



THE VOICE

Vol 26 Issue 48 2018-12-14

New Mediums, New Methods
The Fly on the Wall takes on Paint

Disrupting Your Routine
Pushed by Puppies

Honouring Lost Loves Ones
Dealing with the Holidays

Plus:
Don't Kill Your Dog!
Rumi Steps to Higher Spirituality
and much more!



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Even I don't look at it, it's
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you!
Send your questions and comments to 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 Winding Down

Karl Low



In this penultimate issue of the year, we've gathered an eclectic set of articles, which is another way of me saying that I can't pick out any particular theme going on in the minds of the writers. Yes, the holiday season seems to feature, but the various takes on it we have in this issue defy an easy grouping. Which, when you think about the variety in students of AU, makes a lot of sense.

The holiday season contains a lot of additional stressors and expectations on people from the norm. Whether it's getting work prepared for the new year, the various parties and family gatherings and oh, crap, I forgot about uncle Bob, etc, the differences that come out in those situations are going to be magnified, if only because we don't have time to allow the sharp, rough edges of our thoughts be homogenized into our usual expected roles.

The clash of the expectation that people be happy during these season with the reality of all the additional things we are also expected to do, the expectations of how we are to get along with family that we normally can't stand, or even how it's expected we'll be surrounded by loved ones that many of us

simply don't have, can lead to a disconnect that, ironically, drives up unhappiness and ends up feeding into it's own cycle of feeling like a failure to meet those expectations. There is a reason, after all, that crisis centers see an uptick in the number of calls around the holidays.

So, to avoid that, I encourage you to retreat, if only for a few minutes, into the writings in this week's Voice. Whether it's our feature Fly on the Wall, the proposes using the holidays to take up a new hobby, advice on how you might be able to deal with the emotions of lost loved ones over the season, a search for higher spirituality, some ideas for interesting gifts both for others or yourself, or just a dog-driven break from the routine, we won't judge.

And if you just want a few minutes to forget about Christmas altogether, we've got you covered there as well. Whether with a look at how you might be inadvertently doing harm to your pets, a look at higher-order physics, scholarships, AU related social media, or just keeping up to date with what's going to be closed, this week's Voice Magazine will keep you informed.

But I hope you'll take the opportunity to keep The Voice Magazine informed as well. That's right, I'm still looking for your choices as to which articles we ran over the past year that you think deserve some special treatment. What do you think were the best articles we ran last year? Get your opinion in and I might even sweeten the deal by sending some lucky people a swag package of Voice goodies as a way to say thanks.

Then next week, we'll be running the final issue of The Voice Magazine for 2018, take a much needed break over the holidays, and return on January 4th with our Best of 2018 edition, curated, hopefully, by you! Not that this means I'm trying to get you guys to do my job, although I totally am, but also that I just love to see what articles you people pick. Sometimes I get votes for articles that I completely forgot about, but that really deserve it, and those are the best votes of all. In the meantime, however, enjoy the read!

Handwritten signature of Karl Low.

Fly on the Wall

New Mediums, New Methods

Jason Sullivan

Giving Ourselves the Gift Of an Uncredited Elective



Deep in Amazonian South America live capybara: boxy beavers who intermittently refresh themselves by wallowing in mud. It nourishes and hydrates their skin and probably feels great. Like AU students, capybara life is about perpetual progress. This stands in notable contrast to their cousins the prairie gophers, who take the easy way out of winter by entering hibernation, much like traditional university attendees who get two weeks off following their Fall

exams. For we at AU, a Solstice hot tub might be just the ticket for a certain type of rejuvenation; taking a break from our studies and trying out new creative avenues might be another.

As we descend into the seasonal abyss of a December replete with celebrations and responsibilities, this may be a perfect time to actively engage in a hiatus from our studies. If we so choose, we may *wallow productively* and, just as the capybara absorbs much-needed moisture in a mud bath, we might give ourselves the gift of an uncredited elective this holiday season. The spirit of the season is a spirit of refreshment and replenishment, after all. So here's to wallowing!

Imagine brushstrokes grazing a canvas with elegant and eloquent deft swoops; images invite the eye across your canvas as you swoon to the sensation of embodying your creative essence. The act of engaging with a new medium can be a lovely rejoinder to our brains, addled as they may be from all the assignments and deadlines. As we enter a winter that can seem to drag on without egress, and its prelude that is the chaotic Christmas cavalcade, it helps to remember that this need not be a season of discontent. Far from it, because by trying a couple of new methods and mediums we may expand our capacities for learning and expressing and thereby make the most of a much-needed December break.

The 1960s-era Toronto sociologist Marshall McLuhan famously proclaimed that “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, online). So what new mudhole medium might suit each of us as we take a break from our regular studies; where should we wallow? As the *Fly on the Wall* I'm personally partial to the vagabond author Henry Miller's pastime of choice: *painting*. At the ripe, (or perhaps unripe, or over-ripe depending on which demographic of distance student you ask) age of 37, Miller embarked on his voyage as a painter. By his own account he delved right into the centre of his mind and the mind's eye as enhanced and expressed through the medium of his paintbrush. Miller came to believe that no written word could quite enhance his experience of life's intricacies, exigencies, and universalism than that imparted by painting. “*To paint is to love again*”, he proudly stated with his irascible Brooklyn accent.

"It's only when we look with eyes of love that we see as the painter sees. His is a love, moreover, which is free of possessiveness. What the painter sees he is duty-bound to share. Usually he makes us see and feel what ordinarily we ignore or are immune to. His manner of approaching the world tells us, in effect, that nothing is vile or hideous, nothing is stale, flat and unpalatable unless it be our own power of vision. To see is not merely to look. One must look-see. See into and around." (Popova, online).

Miller's new way of seeing and feeling is akin to the enlightening lyric by the band Bikini Kill: "If you were blind and there was no braille, there are no boundaries on what I can feel" (Bikini Kill, online). There are many ways of being, after all, and setting aside our coursework can open new vistas of vision for ourselves.

