for discussion and support. I think it's too easy to say that the staff's concerns are divergent from the students' concerns, but I think that is an oversimplification of the issue. I think students do care about the working conditions of their professors, tutors, and the professional staff that provide various supports for students. I think that they do care about the kind of institution that they are earning a degree from. I think that once the students connect to the idea that if faculty are being treated poorly, or if academic principles are being compromised, then their learning is compromised, the students will see that that has a direct effect on their learning goals. I think it could be empowering to students to support the learning environment that their professors work within, and this includes the many professional staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes.

Dr. Fassina also gave his assurances to students by saying "The best perspective I can provide is to be patient during what is a fairly typical bargaining process. Moreover, integral to the University's commitment to transparency is the premise of responding to facts and not rumours; therefore, the University is committed to open and honest communication within the confines of the collective bargaining process. Therefore, if learners hear rumors or facts that are concerning, feel free to connect with the University and we can seek to confirm, clarify or dispel any information floating around."

The latest update to the bargaining process from Dr. Barnetson is that bargaining has gone on for five months and the teams have met for 10 or so days of bargaining and, in his words, "There has been basically no progress." He goes on to say that every other public sector agreement is coming in with two years of wage freezes, a wage re-opener for year three, and language improvements for the workers. AU continues to offer a two-year freeze and massive language roll backs, which are unacceptable to AUFAs members. If there is to be a work stoppage, the likely timeline for it would probably be next spring (April or May) which reflects the necessary steps to get to that point and is also during the next provincial election.

The Voice hopes to provide updates to this story as they occur.

*Carla is an AU student who lives and writes in Calgary, Alberta. Say "hi" to her on Twitter @LunchBuster.*



# MEETING THE MINDS

## INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



*Doctor Jeff Chang, Ph.D., R.Psych., is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Disciplines at Athabasca University. He is the Program Director of the Master of Counselling Psychology program at AU. He joined the AU community in 2007. Here we explore his life and work with AU.*

**What is your personal and family background? How does this build into postsecondary experience getting education and certification in psychology?**

I thought that I would be in a helping profession. I had a lot of teachers in my family. Then I went to Trinity Western University in 1977. I was doing work in a youth ministry. I thought, "Maybe, ministry is where I could end up."

Then I got married young and ended up needing to work and slow down on school. I have done all my school full-time plus. School or work full-time while doing the other. This is not necessarily a good thing when you end up in a profession where self-care is important.

I ended up getting a job at a residential treatment centre for adolescents. I thought, "I do not know anything about this." So, I was fortunate to get into a master's program in counselling psychology at Simon Fraser University.

I did that from 1982 to 1985. In 1986, I moved to Alberta. There were a lot of interesting things going on in the family therapy community in Calgary. It was a bit of a hotbed of family therapy at that point.

In Alberta, you can be licensed as a psychologist with a master's degree, which I did. For fifteen years, I worked in children's mental health, employee assistance programs, and in private practice.

**So what brought you to AU?**

There is a bit of a fast forward there. I ended up in a Ph.D. program starting in 2001. When I was close to finishing my Ph.D., a faculty position was posted. I had not considered a career as a full-time academic up to that point.

I worked as an instructor or tutor in several institutions. I was briefly an undergrad tutor at AU from 1989 to 1991, teaching PSYC 289 (Psychology as a Natural Science). After that I taught mostly in counselling-related graduate programs. Then this job appeared, I applied for it, and was successful.

I think my broad practice experience made me attractive. I had a bit of a publication track record as I occasionally found opportunities to write while working full-time in practice. Also, I had had some leadership experience, having run a large practice and a children's mental health program, so I think that helped.

But mainly, I had had a 20-year practice career.

**What was the last non-AU book that you read?**

The last non-AU book that I read.... I must remember the title: *The Devil's Bargain*. It's about how Steve Bannon planned the election of Donald Trump. I generally read history and biographies. The last novel I read was *Crazy Rich Asians*, and I think it's kind of cool that the movie is now out. The book came out about four years ago, so that's how often I read fiction.

**If you could have a meal with one person dead or alive, who would that person be? What meal would you have with them?**

This is a bit trite, but Barack Obama, because he has a nuanced view of so many things. He has an idea of how the world fits together. There are so many moving parts in what he had to do, and I think he gets it.

Also, when you see him on TV, he seems like a down to earth guy. I like the fact that he apparently has a great family life. I would be so curious about how he managed to do that while being president of the United States. I think he is an intriguing person for those reasons.

The meal, solely for myself, because I have no idea what he would enjoy eating. I would want prime rib, Yorkshire pudding, a baked potato, and asparagus. How would I look to your readers if I did not include a vegetable? Also, some good horseradish would be necessary.

**What is your position now? What tasks and responsibilities come along with this position?**

I am an Associate Professor, and I am currently the Program Director of the Master of Counselling Program. A typical academic position is 40% teaching, 40% research and publication, and 20% service.

Service includes university service (committees and administrative work), and external service (sitting on boards, consulting in the community, and in the case of counselling professors, some kind of practice).

In an administrative job, it shifts – teaching and research and publication are reduced. So it's more like 50% administration and 25% the other two. I have been the Program Director for 2 years.

There are many responsibilities related to being Program Director. The responsibilities are pretty wide-ranging. One is general program quality. For example, every program at every university in Alberta does a 5-year program review.

With the help of the Office of Institutional Studies, we collected data from students, alumni, instructors, faculty, and practicum supervisors, faculty and administrative staff, and so on. We did focus groups with our students when they attended in-person 4-day practicum seminars in March.

My job as Program Director was to compile all this data and make sense of it all, to figure what we are doing well and not so well, and create a plan for improving what we do.



As Program Director, I also deal with some unpleasant issues, such as plagiarism and other academic integrity issues. I also deal with grade appeals.

I make final decisions about admissions to our program when an applicant is marginal, review course evaluations and give feedback to instructors, do performance reviews of faculty, and make sure our course revision schedule stays on track.

One of the unexpected pleasures is dealing with students who need support. Sometimes students have health problems, including mental health issues, or they have family crises. At times they end up going MIA in a course, and they think they are in trouble.

As a program, we're not interested in washing them out. Since we are a professional training program, we try to teach students that they are learning is much more than academic content, but skills and attitudes for professional practice.

As professionals, it is an ethical imperative to care for ourselves so we can care for our clients. When we cannot, we must learn to ask for support. Some students think that, if they express weakness or distress we will consider them unsuitable for the profession.

Quite the opposite; they need to learn to recognize their limits and ask for support when they need it. They may need to take time off or to slow down their studies to make sure they can attend to their health or family needs.

