

# THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 08 2019-02-22

**Toronto's Amber Alert**  
Reacting to the Reaction

**Fighting Dunning-Kruger**  
Keeping Incompetence in Check

**The Night Picnic**  
A Macabre Image Resonates

*Plus:  
Entitlement, Part 2  
Woman of Interest  
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!**

**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

### Evening the Field

Karl Low



Recently you may have heard some stories about what happened with an amber alert in Toronto. Being from that city herself, Voice writer Brittany Daigle felt she had to write about the response, and we're presenting it as our feature article this week.

Also, this week, a small theme developed around the idea of people believing that their truth is the real one. This is dug into most deeply by the Fly on the Wall, but our own Wanda Waterman had a look at it through the lens of the Dunning-Kruger effect. Taken together, these two articles give us a solid look at why we should always be questioning ourselves, even when, or perhaps especially when, we know we're right.

Using that as a segue, I wrote a couple weeks ago about an open letter sent to AU faculty and staff regarding the ongoing negotiations between the AU Faculty Association and AU. I noted that, given what was written about it, it didn't seem like the wisest move of management to move negotiations along.

However, AU then did something that absolutely moved negotiations along. They are reported as having dropped all of the contentious language changes they wanted from their

proposed agreement. The AUFA took this as a significant win, and in some ways it is, but I find myself wondering.

Going back to the idea that, at the end of the day, a public union seeking to strike is engaging in a type of public relations war with the management, AU may have just struck a significant blow. AUFA has taken AU's walking back of the contentious wording changes as a win on their part, and so is using that to push forward to try to get changes to the contract that are beneficial to the AUFA (as is their mandate, I should note). However, if AU is firm in not wanting to give any more to the union, they have now dealt themselves a much stronger hand when it comes to presenting their case to the public. Now, if worst comes to worst, AU can portray itself as the more reasonable, having eliminated all negatives to the union except for the two years of 0% increases, which they can point to Alberta's fiscal situation mandating.

AUFA meanwhile, in pressing for more beneficial wording in the contracts, can be portrayed as the stubborn ones if this goes as far as a walk-out or other such labour action. They, of course have already attempted to blunt this by noting that beneficial wording changes have been gained by multiple other public organizations this time around, in exchange for the double-zero increase.

But, from my view, what this has done is put both sides on a much more even playing field should this negotiation be forced to be judged in the court of public opinion (and relevant political pressure). Then again, I can be quite the cynic when it comes to politics, and public union negotiations are nothing if not political. Perhaps I'm wrong and this really is the start to both groups coming to a compromise they can agree with and that, more importantly, benefits students. Until then, enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl". The signature is stylized and cursive.

## Toronto's Amber Alert

Brittany Daigle



At 11:30pm on Thursday evening, while I was lying in bed and getting ready to fall asleep, residents within the Greater Toronto Area received two identical amber alerts back-to-back from the Peel Regional Police, stating “Emergency Alert: Victim is Riya Rajkumar age 11. Suspect is Roopesh Rajkumar age 41. Vehicle is a silver Honda civic plate #ARBV 598. Last known location east bound 401. If observed please call 9-1-1.”

If any of you have previously received an amber alert, you would know that it is no regular sounding alarm ringtone. Amber alerts are designed to be extremely loud and attention-grabbing to warn people of potential danger or to get people to assist with police searches. Last April, a system was implemented in Canada for mobile electronic devices, which required all cellphone carriers to distribute the emergency alert messages to customers. For good reason, customers cannot opt out of these loud, persistent alerts.

Since those tests, I had not received an actual amber alert, so it definitely caught my attention (and my dogs’ attention for that matter). I checked my phone and then searched Google for more information; I found out that her father had failed to return his daughter to her mother after he took her out for her birthday, which was also Valentine’s Day. The father has also had made comments indicating that he was going to harm his daughter, along with himself.