Our studies may *draw us in* (as it were) such that we become immured in a concrete well of meaning, a disciplinary silo, as goes the pejorative term. And even though we bring up answers our well water may become tainted merely by our being too close and too involved with our studies. Interdisciplinary studies are not immune from this outcome either, being limited by necessity to disciplines that define themselves originally as such, with their demarcations, hinterlands, and boundaries. Maybe this Christmas season can be less about lowering our expectations for productivity than about erecting new towers of meaning for ourselves: ones more about exploring and map-making a private and creative treasure hunt. Winter snow hides as well as reveals, and just as new forms appear where barns or trees or plains previously resided, so too can we see ourselves and our academic worlds anew. So why not pick up a cheap paint set and give Miller's extra-curricular hobby of choice a try? As Levar Burton of *Reading Rainbow* used to say when turning testimonials over to his young co-hosts, "you don't have to take my word for it" (Burton, online).

Miller illustrates the value he gleaned from the painting process and how, like a good wallow, it rejuvenated him, *"I turn to painting when I can no longer write. Painting refreshes and restores me; it enables me to forget that I am temporarily unable to write. So I paint while the reservoir replenishes itself."* (Popova, online).

Now, any of us might be forgiven for wondering where on earth we'll find the time to partake in a new hobby even if it is as a temporary replacement of our regular studies. But time is an odd beast over the Holidays: it rides in flows of prepping and planning and entertaining and engaging and then lapses and morphs into lulls and ambiguities before rushing headlong into routines and schedules. Let's face it, no student of any age has a normal December, and no adult, small or tall, does either. It's a season unto itself and maybe the perfect time to learn more about ourselves.

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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.



Honouring Lost Loved Ones over the Holidays

Tara Panrucker



Emotions of sadness and grief inevitably intensify over the holidays when you're missing a recently departed loved one. That person who used to share traditions, keep in touch, and was always there is now missing. That person who perhaps made the warmth and joy of the season come alive has gone somewhere, but you're not sure where. Moving through the—sometimes forced—cheer of the holiday season can be extremely painful when you're feeling an invisible but substantial weight of loss in your heart.

Honouring, remembering, and ritualizing loved ones lost invariably supports the healing process of grieving. There is no wrong way to keep the spirit of your loved one alive. Whatever feels right for you, suits the relationship you experienced with that person, and comforts you in your sadness is ideal.

Since my Mom passed away over three painful months ago, I have been seeking feasible ways to keep her spirit close and love alive. But then I began to contemplate ways to console my Dad, since he is grieving the loss of the love of his life for the past 60 years in a care home. I decided to assemble a special keepsake bag of my Mom's for him to keep close by. For instance, I placed within the bag a small bottle of her perfume, the engagement and wedding rings he gave her so long ago tied to a ribbon and a photo of the two of them on their honeymoon.

There are countless heartening paths to memorializing your loved one throughout the holidays. Journaling can be very therapeutic; I write in my 'Mom' journal almost every single day. Another way to honour him or her is to participate in a grief support group where you may talk freely in a supportive atmosphere. I feel it's good to cry whenever you feel the need—everyone is allowed to cry in grief group.

Many communities hold candle lighting ceremonies dedicated to lost loved ones. If healing in a group appeals to you, then join in. Perhaps you have children or other family members suffering the loss as well. Gather everyone together to craft memorial Christmas ornaments meaningful to their unique relationship with that person.

Giving to others in need or an organization that was dear to your loved one's heart is also a meaningful way to pay your respects. My family donated to the health care auxiliary in my Mom's name that she had selflessly dedicated her time to. Additionally, if your loved one suffered from illness, you may wish to donate to a cause committed to finding a cure.

Another practice for grieving family is to write down a cherished memory of the deceased and store it in a special box to read at their leisure. You can also keep tradition alive and cook that person's favourite dish to share with family and friends.

The other sad factor about death is that there is no chance of reconciliation. If you're experiencing feelings of regret, resentment, or guilt over something involving your late loved

one, write about it on a piece of paper, crumple it up, and toss it into the fireplace as a symbol of letting it go. Forgiveness can be immensely healing.

Over time, honouring your loved one and letting the tears flow eventually softens the heartache. Demonstrating how much that person meant reveals the depth of love you shared and keeps warm memories of them alive in your heart. By actively mourning your dearly departed, you can move through the holidays in a nurturing manner and perhaps heal a little on the way. Take care and be gentle with yourself.

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



The Fit Student Don't Kill Your Dog!

Marie Well



I once worked for a wealthy family. They had a dog, and it didn't like me. Every step I took, the dog would barricade me with its body. The owner called the dog a good judge of character. *At least it's not a Pitbull*, I thought.

But what struck me most about the animal was its diet. The wealthy owner would cook it chicken breasts for dinner and eggs for breakfast. When I asked him why, he'd pause and say, "Would you eat dog food?" I thought, *He's nuts!* But then I'd feed my family's dog. I'd give him the bottom of my cheerios and milk, which he happily gulped. I'd share a bit of everything I ate. Sausage. Salted nuts. Ice cream. Cheese. Milk. Even whole wheat bread. He loved it. But when I walked him, his stools turned to mush, staining the sidewalk long after I cleaned it up.

I also noticed he ate rabbit poo. Someone told me that's how he nibbled his veggies. I thought, *Dogs eat veggies? Since when?* He ate his dog food happily. But I'd wonder about my rich boss's dog dining on steak, chicken, sweet potatoes, and other delicacies.

And I wondered about the sick cows and chickens we eat. You know, the ones locked in cages, unable to move. Oh, the stress! And the shabby diets. I thought, *Who would want that existence?* And we eat that existence, which means we feast on stressed, perhaps even toxic, flesh.

And then I remembered a Ted Talk where the speaker said we could learn from animals. Animals, she said, suffer many of the same diseases and ailments as humans. Postpartum depression. Anxiety. Cancer. Diabetes. Many autoimmune disorders. And I thought of how I almost got hit by an autoimmune disease. I suffered nausea and extreme exhaustion. And that was on the same diet I fed the dog. It wasn't until I started exercising and eating healthy that I cured myself of the sickness.