Some students who are distressed are quite surprised that they are welcome in the program, and we want to support them to attain the competencies they need to become professional counsellors. I ask them to check in with me to let me know how they are doing, and tell me about the changes they've made.

I did not anticipate that this would become a part of the job that I enjoy as much as I do. It's allowed me to connect with students at a vulnerable point in their lives, and I have a sense of satisfaction that they learn the value of self-care.

On the other hand, sometimes I have to be the person to tell a student that, despite our best efforts and theirs, they are not going to be successful acquiring the competencies necessary to be a professional counsellor. That's not pleasant, but it's necessary to protect the public.

Another part of my gig is dealing with regulatory bodies. Because we train students from across Canada, we want to keep on top of the licensing requirements in each province and territory. Recently, I met with the College of Alberta Psychologists.

They've been trying to streamline their process for evaluating applicants; to make this happen, we need to change some of the things we do, but this will make it much easier for our grads to start the process of being Registered Psychologists in Alberta.

Also, I am working on an application to the Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario to preapprove our program so our Ontario grads can be fast-tracked.

I have a pretty active research agenda. I research, write, and present on high-conflict divorce, clinical supervision, school-based mental health services, and family therapy. I have a couple of books out – one on working with children, and another on family therapy.

### **Is it a problem that counsellors take on the issues of their clients?**

That is a great question. Because our program is a professional training program, students need to learn more than theoretical approaches to counselling. They must learn to manage their own behaviour and emotional reactions to clients' stories and difficulties.

In their practicum placements, our students hear about depression, suicidal ideation, trauma, sexual victimization and exploitation, family violence, marital conflict, affairs, substance misuse, and many other problems.

In our program, we work hard to teach students to reflect on their own biases and be self-aware about client issues, or the way clients present, that might be issues for them. We try to model that too.

I share about times when I have had to consult another professional to make sure I can maintain good judgement with clients and deal with them constructively.

### **Is there any such thing as a 'typical' student in your program?**

We have many working students who are established in their career as teachers, social workers, and in other helping professions, who want to stay working in the same field and take our program to advance their careers.

We also have people who are looking for a career change. We've had a military officer, or people who have worked in government at a high level, who want to be therapists as a second career.

The average student age in our program is about 34, but the most striking thing about our student body is that it is 85-90% female. This is the case with counsellor education programs all over Canada and the US. I have had entire classes – sections of 20 students – with not a single man in the class. This has been the case since the beginning of our program in the early 2000s.

This has implications for the supply of counsellors and therapists. If the pool of available counsellors is over 80% female, it might be tougher to engage male clients in therapy. This is not to say that the female therapists cannot be effective with men or with heterosexual couples.

But I think that it would probably a good thing to have more men in the field. When I was doing on a full-time practice, I did a lot of couples' therapy with heterosexual couples.

When I was doing full-time private practice, I think I got a lot of business because I am male because a man might have a certain comfort in knowing, or at least believing, that he is not going to be ganged up on by a female therapist and his female partner.

### **So a lot fewer men. Do you know why men have been self-jettisoning from psychology?**

I don't know. It is possible to make a good income as a counsellor or as a psychologist. But there are certain professions that make better money, right? I think universities have a higher proportion of female students.

Women are more attracted by the helping professions and men are more inclined to be in trades or in technical fields. So if the proportion of men in undergrad programs is smaller, it makes the applicant pool for graduate programs smaller. One can make a decent living as a counsellor or therapist, but it is certainly not a profession in which one will get rich

### **Why would income be the main reason for men?**

I am speculating here. There is still a very strong cultural belief that men are to be providers. But it would be an interesting research study to explore what attracts men the field of counselling, why they stay in the field, and what their career paths look like.

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



## Canadian School Statistics that May Surprise You

Tara Panrucker



Enrolling in a college or university in Canada is a valuable chance to further your studies. While researching schools and cities to study, it's interesting to see how we stack up. Here are some thought-provoking facts about Canadian schools.

1. According to the article "10 of the Best Places to Study Abroad in 2018," by Sabrina Collier, Montreal, Canada ranks #4. There is no reason given for this other than a respondent to a survey who enthused the city is *"...cultural, young and lively. It has absolutely the BEST foods, a European feel, study cafés everywhere, and beautiful people from all over"*.
2. According to another article on the same web site, Canada doesn't even place as one of "10 of the Most Affordable Places to Study Abroad."<sup>2</sup>
3. The University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia are the two top universities in Canada, according to www.timeshighereducation.com. U of T is listed because they offer more than 700 undergraduate degrees and 200 postgraduate degrees, and it also boasts as being one of the best in the world for medicine. UBC is voted because of the natural beauty of its location and for being one of the most competitive universities.
4. Children are eligible to attend kindergarten when they turn four in Ontario and Quebec, but not until they're five in all the other provinces.
5. In 2000, there were a total of 176,556 university graduates across Canada. In 2015, there were a total of 307,245.
6. The 2017 Universities Canada survey states that since 2013, the number of academic programs that include an Indigenous focus or are designed for Indigenous students has been increased by 55%.
7. The average tuition fee for full-time Canadian graduate students in Canada from 2017-2018 for a dentistry student was \$12,652 CAD, while a nursing student would've paid \$7,709, according to www.statista.com.
8. *Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey* reveals that full-time workers with degrees in history earn above \$65,000 annual, on average.
9. As last count in 2016, there are 96 universities in Canada.
10. For international students to get jobs, an MBA is the top course to study in Canada.<sup>7</sup>
11. You can expect to pay an average of \$6,571 per year of study for an undergraduate degree and \$6,907 per year for a graduate degree if you're a Canadian citizen studying in Canada, according to www.topuniversities.com.



12. According to [www.worldwidelearn.com](http://www.worldwidelearn.com), Athabasca University ranks as the #1 online university in Canada, with over fifty undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

I wasn't aware of any of these statistics before I signed up for class. It pays to know how the universities you're considering compare and contrast to others, and even ponder how a child may benefit by beginning school one year earlier. Make an informed decision and ask students who are already attending the university you're considering to get a broader perspective for the future.

*Tara Panrucker lives on Vancouver Island and is seeking a General Arts Degree at AU.*



## Mini Movie Reviews

### Current Horror Flicks

**Xin Xu**



Whether you love it or you avoid it like the plague, horror movies are a bucket list item for many movie-goers this week. While I don't always appreciate the jump scares, when enjoyed with the right people, horror movies can be a great experience with friends. What should you know about the current blockbuster movies on the big screens this Halloween? How do you know it will be the right (or wrong) pick for you? We look at three popular horror movies that will give you some thrills this October 31st.