As I continued to scroll, I began reading the comments that were posted on the news article and I was shocked. Hundreds of people were angry that there was an amber alert sent out at such a late hour, affecting their precious beauty sleep. The Peel Regional Police’s social media accounts were flooded with angry comments. Some people even felt entitled enough to call 911 to complain about being woken up, which is absolutely ridiculous and should be illegal.

Shortly after the amber alert went out the Peel Regional Police sent out an update on social media, stating “Update: Roopesh Rajkumar (the father) has been located and arrested. Riya Rajkumar has been located deceased at a residence in Brampton” and that “Our communications bureau is receiving numerous calls to 9-1-1, complaining about the late hour of the Amber Alert. As a direct result of someone receiving the alert, we were able to locate the suspect and his vehicle. The system works. Thank you to all those that called with tips.” Could you imagine calling 9-1-1 to complain that a text woke you up? There are actual, serious emergencies that may be delayed due to the phone lines being occupied. This just makes me want to scream. I cannot understand how people could be so selfish. As stated by [E-Comm 9-1-1](#), “Don’t let non-emergencies compete with real ones. Know the difference between when to call 9-1-1 and when to report your situation to the non-emergency line.”

That poor little girl was taken and murdered by the hands of her father, and all people care about is their sleep. These emergency alerts send out useful information. Whether it is to warn people

about a terrorist attack, natural disaster, or someone going missing—it is information that people should be aware of so they can react accordingly. At any point it could be your life that they are trying to save. I just wish that those angry, sleepy people would have just taken a moment to consider if it was their child, family member, or friend that had gone missing and was in danger. They would have wanted the entire globe to receive an amber alert and certainly would not have been annoyed if they were woken up during the middle of the night. At the end of the day, system works and should be respected and taken seriously.

Canadian actor and comedian, Gerry Dee, posted a tweet in response to all of the people who complained about the amber alert, stating “When we all received that amber alert last night, a little girl, in the care of her father, was about to be murdered. By her father. On her birthday. I can’t grasp this. Some of you lost some sleep because of the sound of the alert. But, you woke up. Unlike her. RIP Riya.”

Police posted an update on their social media, stating “Over the last 12+ hours, we have received numerous messages of support from the community. We hear you. Thank you for your kind words. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of Riya Rajkumar and all those that are affected by the events.” Thankfully, there are still some rational, respectful people out there.

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



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

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



#### **AthaU Facebook Group**

Jeff wonders if he should take ECON 247 and ECON 248 at the same time; responders agree that one at a time is best, with ECON 247 being first. Angela seeks help with a website citation; the AU library and help are just a phone call away. Sharaya wonders what the cut-off is between full-time and part-time for funded students.

Other posts include AU's French program, textbooks for sale, course evaluations, self-plagiarism, and the weekly question about easy courses.

#### **reddit**

A few new posts have shown up, including one asking if a student can enrol in two AU programs simultaneously, and another griping about the transfer credit fee.

#### **Twitter**

@AthabascaU tweets: "Distinguished Alumni, The Rising Star, The Volunteer Service, & The Future Alumni Award nominations are NOW OPEN. Nominate an outstanding #AthabascaU graduate who is making a difference in their community [t.co/OD9TmCioRU](https://t.co/OD9TmCioRU)."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Did you know AUSU posts its financial statements and budget online? We know - exciting stuff - but we want to know we strongly believe in full transparency with our membership! <https://www.ausu.org/governance/financials/> ..."

## Fly on the Wall

### Entitlement Through the Ages, Part 2

Jason Sullivan

#### Dividing Difference from Diffidence

##### It Takes One to Know One

Last week it became clear, with a little help from a script delivered by Sidney Poitier, that entitlement was alive and well a half century ago. Rebellious flower power and peaceful hippiedom combined palpable rage against elders with a smug sense of superiority: ground zero for entitlement. And this same sense of being misunderstood was present in all the decades in between then and now. This begs the question: is there something incommensurable between generations, a



bridge that cannot be built? Are elders and youth just too *other* for a rehabilitation of their relationship to occur? Putting aside the nearly universal adoption of a device that Asimov might have termed a means of mind control and homogenization, the cell phone, one might wonder if generational fissures will remain until such time as the young become the old and have their own youth to poke and spar at with terms like entitlement and snowflake and buttercup.