I often wonder about animal diets. Now, I've found a book that spells it out. Dog food is made from highly processed foods, deemed waste by humans: "The source for most pet foods boils down to this: animal and plant wastes that cannot be used for human consumption" (Pitcairn,

location 295 of 546, 54%). That's it! Which means you're feeding your pet waste products – just like I did. Repackaged and repurposed.

What exactly goes into dog food? “The meat inspector [for human food] ... is hunting for flesh with signs of disease – abscesses, tumors, cancers, abnormal organs, infected tissues, as well as parasites such as liver flukes, tapeworms – whatever does not look right. Guess where the abscess or tumor goes? Into pet food” (Pitcairn, location 315 of 546, 58%).

But it gets worse: “The unsavory pile of discarded and unhealthy animal tissues from slaughterhouses then goes to rendering plants to be further processed. There it is mixed with a variety of other meaty discards ... garbage from grocery stores; grease and spoiled food from restaurants; roadkill too large to be buried at the side of the road; sick farm animals who have died for reasons other than slaughter; food substances condemned for human consumption; and euthanized dogs and cats from shelters, pounds, and veterinary clinics This material is finely ground and the end product is meat meal Meat meal, bonemeal, and other by-products are widely used in pet foods” (Pitcairn, location 346 of 546, 63%).

Veterinary doctor, Dr. Richard H. Pitcairn says, “If they are not good for people to eat, why would they be good for dogs or cats?” (location 443 of 546, 81%).

Due to unhealthy diets, chronic diseases are on the rise for pets: “The poor state of most pet food is a serious health issue for companion animals, who have been suffering from a rise in chronic diseases, according to a 2015 study of 2.4 million dogs and 480,000 cats by Banfield Veterinary Hospitals” (Pitcairn, location 452 of 546, 83%).

So, don't be surprised if your pet gets disease, cancer, ticks—you name it—until it wastes away prematurely.

Veterinary doctor, Dr. Richard H. Pitcairn worked out a “suitable feeding program ... based on fresh whole meats, grains, and vegetables, also known as ‘people food,’ at least the better version of it (minus the chips, fries, white bread, cookies, soda, and ice cream!). In addition ... offer [your pet] ... several supplements rich in nutrients ... brewer's yeast, vegetable oil, cod-liver oil, kelp, bonemeal, vitamin E, and zinc” (location 130 of 546, 24%).

Dr. Pitcairn says, “Animals respond very quickly and positively to a nutritious diet. In fact, it is the major tool you need to eliminate many of the chronic diseases your animals could experience” (location 285 of 546, 52%).

So, don't feed Fido death by kibbles!

Reference

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AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Non-Events

Athabasca University

Closed Tues, Dec 25 to Tues, Jan 1, inclusive
Reopens Wed, Jan 2, 8:30 am MST

More info at:

news.athabascau.ca/announcements/holiday-closures/

AU Library

Last day to order materials: Wed, Dec 19
Closed Tues, Dec 25 to Tuesday, Jan 1, inclusive

Reopens Wed, Jan 2, 8:30 am MST

More info at:

library.athabascau.ca/page/ann

AUSU

Closed Tues, Dec 25 to Tues, Jan 1, inclusive
Reopens Wed, Jan 2, 9:00 am MST

More info at: www.ausu.org/event/winter-closure/

All events are free unless otherwise specified



Five Rumi Guideposts to Higher Spirituality

Wanda Waterman



The Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (1207-1273) was a Persian Muslim scholar and mystic who spent most of his life in the area now known as Afghanistan. Rumi left behind a massive body of beautiful, deeply meaningful poetry well worth the study of those seeking peace, wholeness, and higher understanding, no matter which path they follow (including no path at all). Here are just five of his teachings.

Every instance of love is in some way a channelling of Love Itself.

Much of Rumi's own spiritual growth sprang from his friendship with an eccentric wandering dervish named Shams-i-Tabrīzī. Through thoughtful dialogue the two developed a deep understanding of the spiritual world. One day Shams inexplicably disappeared, an event that shattered Rumi. For this reason, many of his poems end with a tribute to this man, whom he saw as a conduit to the divine.

*Shams-i-Tabrīzī, you are the sun within the cloud of words;
when your sun arose, all speech was obliterated.*

In addition to being evident in particular relationships, love is also, according to Rumi, the great force behind everything:

*If yonder heaven were not spinning bewildered and in love
like us, it would grow weary of its revolving...*

In this view love, far more than just a feeling of tenderness, is the very power that turns the planets.

Never condemn the religious understanding of others.

In *The Masnavi* Rumi tells the story of a pious shepherd who prayed for a glimpse of his creator. He implored God to reveal Himself, promising that if He did he would comb His hair, wash His clothes, and rub His feet. Moses overheard the shepherd and scolded him soundly for his blasphemy. Was he stupid enough to believe that God had hair and feet? The shepherd, filled with shame, turned away from God altogether, considering himself unworthy of knowing Him.

After this God rebuked Moses:

*I command my servants worship me
not for my profit, but to bless them...*

*We've no regard for words or language
We look for spirit and behavior.
We see the heart and – if that's humble –
ignore the words used, brash or mumbled...*

The Source of All Life doesn't look for correctness of belief or dogma. A humble, loving heart that seeks the good is all that's required on the spiritual journey.

The only thing ultimately worth striving for is Love.

The Bible backs Rumi up on this (and many other things): *God is love, and those who live in love, live in God* [I John 4:16]. Rumi put it like this:

The surging of the sea of grace, Moslems, has wrecked the pomp of personal effort and the programme of belief.

However important it is to have personal goals and beliefs, both are trumped by the need to give and receive love.

Spirituality demands vigilance.