Disclaimer: the IMBD ratings are only for reference, they are not representative of everyone's tastes in horror movies or the entertainment value of each movie.

#### ***The Nun***

IMBD rating: 5.7/10

- Personally, as a big fan of *The Conjuring* series, the nun was a popular pick for me. A few weeks ago, I enjoyed (and screamed) with a handful of friends in theatre at the terrorizing demon possession sensation prelude that leads into *The Conjuring* series. If you're unfamiliar, the series includes *Annabelle*, an eerie looking doll that sends goosebumps down your arms, and *The Conjuring* which follows a series of terrorizing events following a demon possession. This movie introduces the series of events following the suicide of a nun in a haunted abbey in Romania. Even if you're not familiar with *The Conjuring* series, this is an excellent movie for its abundance of jump scares and plot development.

#### ***Hell Fest***

IMBD rating: 5.9/10

- Unlike the other popular titles on the list, *Hell Fest* is distinctly a slasher horror movie. The roller coaster feelings of being stalked, trapped, and captured by the serial killer are all realistically experienced in this movie. It follows the story of a group of teenagers entering

a haunted theme park with scares you would experience in a real-life haunted house. Through the mazes of each activity in the theme park the suspense builds as your sixth sense tells you someone is following you. Although the idea is not original, it does provide you with enough thrills for the week.

### ***The House with a Clock in its Walls***

IMBD: 6.3/10

- True horror fans will roll their eyes at this movie having made the list. However, despite being a PG 13 film, it is still a horror or thriller movie at its best. For AU students who are looking for a moderately scary movie, this will be it. There are still enough disturbing scenes that will be uncomfortable, but not enough to keep you awake at night. The story follows a young boy who learns that his uncle is a warlock looking for a clock in his house that could bring about the end of the world. It's a family thriller movie that has beautiful graphics and a joy to watch on the big screens.

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



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

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

#### **AthaU Facebook Group**

Casey is looking for advice on what course to pick to fill out her critical perspective requirement, while Ashley has some questions about how a minor fits into the degree program and what courses other people took in the first and second semester for a Psychology major.

Other posts include coming up with a specific theme for an end of course paper, whether you can complete a six credit course in a single month, and whether and how to cite the textbook from a course. Courses inquired about include CRJS 490, PHIL 231, ENGL 255, and more.

#### **reddit**

User "Kurtfrom116" has posted a review of Athabasca University, giving it an 8/10 with a list of pros and cons, while "BlanketFaerie" was looking for advice on the CHEM 350 Midterm.

#### **Twitter**

@AthabascaU tweets: Meet #AthabascaU's new Mental Health Coordinator. Her role is to drive the development of a #mentalhealth strategy that will help us to better support the needs of our remarkable & diverse students. An important jump forward on #WorldMentalHealthDay <https://t.co/SbWdF8PjSf>

@austudentsunion tweets: " Did you know you can fill out a peer review course evaluation on AUSU's website? Available anytime, answers are anonymous, but you can also review the results of previous AU course evals! <https://bit.ly/1LxPIQn>



## Self-Care and Perspective

Deanna Roney



Regardless of where you work or study, it can be too easy to push how much time we spend on our occupation. There is a feeling pushed on social media that if you want to get anywhere you need to work, be busy, stay busy. If you take time off or aren't busy *all* the time you're not trying hard enough, and if you don't try hard enough you won't get to where you want to be.

But there is also the self-care side of things. The side where people are starting to recognize burn out and the need to stop before you overwork yourself. It is vital to take these days off and recharge. To take a few hours to yourself in the evening.

With two polarizing ideas, what do you listen to? It can be stressful even if you aren't aware that it is affecting you. Do you hustle for that dream job 24/7 or do you take your weekends off? Do you put in the extra time, or are you draining yourself and you absolutely, without a doubt, must take those two hours in the evening to take yourself to a movie?

The answer is going to be different for everyone. I found that for a long period of time, I hustled, I kept myself busy. If I wasn't actively working toward my goal I struggled to relax, I felt like I needed to be doing

something. And, in all honesty, I did need to hustle to get to where I am. I needed to put in that time, to research, to apply for positions, to ask questions. I needed to be doing everything I could to make progress.

Now that I have gained some ground I am easier on myself, I take time to exercise each day, whether that is in the morning or the evening. I take some weekends off, sometimes only one day, sometimes both. But something I heard the other day that really resonated with me is that this idea of self-care can become stressful in itself; which completely contradicts its purpose.

For example, if you told yourself that you would take an hour walk for self-care, but work is piling up, deadlines are looming, so you try to get through your work to make time for that hour walk; but, leading up to that you are grinding yourself down, stressing yourself out. Then when (if) you get to that walk, you are already beyond burnt out. It would have, in this case, made more sense to have your self-care by not going for that walk, instead acknowledging that it will be better for you to stay and just finish the work, and, when it is caught up, then go.

Sometimes the idea of self-care, of taking time for ourselves, ends up being a task on our to-do list that causes more stress. So cut yourself some slack, it isn't a bad thing if you have to skip that for the day, it doesn't mean you aren't working effectively. Take the time when you can, self-care is important, but it should not be adding to your stress level, and you shouldn't be feeling guilty about it. Because, if you are, it is completely self-defeating.

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





**Brittany Daigle****Course Exam  
MATH 271 (Linear Algebra II)****Course Exam***AU courses, up close***Brittany Daigle**

MATH 271 (Linear Algebra II) is a three-credit upper level mathematics course that continues the study of linear algebra from MATH 270. Mathematics 271 is suggested for students in the science programs. The course covers intermediate topics in linear algebra such as general vector spaces, eigenvalues and eigenvectors, inner product spaces, diagonalization and quadratic forms, and general linear transformations and applications of linear algebra. This course has no prerequisites and there is a Challenge for Credit option if that is of interest to you.

If you are worried that you are not prepared enough to take MATH 271, there is a Mathematics Diagnostic Assessment that you can take. This online test contains seventy questions that will help you assess your mathematical skills. Based on your score we will recommend which Athabasca University mathematics course you are likely ready to take successfully.

Linear Algebra II has five units, five tutor-marked exercises weighing a total of twenty percent, and a final exam weighing eighty percent. The exam is written and calculators are not allowed during the examination. To receive credit for MATH 271, you must achieve a composite course grade of at least fifty percent and a grade of at least fifty percent on the final examination.