Underneath differences it's common to assume that meaning itself exists. Like an emperor unmasked and denuded but nevertheless assuming a throne, a certain act of translation is presumed, particularly between generations that diverge in historical time and social space. Surely we all have more in common than superficial aesthetics like clothing and cute new slang terminologies?

Jacques Derrida weighs in by noting that the concept of meaning, with its possible universal truths, is itself a "transcendental signified" that we believe in such that it becomes naturalized as part of our metaphysical programming (Derrida, 49). But meaning, like truth with a capital T, only exists when we believe in it. What we think is underpinned by what we think is true; when ruptures exist between generations the lack of clothes the emperor of meaning wears becomes painfully clear. Truth and meaning are contested terrains and no maps or borderlands are final.

Derrida summarizes:

"In a certain way, 'thought' means nothing...in the last analysis it no longer derives from 'meaning'...I have attempted to systematize a deconstructive critique precisely against the authority of meaning, as the transcendental signified or as telos, in other words history determined in the last analysis as the history of meaning." (Derrida, 49)

As history unfolds, generations are born, flourish and pass away. Their actions, words and gestures (not to mention core beliefs and definitions) evolve and change and create islands of meaning that appear to rest on a mantle of shared understanding that yet remains ambiguous. Only by ignoring a larger perspective do people become entitled in that they forget where they came from and, crucially, where they are going if they are lucky enough to live that long.

Misunderstandings, then, can be classified as involving either differences in essence or differences in existence. Which came first?

Consider any culture and its stories, be they spoken or written. Tales of how life came to be and how we ought to live are presented as either true for every human (universal) or true for only one section of humanity (contingent). Truths always have a scope and every scope has limits; morality for all humans stops short of morality for, say, sloths and lemurs. Yet, beneath this fact lies the belief that truth itself (for instance, that all kids like hot dogs) claims an autonomous power to be applied in each instance. The theory is that every question has a most-true answer. When large sections of youth rebel against prevalent truths this radical rupture sends a stake through the heart of the hidden beliefs that underlie daily life. It's not just specific normalities, like hair length or clothing style, that are under attack: it's the notion that some stuff is just common sense. Order appears to be displaced by disorder and, like weeds in a field, the reality of non-human nature rushes in. Anyone who wishes to seed their lawn with dandelions, burdock, and pigweed may gleefully note the social consequences.

### **The Torturous Truth about Truth, Power and Control**

Presumably we all become older and wiser. And aren't some truths really true, like the truths of geometry? Send me an angle, baby. Two plus two equals 4, or does it equal 5? Four, of course...pour v'rai!

Consider the horror of being tortured in an Orwellian setting until you make a statement that, according to the laws of math, is categorically untrue. Let's don our inner Trekkie hats, if we have or can imagine them. Failing that, let's don some George Orwell fandom apparel and, given the Orwellian nature of our century, let's proceed as insightful academics.

Capt. Jean-Luc Picard (in Orwell's book *1984* the character in this exact same situation was named Winston Smith) is held captive and tortured. His captor demands that the detainee claim to see five lights when in fact there are only four.