*The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell you
Don't go back to sleep!
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep!*

The spiritual life demands that we pay attention to be forewarned of impending evil and to be ready to recognise the divine when it arrives. Some call this mindfulness—being aware of what's coming to pass in the moment, discerning the meaning of it, and responding appropriately. In the spiritual life this means striving after the highest goods and standing guard against anything that distracts us from them.

Spirituality is beyond reason.

Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, concluded that though we long to know truth our minds are not capable of becoming one with it, and all efforts to do so end in confusion. Hannah Arendt in *Life of the Mind* took from this the notion that the mind might be better occupied in a search for meaning than in a search for truth.

By the 13th century Rumi had already anticipated this line of thinking:

That which imagination never conceived, reason and understanding never perceived, has entered my soul from you; therefore to you alone I turn in worship.

In a nutshell? The Rumi-informed spiritual life is ultimately quite simple: Search for meaning, stay mindful, and live in love.

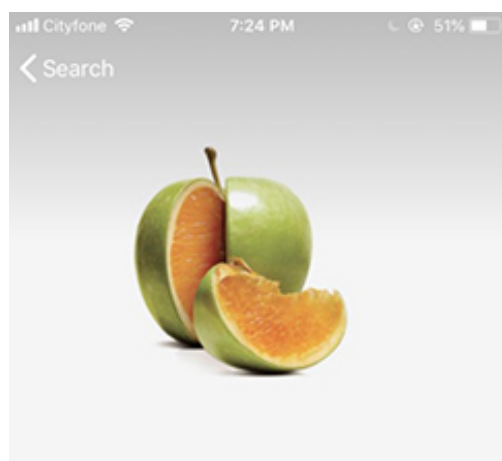
(All lines in italics are from English translations of the works of Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī.)

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



The Five best “Under \$10” Investments I Made in 2018

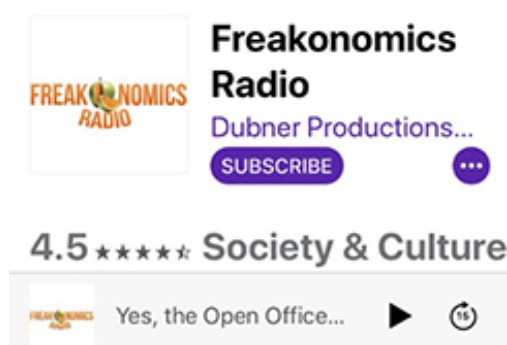
Xin Xu



For me, the end of the year always brings about some deep self-reflection. I like to glance back at the year and consider the major changes, the obstacles, the struggles, and the successes that helped me grow as an individual. Specifically, I related back to some of the worthwhile tools that helped me in a significant way in 2018. Each of these investments has been truly life-changing and I hope to share these hacks with you. Perhaps you'll find some value in using them too.

Podcast subscriptions

Cost: \$0

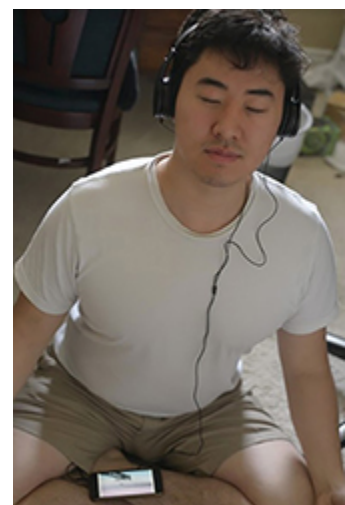


I started listening to many podcasts that have sparked new ideas and provided new insights, knowledge, and wisdom from various individuals' lives and careers. If you don't already listen to podcasts, I highly recommend giving it a try. Podcasts are an excellent way of on-the-go learning and have made my commute time much more satisfying. My favourite podcast is Freakonomics, which explores issues from every aspect of life and dissects it in a way that is both easily understandable and entertaining.

Guided Meditation App

Cost: \$0

As someone who always has a racing mind that leaps from idea to idea, I found it particularly difficult to relax my mind at night. Some nights I would lie awake for hours (or for an entire 7 hours!) blankly staring at the ceiling. Meditation has been a life-saving hack that helps me stay mindful and detach myself from my mind. Many free apps and websites such as YouTube provide free videos and audios of guided meditation that teaches the foundation of meditation.



Vacuum sealed water bottle

Cost: \$8.99

Ever since purchasing a vacuum sealable, heat-retaining water bottle, I have changed my water drinking habits forever. For many years, I had a small, aluminum water bottle that did not retain heat at all. The bottle could not keep ice water cold nor hot water warm. Having a dependable vacuum sealed bottle enabled me to have control over the temperature of my water and I have never looked back since.

www.tomato-timer.com

Cost: \$0

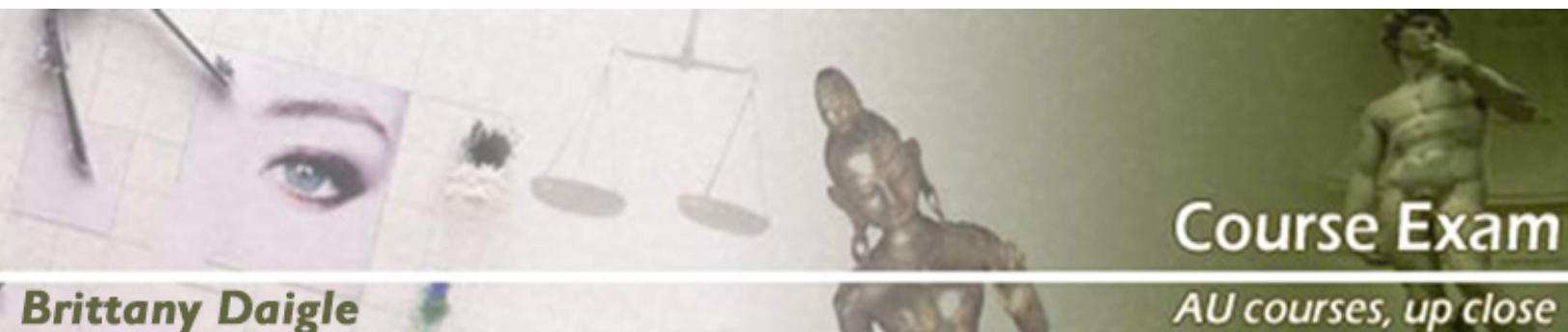
You may be raising your eyebrows at this one, but the tomato timer is a website that breaks your work hours into 25 minute segments. For myself as a student, the timer has helped me break my studying and working sessions into 25 minute chunks that help me stay on track more easily and remind me to take healthy breaks. Science has also shown that breaking your work hours into small chunks fools your brain into staying focused and productive.