Adam Barbour has been studying at Athabasca University since August of 2017 and has completed seven courses so far. He started MATH 271 in early August and he completed his course work for the course by the end of September. He wrote the final exam mid-October. He provides a brief introduction, stating "I am thirty-seven years old and I live in Spruce Grove, Alberta with my wife, two-year-old son, and six-month-old daughter. I am currently enrolled (part-time) in the Bachelor of Science degree program majoring in Computing and Information Systems. I also chose to do a minor in Applied Mathematics. Right now, my focus is on the math portions of the degree. I work full-time as the Shop Manager of a large heavy trailer dealership where we perform all manner of modifications and repairs to on and off-road trailers. We also do various modifications to large trucks such as installing accessories enabling them to operate said trailers. Those of you with little ones know that recreational time can be limited, so my primary individual activity right now is ball hockey a couple times a week. I also make a point of reading every day."

He describes MATH 271 as a "continuation of MATH 270 and advances concepts such as systems of equations, matrices, vectors, and dimensions. The course also touched on real-world topics including genetics, computer graphics, and cryptography. The course has five units with an assignment following each. The assignments had five to six questions, and each is worth four percent of your final grade. Depending on your writing style, each question averaged nearly a page of writing each for me. There is no midterm, and the final is worth eighty percent. All the assignment questions came from the textbook, so they follow the supplied material well. The first unit was the longest but was strictly review of key concepts from MATH 270."

Adam continues, “The final exam is written, has ten questions, and is open book. I did not complete the exam in the three-hour time limit. In my opinion, the exam accurately reflected the course and assignment content. The exam was hard, but not impossibly so. If you are familiar with matrix manipulation, you know how tracking a small addition/multiplication error can eat the minutes away. Just as in MATH 270, there are no calculators allowed for exams. I had to laugh at myself during the MATH 270 midterm as I had to very quickly recall how to perform basic arithmetic and factoring twenty years out of high school. (Spoiler: Most of it came back in time). If you are going to take these two courses, leave the calculator in your bag and do everything with a scratchpad. Learn the quadratic formula. I used [Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/) as a refresher for factoring as well as a website [www.symbolab.com](http://www.symbolab.com) when doing self-checks on answers.”

Overall, Adam would recommend this course, stating “I would recommend MATH 271 for most, though only if you are passionate about math or it is a program requirement. It does count as a science course however, so if you took 270 and want to challenge yourself further, this would be a good course for that!”

Whether MATH 271 is a degree or program requirement of yours, or the topics discussed above are of interest to you, this course will have you learning advanced linear algebra concepts.

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



## The Fit Student Dine Like a Champion

Marie Well



Dine like a champion to achieve top performance. Positive choices, such as healthy-eating, spill over. Yes, they spill-over into your spunk, your joy, your dignity, your grooming, your self-esteem, and your get-up-and-go. Positive choices also tame temptations to try toxins.

So, chow down like champions by gleaning the following hints. I bold my tips and bullet those from expert Marni Sumbal:

**Sprinkle zero sugar into your diet.** Sugar crashes you—and strikes many with diabetes. And the more sugar you eat, the more you crave. I once ate oodles of brownies. Plus, I sweetened my teas with half-a-cup of sugar a day. But I’ve since got healthy. Now, I add no sugar. I do wolf down 90% dark chocolate. And I eat fruit. Just today, I couldn’t stomach a teaspoon of sugar mistakenly mixed into my herbal tea.

**Don’t salt your meals—unless you use sea salt sparingly. Instead, swallow salts from fermented foods.** Salt-fermented foods brim with healthy probiotics. For salt, I munch unpasteurized sauerkraut and sip organic miso soup. Kimchi works wonders, too, but stay clear of the kind with MSG.

**To quit alcohol, drink organic kombucha.** Kombucha tastes like beer but bears only a slight alcohol content. But kombucha teems with probiotics. You can also drink probiotic-rich miso soup, which has 0.3% alcohol content. The Japanese love miso and boast the longest life-spans.

**Don't guzzle alcohol.** Alcohol fattens abs and impairs brains. And never take marijuana for performance. Weed wastes the will to win—and sculpts the face ugly.

**Do gorge water.** One gung-ho bank-teller chugged two-liter Pepsi bottles filled with tap water. But too much water can be toxic, says author Marni Sumbal. Instead, gulp water with one-liter bottles, giant cups, or tall thermoses. Plenty of them.

So, what should you swallow for peak performance, according to an expert? Marni Sumbal shows you the true breakfast of champions in the book *Essential Sports Nutrition: A Guide to Optimal Performance For Every Active Person*:

- Always carry a cup of water: “Plain water is still the ideal fluid to consume daily” (location 897, 21%).
- While you train, gulp water: “You may not feel thirsty during a workout, but it’s absolutely necessary to hydrate while you exercise” (location 890, 20%).
- Pay attention to your urine. Pale yellow to clear means you are hydrated. Dark or orange tint means you are severely dehydrated.
- Cut back on sugar: “Women should limit added sugar to 6 teaspoons a day, and men should limit it to 9 teaspoons .... Consuming naturally sweet foods like fruit or plain yogurt when you crave a treat can help lower your added-sugar consumption” (location 453, 10%).
- Eat carbs, but the healthy kinds: “Many athletes now believe that carbs are fattening—they think you can’t burn fat if you eat carbs ... Some of the healthiest and fittest people in the world consume a high-carbohydrate diet, with the majority of calories coming from potatoes, rice, legumes, and vegetables” (location 420).
- Fill up on your RDA of healthy fats: “The notion that ‘fat makes you fat’ has contributed to the popular mindset for decades .... Dietary fat ... is important for a healthy, functioning body .... Fat promotes satiety, delays the onset of hunger pangs, and can reduce cravings and overeating” (location 652, 15%).
- Don't guzzle alcohol: “There are no health benefits to heavy drinking. From an athletic standpoint, the use of alcohol, even in small amounts, can negatively affect hydration status, recovery, sleep, motor skills, motivation, judgment, and overall performance. It can also cause weight gain, nutritional deficiencies, depressed immunity, and elevated cortisol ...” (location 1015, 23%).
- Be careful with coffee—as caffeine can kill. “Caffeine is a drug. Its side effects include insomnia, restlessness, stomach upset, nausea, increased heart and breathing rates, and anxiety ... There’s always a risk of death when caffeine is improperly used or overconsumed” (location 956, 22%).

**Most of all, never swig energy drinks.** One lean, muscular youth got diabetes. So, my boyfriend asked him what caused it. He said Red Bull! Perhaps a Red Bull a day gives doctors their pay?

Yes, poor diet causes diabetes. And diabetes steps-up challenges to winning any prize. So, dine like a champion to shine like a champion.