*"How many lights are there?"*

*"There are 4 lights."*

*"I don't understand how you can be so mistaken."*

*Punishment ensues. (Dansereau, A., online).*

Now, if we take this text literally, we immediately see that what's going on is not about what's in plain sight. It's not about lights and certainly no, as the English say, the maths. The disagreement is about power and control. Picard's captor doesn't understand why Picard wouldn't just admit to seeing what he's supposed to see. It's just like how Sidney Poitier's Dad wants his son to pay homage to the many sacrifices, including his own mother doing without a nice winter coat, that his parents had made to further their boy's education. They'd aided and abetted his young hiney

## **AU-thentic Events** **Upcoming AU Related Events**

### **Writer-in-Residence Katherena Vermette's Inaugural Talk**

Wed, Feb 27, 2:00 to 3:30 pm MST  
Peace Hills Trust Tower, Room 1112, 10011  
109 St NW, Edmonton AB

In person and online

Hosted by AU

[news.athabascau.ca/events/gene-rations-making-poetry-out-of-metis-history-katherena-vermette/](https://news.athabascau.ca/events/gene-rations-making-poetry-out-of-metis-history-katherena-vermette/)

See above link for info and to connect online

### **Business Undergraduate Info Session**

Thurs, Feb 28, 12:00 to 1:00 pm MST  
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[business.athabascau.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-information-session-11/](https://business.athabascau.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-information-session-11/)

Register online at above link

### **FHSS Research Talks**

Fri, Mar 1, 2:00 to 4:00 pm MST  
Peace Hills Trust Tower, Room 1222, 10011  
109 St NW, Edmonton AB.

In person and online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Conference Number(s): 1-855-228-6652

Participant code: 1362638

Adobe Connect link:

<https://athabascau.adobeconnect.com/fhss-research/>

No pre-registration necessary

*All events are free unless otherwise specified*

so that he could achieve such successes and, indeed, this had enabled him to come to see the world differently than they did. (Rose, online) They planted him and he blossomed; only hitch was that he forgot who his gardeners were.

Poitier's entitlement granted him the privilege of access to higher learning but he failed to simply acknowledge this fact and proceed accordingly. Or, more truthfully, his character didn't feel obliged to do so because he felt fundamentally misunderstood. That's entitlement for you, be it in 1967 or in 2019 or on a planet far away in the 24<sup>th</sup> Century. When we feel more righteous than the facts of our situation allows, then we are feeling the onrush of entitlement.

### Practical Applications of Our AU Status

Now, in fairness to Picard, his defence of justice and loyalty to his superiors is what led him to resist unjust prosecution. Likewise, we AU students may be promptly required to justify our existence in any social moment (the doctor's office, the local watering hole), and ought to do so with resolute pride. If someone asks "what are you gonna do with that degree" we can forge common ground, a greater sense of sanity and gratitude, by putting ourselves in our interlocutor's mental state before answering. Imagine what they're thinking and respond in that context.

### Know Thy Source, Know Thy Source Code?

So, considering instances where the authority figure and the subaltern character are of different generations, we might wonder why the former won't just follow the rules. This recalcitrance makes it seem as though different generations have different *source codes* creating divergent ideological countenances.

To further my enquiry on the matter of our cultural programming and its creation of generational chasms, I interviewed my brother, Ben. He's worked in gaming design and programming for the past decade and a half so knows his way around a literal source code. He defined source codes as: "simply a series of rigidly defined instruction that the computer can execute to perform functions...Knights have 'a code'. But source code is more akin to fabric than rules. It is the material of the thing more than something the thing abides by" (Sullivan, personal comm.)

So, if the need to be hip rather than square, or lit rather than MAGA, is built into an epoch's cultural fabric then there's no changing it once its coded. But there are possibilities for becoming aware of it. Realizing the existence of difference, even of an incomprehensible *other*, goes a long way toward accepting this same *other*. We were all once younger than we are today, and we will all be older than we are now. No sheet, Sherlock! So, let's use our educational process at AU to nurture tolerance—if not the discovery of common ground with others. Critical thinking, arguably the most important learning outcome of all, depends upon the ability to see things outside of the boxes, nests, and cages (especially the gilded cages) we inhabit. Perhaps, then, if the makeup of different people is incommensurable, not reducible to a common denominator, then we must simply agree to disagree. And, to maintain academic integrity, and self-respect, we must disagree respectfully.