Diffuser

Cost: \$9.99

After a stressful midterm season, I made a curious purchase (some might call frivolous). I decided to invest in a diffuser, humidifier that allows fragrances to be disseminated in a room. This serves two functions for me. Not only does it help keep the room moister in the dry environment of Alberta, but it also helped calm my anxiety and adrenaline rushes during the day. The colored LED light transformations and scent from herbal oils has been helpful during my meditation sessions.

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



Course Exam

GEOG/GLST 200 (World Regional Geography)

Brittany Daigle

GEOG 200 / GLST 200 (World Regional Geography) is a three-credit junior-level Geography course that is designed to provide students with an introduction to the major modern geographical regions. More specifically, this course examines Europe; Russia; North, Central, and South America; Sub-saharan Africa; North Africa and Southwest Asia; South Asia; East Asia; Southeast Asia; and the Austral, Pacific, and Polar regions.

Students should note that this is a cross listed course. This means that this course is listed under two different disciplines (Global Studies and Geography). GEOG 200 may not be taken for credit by students who have obtained credit for GLST 200 and vice versa.

This course is intended as a foundation course for students in Geography, Global Studies, and Environmental Studies programs, but it is also suitable for students with interest in studying the

geographical regions of the planet or in acquiring better background understanding of contemporary world events. It is designed for learners with little or no previous university experience. There are no prerequisites for this course and there is a Challenge for Credit option if that is of interest to you.

World Regional Geography is made up of twelve units, three assignments worth fifteen percent each, one assignment weighing twenty percent, film reviews weighing five percent, a glossary exercise weighing five percent, and a final exam weighing twenty-five percent. Throughout the twelve units, students will be guided through an analysis of the physical geography, links and barriers, demographic patterns, economic assets and liabilities, and human potentials and prospects of each region. It also introduces the methods and perspectives of the discipline of geography, focusing on the relationships between human societies and their natural and built environments. To receive credit for GEOG 200 / GLST 200, students must achieve a grade of at least fifty percent on the finale examination and achieve a minimum course composite grade of fifty percent.

Dakota Soares has been studying at Athabasca University for two years. He is currently working towards a Bachelor of Science in Computing an Information Systems with a minor in Geoscience. He started GEOG 200 in September of 2018 and finished the course this December.

Dakota explains GEOG 200 / GLST 200 as “an overview of world geography, with emphasis on how humans fit into the overall scheme of things. The course splits the world into “realms” based on a variety of factors (some realm delineations may surprise you – as they did myself!). within each realm, overviews of each country are given – along with vital statistics, and then defining features of the specific realm are presented (in the text, one chapter is devoted to the overviews, and another devoted to the features of the realm).”

He continues with providing some insight to the structure of the course, stating “There was a bit of work that had to be put into this course – I would not recommend the course if you are not interested in geography, as there are a lot of terms that need to be memorized! There were two video reviews, a glossary exercise, four essays, and a final exam. The final exam is a paper exam because you do some map labeling. The assignments were very straightforward, but if you do not like geography (or writing long essays), you may find it a bore – each essay was ten pages, so I have written over forty-five pages of material for this course alone. The marker was not strict and was quite helpful. I communicated with them on several occasions and received a timely reply.”

Dakota stated that the final exam was exceptionally easy for him; however, “it took a full three hours because you need to write everything by hand – my wrist was definitely aching by the end! You start out with a series of multiple-choice questions. Then you move into a bunch of short answer questions. There are also two maps you need to label. Finally, you can pick one of four topics, and need to write an essay on the one you choose. It is closed-book, so you cannot bring notes or the like into it.”

When asked if he enjoyed the course or not, Dakota replied “I honestly enjoyed the course and I would recommend the course if you like geography, mapping, and writing! It is an intro to world geography, so the wide breath of geopolitical and spatial differences throughout the planet made it impossible to dig deeply into certain areas – which is why I took this course (in order to get an overview of things before digging into specific regions and the like later in my degree). The layout was easy to follow – the textbook is long, and I would recommend buying the physical textbook off Amazon (I found one used for about forty bucks). The thing I disliked most was a sudden tutor change – however I had all but finished the course by then, so it did not cause a disruption in my grades.”

When asked if there were any helpful resources that he could recommend to students, he states “Getting the physical copy of the textbook was helpful. Otherwise not much else is needed. I would use an erasable pen in the exam – labeling can get tricky, and make sure to get a colour (say red) as they have you outlining some areas on the map. You want to make sure your lines are drawn very clearly as some realm’s borders can get muddled in all the maps noise.”

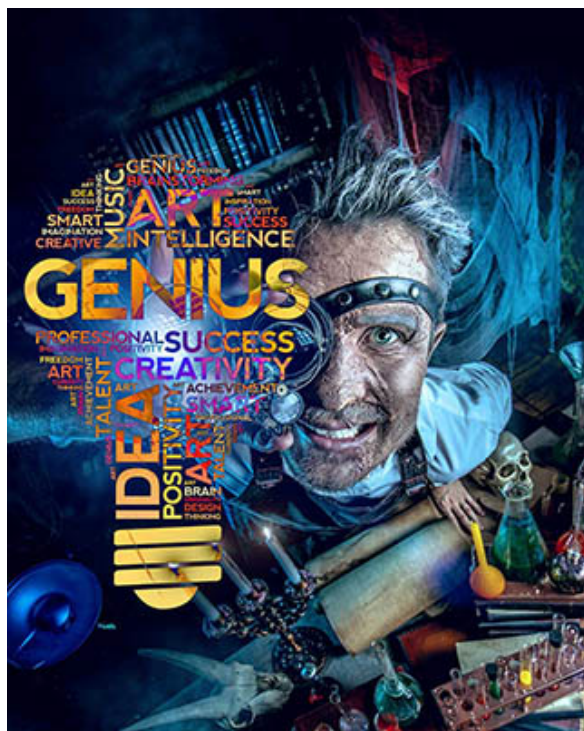
Whether GEOG 200 / GLST 200 is a degree or program requirement of yours or the content discussed above is of interest to you, this course will provide you with an introduction to the major geographical regions of the modern world!