## Six Pumpkin Carvings Students Can Relate To

Xin Xu

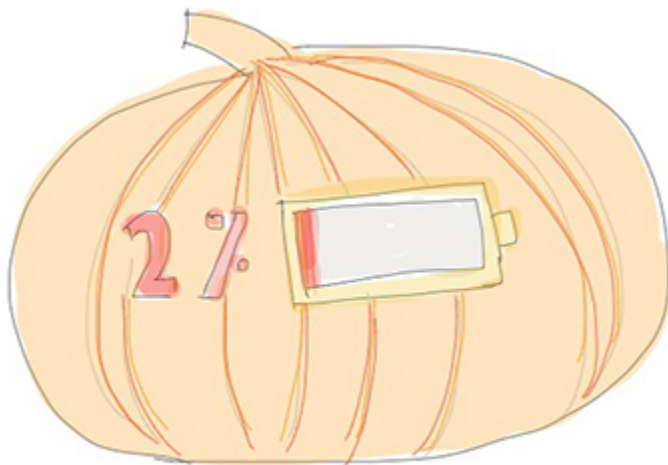
It's hard to stay original with pumpkin carving every year when October 31st rolls around. While your neighbors might be striving for the most sophisticated carvings (intricately sculpted in ways that would make Michelangelo proud), keep your carvings original this year with the most relatable pumpkin carvings that would warrant a chuckle from your fellow students. Designed expressly for the amateur pumpkin carver, these ideas are 100% practical and both original and horrifying.



The Debt-Ridden Pumpkin



The I-Should-Have-Studied-More Pumpkin



The Need-Charger-Pronto Pumpkin



The Rejection Pumpkin



The Disconnected Pumpkin



The Swipe-Again Pumpkin

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



## Scholarship of the Week

**Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.**

**Scholarship name:** ServiceScape Scholarship 2018

**Sponsored by:** ServiceScape

**Deadline:** November 30, 2018

**Potential payout:** \$1000 USD

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be attending or will attend an accredited college, university, or trade school in 2018.

**What's required:** An online application form, including a maximum 300-word essay on how writing impacts today's world.

**Tips:** Check out the [Blog](#) pages for writing advice.

**Where to get info:** [www.servicescape.com/scholarship](http://www.servicescape.com/scholarship)



## The Study Dude Double Your Success!

Marie Well



Night owls, listen up! Wake up with a bang in the wee hours. But if you can't stomach a 6 AM rise and shine, no worries. There are plenty of tips below to double your success.

I once was a night owl. Not anymore.

When I worked eleven-hour days, I felt charged. I'd wake up at 6 AM, train in the gym, shower, clean, and rush to work. Then I'd come home and train in the gym again. After that, I'd go to sleep by 8:30 PM. I felt on fire.

Waking up early changes your life. Early birds who make their beds first thing start the day with an achievement. Even Navy Seals urge you to make your bed as soon as you wake up. But I say, wake up early, rush to the gym, and then make your bed. Now that's accomplishment!

Early morning, you have no distractions. No need to worry about looking like a Lulu Lemon

Goddess in an empty gym. You finish chores first thing, not guiltily mulling them over the entire day. And early morning achievements boost your confidence, snowballing even bigger accomplishments ahead.

On the flipside, the less active your life grows, the more you dwell. An idle mind is the devil's playground, isn't it? One friend led a stagnant life. She said she needed more stress. She craved the distractions from petty worries—and she longed for the hardships that come with trying new things. Yes, to do anything worthwhile, you must go through some suffering, says author Michael Mackintosh.

I wouldn't want to relive my undergrad experience. Tormented by peers, I went through depression, crying every day. But I hung in there and wound up with the silver medallion and a graduate degree. If you hang in there long enough, you end up with the promotions, the degrees, the trophies, the medallions, and tenure.

Double your success with tips from Michael Mackintosh in his book *Get It Done: The 21-Day Mind Hack System to Double Your Productivity and Finish What You Start*:

- Do more than double your success: "I believe you can be at least 2-16 times more successful than you currently are" (location 55, 2%).
- If we slack off, we feel it: "Every day that we put off doing what we need to do and live below our potential, we die a little" (location 4, 7%).
- To achieve anything worthwhile, we suffer: "Life isn't easy, and, one way or another, we're going to feel at least some degree of discomfort or pain .... No matter how successful we are, or how much money we have, we'll all experience some kind of pain in our lives" (location 5, 7%).
- Our best suffering leads to rewards: "A meaningful life of authentic suffering ... leads to joy, freedom, wealth, love, and deep satisfaction" (location 8, 9%).



- Focus on the tasks with the biggest rewards: “The 80/20 rule says that just a few things in life matter a lot while the rest is essentially pointless and trivial” (location 15, 12%).
- Drop the time wasters: “Right now, 80% of what you do is a waste of time and can be removed or dramatically reduced” (location 19, 15%).
- Beware perfectionism—it slows you down: “It takes exponentially more work, time, and effort as you approach perfection while working on a task. That means, the longer you work to make something ‘just right,’ the longer you have to keep working to improve it just a little bit” (location 23, 16%).
- But sometimes perfectionism makes sense: “The key is to know when you need to make something good enough, and when you need to go the extra mile to create something truly great” (location 24, 16%).
- And learn the secret of focus: “Remember the classic acronym—FOCUS: Follow ... One ... Course ... Until ... Successful ... Focus on completing one project at a time” (location 48, 29%).
- Most of all, share your gifts: “Souls are calling out for support in so many different ways. Some of them are calling out to you, yes YOU personally. They need YOU. They need you to serve them and teach them how to swim” (location 52, 30%).

Sometimes our successes seem small. And, wow, do we suffer to gain those wins. But each win—and each loss—fuels our growth. Yet, we grow the most when we share our wins with others.



## Fly on the Wall

### Frightful Times on the Fringes of Identity

Jason Sullivan



Ever wake up not feeling yourself? This can be a haunting reality as when a person says *you're not yourself today* or *that doesn't seem like something you'd do*. To have our stable wholeness questioned can leave us feeling off kilter or even defensive. These moments illustrate that our being (our ontology) is more fluid than we might assume. We embody different shrouds of self in different circumstances and according to different audiences. And, like shadows crossing over a werewolf's moon, we are many things to many people, including ourselves.

The truth of our multifarious existence is replete with creative and liberating possibilities. As AU students, we forge new identities as we embark on distance education. The one key ghost we must make peace with transgresses the holiday calendar: *our ghost of procrastination past*. To this end, our multiplicity of essences function as a toolbox. Martin Heidegger noted that our being in the world (Dasein) invariably constitutes a fractal as we encounter external reality: our being “has already dispersed itself in definite ways of being-in [different contexts]” (Being and Time 57). This has pedagogical consequences for our processes of learning. We might be the *relaxing*



*after dinner* version of ourselves but that self within it contains flexibility such that we find the time to study.