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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.*



## Fighting Dunning-Kruger

Wanda Waterman

### How to Keep the Dunning-Kruger Effect from Jeopardizing Your Education



A friend's marketing career hit a bump when he hired a graphic artist to create a three-dimensional model for an important project. She claimed she could do it, and he believed her.

Time dwindled away and she wasn't getting it done. She continued to insist she could do it, that she could do it exceptionally well, and that she could get it done by the deadline. He continued to believe her. How could he not? She was just so sure of herself!

We've all seen it: that off-key warbler who simply has to sing at her sister's wedding, or the clerk who takes control of a department's financial records only to botch them, or the friend who insists they can dye your tresses as well as any salon and ends up turning your hair green.

#### What is the Dunning-Kruger effect?

These kinds of disasters could have been averted were it not for the Dunning-Kruger effect, a common phenomenon in human behaviour that grants us a

higher opinion of our own knowledge and abilities than we deserve. The Dunning-Kruger effect is a kind of cognitive bias, or, in layperson's terms, a persistent form of stupidity.

The effect was named for David Dunning and Justin Kruger, the psychologists who studied it, described it, and tested it. What they found in their carefully designed experiments was a correlation between a person's depth of ignorance about a subject and the height of their self-confidence regarding their knowledge of that subject.

You're probably aware, if you're studying psychology, that students who go into examinations feeling highly confident are more likely to make errors. Doubt, it seems, can get you higher marks, as incompetence has a tendency to blind us to our own ignorance.

I see this happen quite often among writers, myself included. The sad fact is that writing well takes time and humility, and no amount of experience seems to change that. Taking the time to revise and being in the habit of reading well-written work will always be necessary to keeping your writing chops.

Unfortunately getting work as a writer often means applying for jobs with people who don't know good writing, and these are more likely to hire a self-confident writer than one who can write well. The highly competent don't recognise their own capabilities and so hold themselves back, and too often it's the overconfident bird that gets the worm.

Just ask my friend in marketing: He ended up having to let the artist go at the last minute and create the model himself. It was disastrous, and more damaging to his once-successful career than it was to hers.

Don't think you're exempt; if you're a homo sapiens with a heartbeat there's probably at least one area in your life where your confidence exceeds your ability. It's time to take stock and turn it all

around so that your overconfidence doesn't trip up your academic performance, or, heaven forbid, your career.

### Five ways to keep the Dunning-Kruger effect from holding you back

- 1). Be humble. Never assume you can do something better than someone else without putting that assumption to the test. Be thorough when you study. Go over that exam, reading the questions again and making sure you understood them the first time, then go over your answers. Revise your papers as often as you can to rid them of mistakes and false assumptions.
- 2). Be honest with yourself. Are you really a better singer than Lady Gaga? Find someone whose opinion you trust and ask them for honest feedback.
- 3). Be objective. Stand back and look at yourself with a calm detachment. Remind yourself that you can't be certain of your own knowledge and abilities but that they are certain to improve with hard work.
- 4). Learn more. Don't be content with just a little knowledge, which, experts agree, can be dangerous. If you think you know a subject, keep learning it until you can find out what you *don't* know.
- 5). Don't let someone else's confidence trip you up. If you need to hire someone make sure they come highly recommended from someone other than themselves, or that at least they can show you examples of their work and talk knowledgeably about it.

How many of the world's messes can we blame on the Dunning-Kruger effect? I could answer that question with great confidence, but I'd probably be wrong.

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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*.

On this Margarita Day February 22, we thought for sure we'd find *The Voice's* vault dry. But no. Margaritas? We got 'em!

**Margaritas don't mix well with performance reviews.** Writer Bill Pollett imagines what an employee really wants to say to his boss. "I suppose my long-term goals are to, you know, just keep slogging away in the accounts receivable department, whilst nursing unrealistic dreams of telling you to fuck off." Porkpie Hat—Jenkins's Final Performance Review, April 24, 2009.