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



The Study Dude Quacks

Marie Well



Are physicists quacks? Physicists’ theories should boil down to observations and measurements, right? The scientific method. But wait, “There is as of yet no observational experimental evidence for many of the concepts of contemporary theoretical physics, such as super-symmetric particles, superstrings, the multiverse, the universe as information, the holographic principle For some of the wilder speculations of the theorists there can by definition never be any such evidence” (Baggott, location 68 of 6945, 1%).

Author and PhD Jim Baggott says, “This stuff is not only not true. It is not even science. I call it ‘fairytale physics’” (Baggott, location 68 of 6934, 1%).

But I think these theoretical scientists do have observational bases for their findings. Simple observations. The stuff of quacks. For instance, if you squint your eyes in front of a light beaming from, say, a clock radio, you see strings of light. Could such a simple observation have inspired string theory? Who would admit it? After all, “scientists don’t like us looking over their shoulders ... as they fear that if we really knew what

went on, this would somehow undermine their credibility and authority” (Baggott, location 11 of 338, 5%).

Isaac Newton’s apple seems an obvious example of inspiration from the simple. And wavelets of sunlight reflected on my wall might offer a case for wave theory.

But do scientists hide their inspirations for fear of looking like hacks? Perhaps, “they have chosen instead to abandon the obligation to refer their theories to our experience of the real world. They have chosen to abandon the scientific method” (Baggott, location 108 of 6934, 2%).

So, what do theoretical physicists rely on when void of observational data? “With no observational or experimental data to ground their theories in reality, these theorists have been guided instead by their mathematics and their aesthetic sensibilities” (Baggott, location 108 of 6934, 2%).

One math TA said mathematicians, like magicians, have long ago worked out what many Nobel-worthy physicists newly seek. The TA went as far as to suggest that math covers the scope of all physical possibilities. Take infinite dimensionality, for instance. When physicists needed more than four dimensions, math geeks dished out equations for infinite dimensions. So, if math covers all physical possibilities, that means there could be infinite versions of you. You could have an IQ of infinity—or of negative infinity. You could be infinite feet tall, and not just to an ant. Thus, math broadens the playground of theoretical physicist quacks.

I'd love to learn how science hacks introduce wild theories. This know-how could help me introduce my theory of motion parallax. Motion parallax seems too gritty and raw to explain in a single article, so I'll sum it in a sentence. An example of motion parallax is when you drive down the highway and the nearby trees speed by faster than distant mountains. My theory is based on such simple observable data.

I'd like to recommend a system for studying motion parallax. I'd want to create a coordinate system, one that captures the "observed" motion of still objects relative to a moving observer. I'd set multiple coordinate grids in motion, each representing an object in 3d space relative to a moving observer (and relative to other objects).

Currently, our coordinate systems are meant for stationary observers. I want to make a coordinate system for moving observers, which is a whole new field of study, in my opinion.

But I don't know where to begin. I achieved top grades in university math, but through solving problems, not through real-world applications. So, how do physicists manipulate math to fit their theories?

One communications professor needed a formula for his research. So, I sent him to a math professor. He and the math professor worked out a formula together. I, too, need to find a math professor to help me theorize my motion parallax coordinate system.

But my approach now is to do everything myself. For instance, to make a documentary film, I'd aim to perform the camera recording, video and sound editing, production, and direction myself. In other words, I need time to learn the different tasks. That way, I won't get hijacked by some creepy Pete.

To learn enough math and physics to make my motion parallax theory gain ground seems like a lifetime of work.

I told my first communications supervisor about my motion parallax theory. She smugly tore my ideas apart—until I burst into tears, calling her a dream killer. In my defense, "whenever historians examine the details of scientific discoveries, they inevitably find only confusion and muddle, vagueness and error, good fortune often pointing the way to the right answers for the wrong reasons. Occasionally, they find true genius. Theorizing involves a deeply human act of creativity. And this, like humor, doesn't fare well under any kind of rational analysis" (Baggott, p. 14 of 338, 5%).

But maybe it's okay to publish a theory with unresolved issues. The issues may later get resolved. And with Amazon, you can publish most anything. After all, "Nobody understands quantum mechanics," declared the charismatic American physicist and Nobel laureate Richard Feynman, with some justification. And today, more than a hundred years after it was first discovered, the theory remains completely inscrutable" (Baggott, location 98 of 6934, 1%).

References

Baggott, Jim. (n.d.) *Farewell to Reality: How Modern Physics Has Betrayed the Search for Scientific Truth*. New York: Pegasus Books.



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Amber is floored by a marking rubric with obvious and egregious errors; among a flood of responses an AU staffer jumps in with good advice and an offer of assistance; Carrie has just enrolled in her first course and is itching to get access to the course page and materials.

Other posts include Access to Students with Disabilities, the job market for HR grads, nursing degree clinicals, and courses FREN 375 and PSYC 355.

reddit

Recent posters are looking for insight into ACCT 253, COMP 325, and PHIL 371.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Get to know #AthabascaU's new Writer in Residence, Katherena Vermette! Our @angie abdou & Paul Huebener sat down with @katherenav for a great Q&A bit.ly/2C5kj9u #CanLit #writing #academicwriting #fiction #nonfiction #graphicnovel."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Want to get in extra training over the holiday season? AUSU provides all members with a FREE subscription to lynda.com, the world's premier video training site. Learn everything from programming to photography to business skills and more! bit.ly/1Qvg8pb."

Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: The Expert Institute's 2018 Annual Healthcare and Life Sciences Scholarship

Sponsored by: The Expert Institute

Deadline: December 31, 2018

Potential payout: \$1000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be actively pursuing a degree related to healthcare or the life sciences, and have a GPA of at least 3.0.

What's required: An online application form, along with a cover sheet and an essay of 1000 to 2000 words on how you feel your specialized knowledge and training could be applied to improving the practice of law.

Tips: Read [last year's scholarship winning entries](#) for inspiration.

Where to get info: www.theexpertinstitute.com/writing-contest-medical-scholarship/



Disrupting Your Routine

Deanna Roney



We can get stuck in routines, even find comfort in their consistencies. We become comfortable and complacent in these daily routines that seem to be working for us. And, while there isn't anything wrong with having a routine, it can help us stay organized and motivated, sometimes we don't realize just how stuck in it we are.

Sometimes it happens without conscious thought that we end up throwing our familiar days out the window. Sometimes we do it with purpose to "shake things up".

I found that I didn't realize the rut I had been in for months. The days came and went quickly as work became more work and responsibilities added up and, before I realized it, weeks blurred by with nothing too different happening. Holidays are great for breaking up those days, to throw in some extra time to visit with family and friends from out of town, even those from in town that you just don't make the time to visit.

We recently added a puppy to our family and this addition proved to me just how comfortable I got in my own routine, my own rut. I worked in my office from morning until evening, generally unable to focus outside of the space. I would take my grown dogs outside and play with them, run them, but only once work was done, because they were pretty content in my routine too: they loved to sleep on my office floor while I worked, only interrupting me when they wanted a pet or really needed to go outside.

With the addition of the puppy, who, for the sake of my books, is not allowed inside my office until he settles down, I have spent much less time working in there and a lot more time working in the living room or at the kitchen table. I still sneak away to my office when I need to shut out the noise of life, but a lot less. And I have learned that I can be productive working among some distractions. I can make time here and there to take the dogs all outside to burn energy off without it completely disrupting my work flow.

I would argue that these small interruptions, the fresh air and the brief time away, recharges me when I get back in front of my computer. That isn't to say that the disruption to my routine went smoothly at first, there was an adjustment (and still is some days) but this disruption has reminded me to focus beyond work, to see beyond the to-do list and reinforced that it is okay to take these breaks in the day. The list will still be there and the work will still get done.

While I don't recommend puppies as a method to disrupt a routine to everyone, for me it has been a very rewarding disruption. It is teaching me patience, organization, and pushing me to get back in touch with the alpha side of me—the one that doesn't take no, or running away, as an appropriate answer.

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





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

The Lost Wonderful Time of the Year

Dear Barb:

The happiest time of the year is quickly approaching, but I am not feeling it. Most of my family members have passed away and my only son is not talking to me. He gave me an ultimatum and he didn't get the response he wanted from me. His father and I have been divorced for many years and my son became my whole life, but I found out from other family members that my son will be spending Christmas with his father.

I don't have regrets about not giving in to my son, but I do feel sorry that he cut me out of his life so easily. I feel very alone and I'm not sure what to do about it. I have always held the Christmas dinner at my house, and I will still be preparing dinner this year, but it won't be the same without my son and his family. I wish Christmas day was over, so I could move past this. Do you have any suggestions on how I can get through this heartbreaking Christmas? I don't want to cause the few people who will be coming over to feel as I do.

Thanks for your help, Victoria.

Hi Victoria:

Sorry to hear about your situation. Parents who are estranged from their adult children are becoming an epidemic and there doesn't seem to be an easy solution. This generation of parents have often allowed their children to call the shots in the relationship, especially in

cases of divorce. Many children learned to play one parent against the other to get what they want, and it worked, and they continued this behaviour into adulthood.

A friend of mine, whose parents were divorced, made the observation that children of divorce are forced to choose between their parents, which is not something children of intact families do. You said your son was your whole life, so I'm assuming you did everything your son wanted while he was growing up, and now you chose to say no, and this is the outcome. You have two choices, you can continue to spend your life catering to your adult child's wishes, or you can hold your ground and hope at some point he will come to his senses and respect your right to have your own opinion. If he doesn't, you owe it to yourself to let this go and be happy. Focus on the people who want to spend Christmas with you and be thankful. There really is no easy solution.