The classic counter-culture theorist Allan Watts spoke to how we become plural rather than singular selves from a Buddhist Zen, as well as social-psychological, perspective. Watts noted:

“As a child is brought up it becomes more and more self conscious and it loses its freshness ... the human being seems to be turned into a creature, designed to get in his own way ... he's always questioning himself (and asking) 'am I being consistent, does what I do make any sense'” (Watts, online).

Clearly part of us is, ironically, not us at all, but rather our imagined viewpoint of what others make of us. Like a creepy voyeur with hidden cameras stashed around every corner, our mind is booby-trapped with our worries about how we are perceived by others. The philosopher George Berkeley even claimed that “*to be is to be perceived*” (Berkeley, online). Luckily, at AU we are judged more on our academic output than how we look, although we nonetheless are perceived by the invisible eye of our classmates and tutors as they read our work. The mind's eye never shuts.

Watts adds that our desire for consistency founders toward farce because we cannot be our authentic selves to all people all the time. Bringing our AU study material to a crowded family firepit or a first date at a movie theatre would seem untoward, for instance, even if it's what our truest self would rather be doing. However, as Watts continues, problems arise because we tend to surveil ourselves in the face of perceived cultural norms and potential social opposition. Insidiously, like creeping possession by a nefarious demon, we spawn “a second self inside us ... that comments on us all the time” (Watts, online). If we're not careful, we'll be run ragged by imagined interpretations by others, and these can be quite nightmarish if we have learned to expect harsh judgement and ridicule from our peers. Contradictions abound because what functions in one social context, and what accounts for a decent explanation of our behaviour to ourselves given the circumstance, may seem eerie or uncannily out of place given a different setting.

Having been “taught also to behave consistently, almost like the characters in a book ... as if they were actually consistent in life”, we demand of ourselves a fictional and fantastical adhesion to a character that we play rather than embody (Watts, online). In a sense we are never absolutely ourselves in that each self, like each spoken sentence or instance of body language, is itself an expression of an inner state that reflects, as down a hall of mirrored images, a response to infinite other reactions to internal and external sentiments. With characteristic pith, Watts concludes that this expectation of consistency “warps us” such that we become disoriented and unable to find our true selves (Watts, online). However, in true *ye who enter abandon all hope* House of Horrors fashion, our original self is absent: we are the sum but not the essence of our parts because we are perpetually in flux.

This is all very creepy if we take literally the fact that “we are brought up to makes sense of ourselves, to account for ourselves ... to account for our actions in words” as though a sentence can summarize our deep internal reality (Watts). There's a term for this ideology that each of us is reducible to a single expressive self knowable through the unity of spoken and written words: *phonocentrism* (Stawarska, online). At AU we experience the active formation and creation of new identities: our studies graft themselves onto our everyday life and force us to contend with the fluidity of our existence.

Meanwhile, from a surrealist perspective, a pastiche of self and imagery is just what the psychopath doctor ordered: good things happen when we embrace juxtaposition and difference as articulated by the surrealist movement's desire to embrace "the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table" (Sokei, online) Surreal though our many identities may be if they are jumbled into one, that's only a backdrop to the actionable reality of our lives: on a daily basis we encounter the existential fact that we are not one but many.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, wizards of polymorphous identity proliferation, ennobled the act of embarking toward new terrains of self-discovery. Disturbing as our more outlandish selves might be (I never thought I'd enjoy a statistics course, what terror!), it helps to investigate alternate explanations and definitions of who and what we are. Ontologically, this is the ultimate Hallowe'en masquerade. Take the statement, *this is me* for instance. Deleuze and Guattari state:

"one could try to create new, as yet unknown statements for that proposition, even if the result were a patois of sensual delight, physical and semiotic systems in shreds, asubjective affects, signs without significance where syntax, semantics and logic are in collapse. This research could go from the worst to the best since it would cover precious, metaphorical, or stultifying regimes as well as cries-whispers, feverish improvisations..." (Deleuze and Guattari, 147).

Counter to the expectation that our selves come neat and tidy and ready-packaged, Deleuze and Guattari compare our expectations of self to Descartes' *Reason* (Cogito). Deleuze and Guattari state:

"A new form of slavery is invented, namely, being slave to oneself, or to pure "reason", the Cogito". Is there anything more passionate than pure reason? Is there a colder, more extreme, more self-interested passion than the Cogito?" (D and G, 130).

To truly desire a stable and consistent self is to harbour an unrequited and impossible love, one doomed to a macabre and tragic ending. "What love is not betrayed? What cogito lacks its evil genius, the traitor it will never be rid of" (D and G, 131). Sometimes our inner rebel doesn't want to crack the books. To study effectively, then, is to balance our inner delinquent with our inner savant. In a sense, then, to love ourselves is to love our darker side. After all, each of us has sun and shadows and these reflect our emotions and sentiments as well as our interests and abilities. Our studies allow us to discover and create new selves as we interact with new information and uncover our best scholarly self.

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## Porkpie Hat Fear of Polymaths

Darjeeling Jones



I'll level with you: most of what passes for television entertainment these days, whether on traditional networks or streaming services, leaves me cold. Formula comedy and drama that's predictable as a bigot's opinions, and as exciting as last night's unemptied dishwasher. Typically, I'd rather spend time at home exploring a good book. Or maybe better still, opening up a bottle of beer, turning up the volume on some choice vinyl, and spending a few hours in the kitchen deboning a chicken and chopping up veggies.

I made an exception recently, though, for something I stumbled across on Netflix, a show called *Hannibal*. For

anyone not familiar with it, it's a reboot / rethink of the Hannibal Lecter character central to the film *Silence of the Lambs*. I'm actually not really sure why I began watching this series, except for the fact that it stars Mads Mikkelsen, who's a first-class actor. With one or two exceptions - the aforementioned Jonathan Demme film being one of them - I'm not the biggest fan of serial killer shows. Too many of them, too familiar, frequently too misogynistic.

This one, though, had me transfixed from the get-go. I've rarely seen such brutality and exquisite aesthetics welded so artfully together. Over the course of its three seasons, the now-cancelled show reached a level of unsettling poetry and thematic cohesion that is truly rare in any medium, bringing alive nightmarishly vivid tableaux filled with visual and verbal poetry. It's so unexpected, so intense, I find it amazing that it attracted enough mainstream viewers to keep it alive for those three years. The violence throughout the show is extreme, but rarely graphic, typically shown obliquely and after-the-fact. Always though, the scenes of visceral carnage are extravagant, strangely opulent, with an unearthly beauty. Imagine the exploits of Jack the Ripper brought to searing life by Caravaggio and Sven Nykvist.