**No driving, just drinking.** Vancouverite Janice Behrens describes her family's decision to chuck the car keys for good. Not easy when even her ideal vacation "involves sitting behind the wheel, with good music playing on the tape deck, and with miles and miles of highway in front of me..." The Good Life—Without a Car, February 9, 2005.

## Porkpie Hat The Night Picnic

Darjeeling Jones



In the English seaside town I grew up in, there was an urban legend about a certain apple tree that grew on the edge of the town park, or the Recreation Grounds, as the place was known. The story went that a woman, a single mother with three young daughters, had brought her family to the park for a “midnight picnic”, and whilst there had strangled the children and thrown their bodies into the sea. She had then hanged herself from a branch of the tree, where she was discovered the next morning by a class of primary school children on a field trip.

The Recreation Grounds, as I recall them, were the perfect setting for this grisly story. It was situated behind a bus depot, near a low cliff overlooking the North Sea. In my memory, the playing fields were nothing more than a wasteland of mud and broken glass; the seascape beyond consisted of treacherous cliffs, black, jagged rocks, tidal pools teeming with spiny and squishy lifeforms, and perpetually angry, roiling, slate-grey ocean waves. It was the sort of coastline where one could easily imagine bodies washing ashore; the sort of sea more likely to breed monsters than mermaids.

The park’s playground consisted of a roundabout with rotten, splintered boards, a rusted, medieval-looking climbing structure, and a pair of swings with chains that gave forth an unearthly shrieking sound on the rare occasions that they were ever used.

And, of course, there was the apple tree—ancient, gnarled, producing mean and diseased-looking fruit. It was an article of faith amongst us kids that one bite of one of those apples could bring about all manner of misfortune, including (but not limited to) downturns in luck, parental divorce, broken limbs, bedroom hauntings, and even sudden death. Rumour had it, amongst us gossipy little twits, that a girl named Shirley Blake, a sixth former, had taken a bite of one on a dare. I remember it was source of unending speculation as to when—rather than if—some terrible fate would befall her. As far as I remember, the worst thing that ever did happen to her was that she got her forehead slashed during a field hockey game and had to get some stitches. Naturally, we took this as definitive confirmation.

According to the legend, if you went to the tree on the night of a full moon, you would be greeted by the sight of the dead mother swinging slowly from the creaking branch, whilst her children sat on a picnic blanket at the foot of it, silently eating a repast of earwigs, beetles, moths, and worms.

I remember very little of the things I learned in the dreary classrooms of that primary school: a few juicily bloody stories from history and the bible spring to mind. I remember some fumbling studies of human anatomy in the bushes behind the portables. Most clearly, though, I recall that weird piece of dark folklore and the images it etched into my imagination: the hanged woman, slowly turning in the breeze, and children sitting on the blanket, eating their midnight picnic, with the legs and wings of crawling and flying creatures hanging from their lips.

In a way, I have been drawn to permutations of that unsettling story throughout my life. I have looked for them, and found them, in the Nordic Noir, dark country songs, horror novels, and operas. I have seen and heard echoes of the ghost woman in the apple tree in the songs of Neko Case, Neil Young, The Handsome Family. I can find traces of the story in *Black Swan*, *Macbeth*, *Blue Velvet*, and *The Shining*. It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that there is some profound, symbolic truth contained in such stories of madness, strangeness, and misfortune. Perhaps there are some things that are essential for us to know about certain aspects of the mysterious universe that are best understood through story.



**Brittany Daigle**

**Course Exam**

*AU courses, up close*

**Course Exam**

**ENGL 353 (Intermediate Composition)**

**Brittany Daigle**

ENGL 353 (Intermediate Composition) is a three-credit intermediate English course that takes a practical approach to the art of essay writing by having students apply the major principles of composition in five essay assignments. Students learn these principles in the abstract by studying online handbooks on composition and, in practice, by studying samples of good writing and applying the principles in their own work. The course emphasizes some common essay types: exposition, comparison/contrast, persuasion, and research.