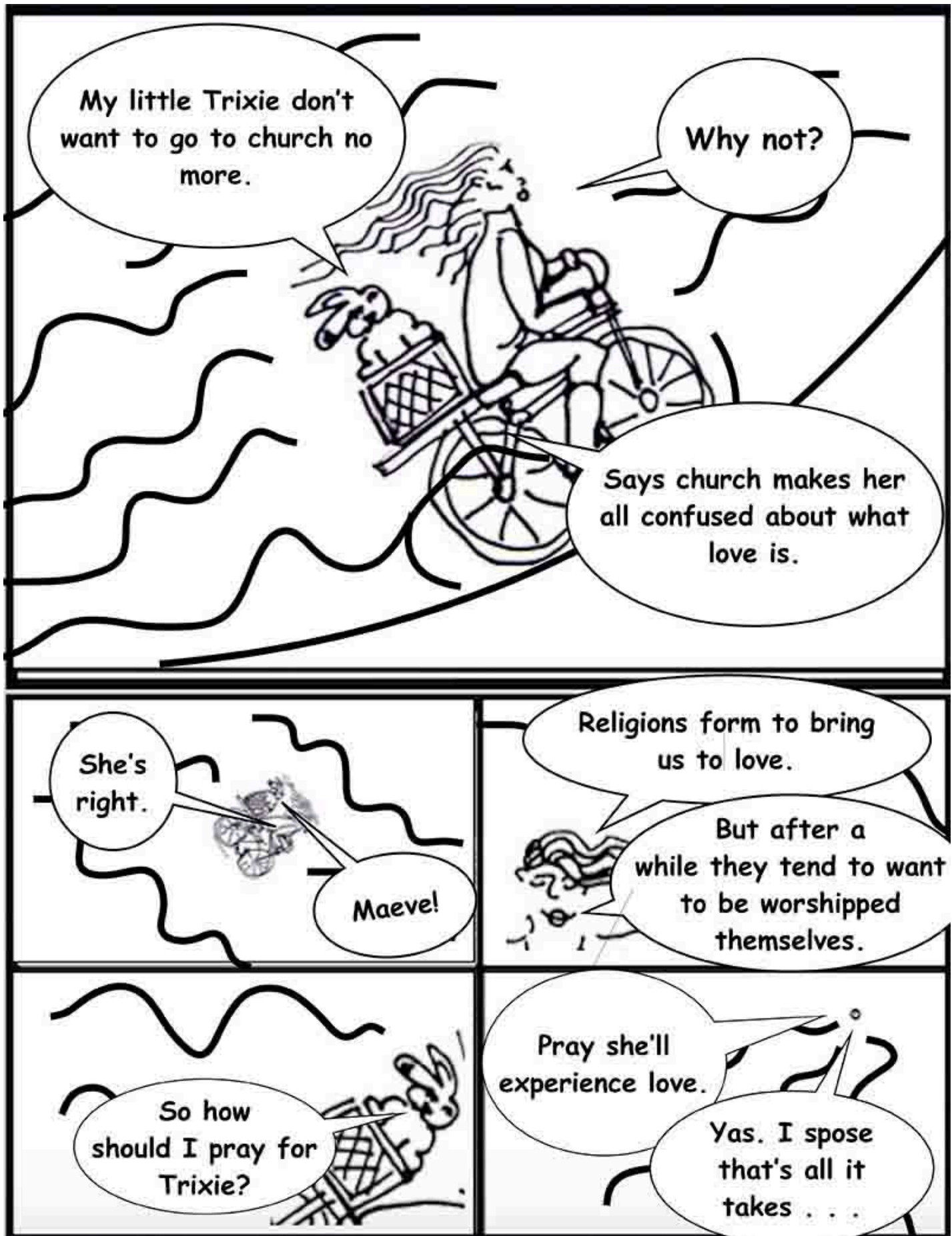
Thank you for your letter Victoria and I'm sure there are a lot of parents and adult children who will be able to relate to your situation.

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



Poet Maeve
Experiencing Love

Wanda Waterman





AUSU
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

This space is provided by AUSU. The Voice does not create or edit this content. Contact services@ausu.org with any questions.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Dec 15:** [Jan degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Dec 24 – Jan 1 (inclusive):** [AUSU & AU office closure](#)
- **Dec 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Feb](#)
- **Jan 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Feb 1](#)
- **Jan 10:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Jan 15:** [Feb degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Jan 15:** [Deadline to finish exams for course with Dec end](#)

AUSU Advocacy Week 2018

Our latest executive blog is now posted, all about [Advocacy Week 2018](#) in Ottawa – complete with photos!

This year, all three members of our executive team travelled to Ottawa in November 2018 as part of the [CASA](#) (Canadian Alliance of Students' Associations) delegation, ready to bring the needs of post-secondary students in Canada to the attention of the federal government.

Some highlights of Advocacy Week included:

- Over 160 meeting with Members of Parliament (MPs), Senators, and other stakeholders
- Consultation with Mental Health Commission of Canada
- Meeting with Economic and Social Development Canada & Native Women's Association of Canada
- Fireside Chat with various Canadian senators
- Reception at the Centre Block building of Parliament
- .. and more!

Visit our website [here](#) to find out more and check out our Advocacy Week 2018 Photo Gallery!



Sapna Rahajan, Director of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, AUSU VPEx Melinda Goertz & VPFA Natasha Donahue

Help Over the Holidays

The holidays can be a stressful time of year. For some, it can be lonely or isolating, especially with our dark, cold winters. For some, it could be overwhelming with too many commitments, social obligations, or family drama.

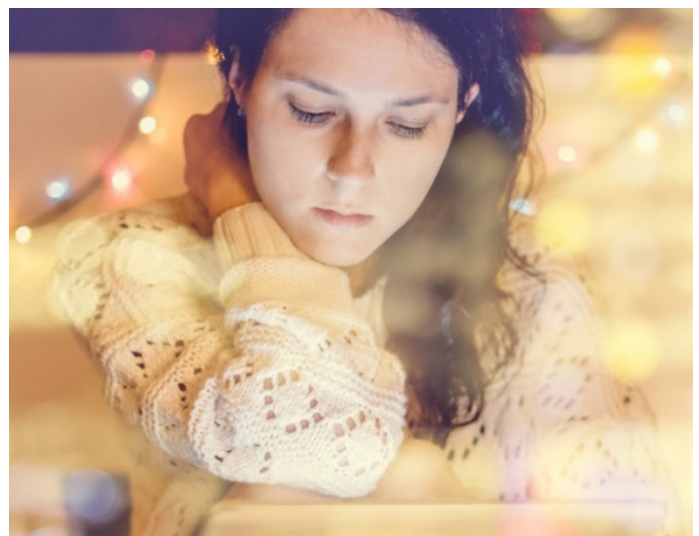
Whether you are juggling too much time or not enough time, struggling with budgeting, anxiety, loneliness, or just need some tips to get through the holiday season, AU's [Homewood Health Program](#) is there for you.

For immediate support, 24/7, call Homewood Health:

1-800-663-1142 (English)
1-866-398-9505 (French)
1-888-384-1152 (TTY/hearing impaired)
1-877-301-4776 (Outside of Canada)

You can also access a variety of web-based services and resources on the website at homeweb.ca.

Find full overview of Homewood Health's Services [here](#).



Holiday Stress? There is help!

Call 24/7 to speak to a caring professional
1-800-663-1142 **homeweb.ca**

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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