The title character, as portrayed by Mikkelsen, is a man of refined, esoteric tastes and demonic inclinations. He's a psychiatrist, medical doctor, expert chef, wearer of bespoke suits, and aficionado of Renaissance art and baroque music. When he's not consulting on behalf of the F.B.I. (helping them catch serial killers, no less) he spends his time in pursuits such as composing music for harpsichord, lecturing on Dante in Florence, holding forth on rare wines, or cruelly murdering, dismembering, and then (in gourmet fashion) cannibalizing what he considers to be inferior varieties of human, all for the purposes of curiosity and fun.

One of the things that struck me when watching was the trope of the evil genius who considers himself to be above the moral laws of humanity. Despite the many instances of artistic ingenuity in this show, that theme in itself has been a prevalent one for some time. Of course, there is Anthony Hopkins' famous take on the Lecter character. But also Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty, and the arrogant, sociopathic antihero Sherlock Holmes himself, at least according to



the latest BBC series portrayal. And let's not forget Lex Luthor, Doctor Doom, The Master from Doctor Who, Alice Morgan from Luther, and Cersei Lannister, to name just a very few.

I would suggest that this pattern tells us two interesting things. Firstly, that many of us have a love / hate relationship with intelligence. There is an anti-intellectual streak inherent in society that is at eternal odds with the embracing of curiosity, innovation, exploration and genius. Very often this conflict happens within the same person. We love the idea of polymaths, of renaissance men and women, but we are also innately suspicious of them. How dare they think they are better than us? Are they trying to pull one over on us?

The second thing I think it tells us is that many of us have an intense desire to escape the mediocrity and mundanity of modern existence. We are sick to death of the stale bread and media circuses of our typical media diet. We long for the exceptional, the transcendent, even (or perhaps especially) if it comes in the shape of villains who cannibalize their victims, or cruel monsters who (as in the case of another Hannibal killer) flavour their martinis with human tears. We may be afraid of the devil, it seems, but there is a part of us that relishes his malevolent joy and freedom. Do you think there is any validity to these assertions? I would love to know.



## In Conversation With Sydney Wright

**Wanda Waterman**



Sydney Wright is a live sound engineer and singer-songwriter now working in Austin, Texas. Her songs reach for deep emotions and leave the listener with an abiding sense of joyful hope. Her debut album, *Seiche* (watch the enthralling video of her song “You Can Stay” [here](#)) is set for release on November 9. Wright was recently kind enough to answer our questions about her youth and the series of events leading up to the completion of her first album.

### What kind of childhood did you have?

I grew up in a very safe, loving environment. I lived my whole life in rural west Texas, mostly in a town called Snyder with my parents and three sisters. We grew up across from the city park and baseball fields, on a street with lots of kids our age. We called ourselves “the hood” like real bad-asses, and our block was the destination for baseball games, parades, carnivals, and point A for a game of cops and robbers (you run on foot from your friends in cars — totally safer than it sounds).



**What role did music play in it?**

We grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry with my dad. We used to sit in a circle around him while he sang and played rock riffs and bluegrass tunes to us. Like most of the ladies in my family, my sisters and I took piano lessons and played organ and keys for church functions. That's where I learned to sing harmony. My mom has a killer ear for harmony, and I'd sing along with her at church. I played my first gigs at a BBQ place for tips and a steak when I was 16. Around that time I started writing songs for myself and for friends who needed a therapeutic breakup-song session. That's when I fell in love. Song writing is my boyfriend.

My sisters and I performed in countless recitals and competed in festivals playing classical, blues, ragtime, hymns, and duets for competition. Our teacher was really into it. At around 15, I asked Mom if I could quit taking piano lessons and learn guitar instead. Thus began my journey into singing and song writing. Along the way I've learned or taught myself guitar, sound engineering, recording, drums, and any other instrument or mouth sound I need to make for the music.

**Who — or what — in your life was the best influence on you as an artist?**

Playing in bands. It wasn't comfortable. It guided me to going solo and learning to loop.

**As a human being?**

Listening.

**What does music mean to you?**

It's my favorite outlet for expression and connection. Many of my songs are stories I make up, made up, or have narrated to me by others. I like to create with other people in mind. I want to share. I want my output to be for all of us.

**Why did you choose to become a sound engineer?**

I got tired of waitressing and all my friends were doing it. It's a great skill to know as an artist, especially when I'm recording or performing.

**What do you like best about your debut album so far?**

I've liked making music videos to support the songs the best. It's guided me to learn several new skills and expanded the ways I get to express.

**Did anything funny or weird happen while you were recording it?**

I learned a lot more Spanish and made a lot of friends from Mexico. I met my producer and engineer, Stefano Vieni and Alex Ponce, at Sonic Ranch. I got to finish up vocals at their studio in Mexico City, where I stayed for nine-ish days. I also loved getting to record at Sonic Ranch. It definitely sets a high bar for incredible gear and a creative atmosphere. Sonic Ranch is also a pecan ranch with rows of peaceful pecan trees. It also runs right up to the border of Mexico. When I needed a break, I'd grab a bike and pedal over to the border fence. It's big and formidable, and it looks like fear.

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**What's the story behind the song "Seiche?"**

"Seiche" is the title-track to my forthcoming album! It's a French word meaning "to sway back and forth." Hydrologists use it to describe a surfing wave on top of a lake. They're unnatural under normal conditions, and they're caused by violent, sudden changes in atmospheric pressure or seismic activity. It forces the water to slosh back and forth to regain equilibrium.

**How has Austin helped you as a music maker?**

This city is supportive to its musicians. That's why we flock to it. Being surrounded by artists could harbor a community of competition, but here I've only felt solidarity. The high volume of musical acts is inspiring and challenges me to move further faster.

**If you don't mind, could you tell us about the accident you were in recently?**

I got knocked off a scooter in a hit and run a few months ago, and at this point I'm working on walking again. It's been difficult being weak and even more difficult to be seen as such. It's been a heavy test in mental strength, patience, and resilience, and I'm fortunate to be very loved and able to make a full recovery eventually.

I'm also very fortunate that this is the most traumatic experience I've ever worked through. I've been both miserable and uplifted, and I know it's something that has incited growth that I may never have known if it hadn't happened.

**What life lessons, if any, were you able to draw from this?**

It made me much more aware of handicap accessible spaces. I didn't realize before that walking is a huge freedom. It has made me more empathetic to trauma. Apart from the physical shock, sudden changes that make one's normal actions impossible from one day to the next is taxing mentally and emotionally. It may be too soon to know what I've learned.

I'm only in the beginning of recovery. These are just tiny green buds of growth.