Intermediate Composition is made up of six units, and the marks are based on an expository essay weighing fifteen percent, a critical review worth fifteen percent, a comparison/contrast essay and a persuasive essay each weighing twenty percent, a research essay proposal worth five percent, and, finally, a research essay weighing twenty-five percent. This course has no final exams. To receive credit for ENGL 353, students must achieve a minimum grade of fifty percent on each assignment and a composite grade of at least fifty percent on the course.

Students should note that you may rewrite any assignment once and the final grade for the assignment will be the average of the two marks awarded. Also, this course qualifies for a reduced learning resource fee of \$130 which covers the cost of mandatory, Athabasca University-produced learning resources, library services, learning management system support, and learning design and development. The materials for this course are available entirely online through the English 353 main course page and Digital Reading Room (DRR).

Dr. Angie Abdou has been working at Athabasca for four years and she has been the course coordinator and tutor for ENGL 353 since she started. She states, "I have a Ph.D. from University of Calgary in Canadian Literature and Creative Writing. I have published seven books: one collection of short fiction, four novels, one collection of essays about Canadian sport literature, and one memoir. The memoir was inspired by a creative nonfiction course I teach in AU's

Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies. After teaching creative nonfiction for a couple of years, I found myself pulled to write my own book-length creative nonfiction. I tend to want to write what I love to read and that is always changing. What to tell you about myself personally? My husband Marty and I have two children, a twelve-year-old boy and a ten-year-old girl. All their sports (hockey, skiing, and gymnastics, swimming) keep us busy. We recently acquired sister puppies - so the house is full.”

Alongside ENGL 353, she coordinates all of Athabasca University’s creative writing courses, which include [ENGL 380](#) (Writing Poetry), [ENGL 381](#) (Creative Writing in Prose), [ENGL 384](#) (Writing Creative Nonfiction), [ENGL 387](#) (Writing Speculative Fiction), and [ENGL 482](#) (Advanced Fiction Writing). She explains, “I tutor for all of those except the poetry course. I also tutor in the independent study courses ([ENGL 491](#) – Directed Studies in Literature and [ENGL 492](#) – Research and Writing Projects in Literature), which allow students to do an independent creative project with my mentorship. In the graduate program, I regularly teach [MAIS 617](#) (Creative Nonfiction).”

She describes ENGL 353 as “an academic writing course. Students get a chance to polish up the essay-writing skills that they will need to excel in other university courses. The course focuses on different essay forms and gives students plenty of opportunities to learn through doing.”

Dr. Abdou explains that “like all of AU's self-paced courses, ENGL 353 requires a motivated and self-directed student. The students who work hardest improve the most. If students learn from the feedback on each assignment and apply it to the next submission, their writing gets better. If students take time to do many drafts, rather than submitting a first draft, their marks reflect that effort. A good work ethic is crucial to success in writing, and therefore crucial to success in this course.”

As for advice, she encourages students to not get discouraged if they do poorly on the first assignment. She states, “If you learn from each assignment, your mark will improve - and there are enough assignments that the first assignment does not determine your final outcome. Instead of focusing on marks, focus on feedback. Take time to absorb your tutor's comments and use those comments to make the next assignment better. If you need elaboration or clarification on any of those comments—or on anything—do not hesitate to contact your tutor.”

She believes that everyone should take ENGL 353, stating “If you have to write essays in your other courses, and most students do, this course will give you strategies to be successful.” Students will gain “a clearer sense of what is required in university essays and better skills for producing good quality essays.”