**How do you regenerate after giving yourself heavily to the music?**

I usually spend time with other humans. When I'm working on music I sequester myself heavily. After I get over a productive hump I like to reconnect with my friends.

**What conditions do you need in your life in order to maintain your creative output?**

I need to be physically active so that my brain can wander. I have to make myself work on several projects a day based on time instead of completion. I find that I get more done faster by allotting each project a finite amount of time each day instead of plowing away at one thing for hours until it's done.

**Are there any books, albums, or films that have influenced your work?**

Yeah, all of them. I like to use them as research for expression. For instance, in the "Seiche" music video my friend Charlotte played the part of the "transcended dance queen." For her character I wanted to portray someone who is very aware of who she is, where she stands, and how she connects to the world.

I gave her a “kirituhi” (skin marking) on her chin as a signifier of that. I fashioned it after a “moko” which is an identity tattoo of the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori. It is sacred scarring and can represent a Maori person’s social status, ancestry, cultural affirmation, and even personality traits.

It’s a visual language that inspired me through this episode of *Waka Huia* (documentary series about Maori history and stories). It’s about a female *tā moko* artist, Paitangi Ostick, who practices the art and wears the mark of a Maori warrior, both of which are unusual and even considered taboo for women.

### **Do you follow a spiritual discipline that helps you stay balanced?**

I believe I’m a creation. I pray to my creator and use yoga as a meditative tool.

### **If you had an artistic mission statement, what would it be?**

Make the most.

### **What’s next for you?**

Next up is my album release coming up on November 9. I’m very excited to get it out and figure out how I’m gonna start recording the next batch!

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



### **Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of *The Voice Magazine*.**

In the lead-up to Halloween October 31, it's no surprise that October 26 has been designated Pumpkin Day. Pumpkins in a university student magazine? We got 'em.

**Pepo'lantern?** Writer Zoe Dalton describes the colourful history of Cucurbita pepo, aka the pumpkin. "[S]quashes and pumpkins are useful for far more than just food: masks, dishes, carrying containers, and musical instruments were once made from these versatile fruits."

Nature Notes—From the Backyard to the Biosphere: Kudos to the Cucurbits,

November 3, 2004.

**Smashing Pumpkins.** Writer E.L. Farris struggles to find a shred of positive meaning in a dark holiday. "A child threatens to commit a trick and in turn, the homeowner gives this child a treat. What the heck? How does this make sense? How does it help our children to become good citizens?" I'm Annoyed by Halloween, October 26, 2012.



Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## Things Better Not Said?

Dear Barb:

*I am in my twenties and have two older brothers who are 12 and 13 years older than me. I don't resemble my brothers, they have dark hair and eyes and I have light hair and blue eyes. My mom raised us as a single mom. Our dad died when I was a baby, so I have no memories of him, but I always had the feeling that I have a different father than my brothers. I have been reluctant to ask, as we are a pretty stoic family, but I really would like to know. I don't want my mother to feel I am implying anything by asking her this question. One of my brothers is a little more open than the other one, so I'm thinking of asking him. Do you think I should or would I just be stirring the pot? Looking for some advice, thanks Ron.*

Hi Ron:

Just because you don't look like your brothers doesn't mean you don't have the same biological father. Do you look like anyone else in the family, like cousins or a grandfather? Sometimes people look like long lost relatives. Does your mother have pictures of her family and your late father's family? You could check through to see if you resemble anyone else. Although people often have a sixth sense about these things, just something doesn't feel right. If that is what you are feeling, then maybe there is some validity to your concerns. If finding the answer to this question is important to you, then I would suggest you discuss your feelings with your brother first and if then approach your mother. She should not be offended by the fact that you have some questions. Best of luck Ron.

Dear Barb:

*The other day I was out for drinks with friends and we got talking about a few controversial topics. When we began discussing global warming things got pretty heated. We were almost a 50/50 split on whether global warming is really happening, or it's just a big hype. Things got so heated that most of the group were not talking to each other by the end of the night. I don't understand why people get so heated that they actually make friends into enemies over things like this. I am frustrated with everyone for their reactions. Is there anything I can do to smooth this over and get my friends back together? Thanks, Madeline.*

Hi Madeline:

Global warming is a hot topic and not one that is easily agreed on as you discovered. People generally become agitated about things they are passionate about. Possibly a couple of people in your group got worked up and that caused others to follow. You may be the one that is overreacting now. Wait a few weeks and plan another outing and invite everyone and see who shows up. If the conversation seems to be following the same trend, which I highly doubt it will, try to redirect the exchange to something more neutral. Thanks for your question.

Follow Barb on twitter @BarbGod

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





Poet Maeve  
Legal Pot

Wanda Waterman

It's hard  
to believe I was  
once a highly driven  
businessman.

I had a  
renewable source  
of capital with a  
growing demand.



I lost it all  
when my  
industry was  
nationalized.



Now I  
can spend my  
days hanging out  
with friends and  
grooving on nature.  
It's a pothead's  
dream!



And I owe it  
all to the  
legalisation of  
marijuana.



Thanks for  
sharing, Christy.  
Now how about a little  
less talk and a lot  
more grooving.





**AUSU**  
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS' UNION

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## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Oct 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Dec](#)
- **Nov 08:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Nov 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Dec 1](#)
- **Nov 12:** [AUSU Office Closed in lieu of Remembrance Day](#)
- **Nov 15:** [Dec degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Nov 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Jan](#)
- **Dec 14:** [December Council Meeting \(tentative\)](#)

## Only a few days left to apply for AUSU Awards and Bursaries!

The deadline is fast approaching for AUSU's November Cycle. Over **\$20,000** in funding available to be won! Apply online [here](#) by November 1, 2018.

**Academic Achievement Award:** For students who have achieved academic excellence.

**AUSU Bursaries:** For students in financial need and/or with exceptional life circumstances.

**Balanced Student Awards:** For students who balance multiple commitments.

**#Igo2AU Award:** This award is available to all AUSU members. Applicants just need to submit a video up to 2 minutes long articulating a personal experience in any one, or a combination of the following areas: how has AU improved your life; what is it about AU that fuels your passion for learning; why you chose AU; how does AU inspire you, and/or; what AU means to you.

**Returning Student Awards:** For students who returned to studies after a break of two or more years.

**Student Volunteer Awards:** For students who do volunteer work.

Find out more or apply online [here](#).



**AUSU**  
**Awards &**  
**Bursaries**

**Deadline: Nov 1**

## Pharmacy Savings and FREE Prescription Delivery!

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- Refill reminders by phone, text message & email.
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- Free phone consultations with qualified pharmacists.

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