When asked which aspects of the course is the most difficult, she explains “Some students do not like to write so that is a hurdle. Some students do not feel confident in their writing skills. I hope that taking the course one essay at a time and looking to improve a little with each set of feedback will help students over both of those obstacles. Also, I strongly encourage students to seek out the tutor's help along the way for advice as needed. Do not be shy. That is what the tutors are there for and we always appreciate hearing from you.”

Whether ENGL 353 (Intermediate Composition) is a degree or program requirement of yours or the topics discussed above are of interest to you, or writing in general is something that you enjoy, this course will surely make you a stronger writer and better prepare you to write at the university-level!

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



## Top Ten Advantages of Self-Employment

Tara Panrucker



No matter what your goals are after attaining a university education, there is no guarantee a cushy job with company benefits awaits at the end of your journey. While various students aim for a specific position with a business or institution, self-employment may be the sole purpose for many at the end of their studies, and for good reason.

Although the security of a full-time job and a regular paycheque has undeniable advantages, it comes at a cost. Canada has the lowest paid time off in the world (often a scant two weeks/year), and you may further be expected to put in an exhausting 50-hour work week. France offers 30 paid vacation days, so unless you plan on relocating to France, two weeks off per year is a probability at your new workplace. Luckily, there are countless rewards to working autonomously.

1. You have the option of working from your own comfortable home office, with your cat, dog, and/or kids at hand. Say goodbye to expensive childcare, restaurant, commuting, and pet sitting costs.
2. You don't have to spend your precious time commuting, deciding what to wear to work every day, or making work lunches, which frees up more personal time to do other things, like exercising or cooking healthy meals.
3. The sky is the limit on your income. When you work for yourself, you decide how little or how much effort to sink into your business, or how many clients you want generate. In addition, this gives you the option to weed out toxic clients that you'd otherwise be stuck with working for a corporation.
4. You choose your hours of work. If you want to start at 4 am and be done by noon and have the remainder of the day to spend as you choose, you can!
5. Self-employment rewards you with working doing something you love and leaving the days of working at a job you loathe in the past.
6. Self-employment is rarely dull. With varied agendas and tasks, you can focus on what you do best. Working for an employer often entails showing up at the same place for the same amount of time every day, year after year. Furthermore, if you don't like paperwork, you can hire it out and remain focused on other activities you relish, such as sales or inventing.
7. True entrepreneurs are notoriously creative. They use their imaginations and are motivated to solve problems and make life better for others. This can be hugely rewarding and beneficial in ways you may never find in a regular job that commonly deters creativity and innovation.
8. If you've ever worked for a sexist, racist, or downright horrible boss, you will appreciate the value of being your own supervisor. You run your company according to your core values as opposed to getting sucked into the train wreck of many dysfunctional businesses.
9. Not only can you create a higher income level, you can also write off heaps of bills on your income taxes, like gas, utilities, office supplies, and rent.

10. Requesting time off for sick days or holidays can have a demeaning and deflating effect on your morale. Companies can make you feel guilty or like an outright liar for requiring health and wellness time off for yourself and your family. You can kiss all that goodbye when you own the company.

I've had the opportunity to work for many successful businesses, with awesome benefits from free wine and beer samples to all-expense-paid business trips to Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. Conversely, I worked for managers who asked me to "wear more skirts," lied to my face about a wage increase, told me I needed a new hairstyle, and assumed I would travel for business on my weekends off. I don't miss any of it.

Surely there are downsides to self-employment and working for someone else has its place when you have others dependent on your income. However, owning and running your own business is an enviable ambition to work toward, opening an exciting new pathway to creativity, opportunity, financial success, and deep personal satisfaction.

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



## The Fit Student Stop Headaches

Marie Well



Have you woken up with a new ache, pain, or symptom? If so, block threats and welcome healers.

As for new pains, do you get headaches? Well, I've been slapped with brain pains. Stabbing pains that move from one side of my head to the other. Before this, I've rarely had headaches. Once when a friend's child had a brain tumor erupt, I came down with serious headaches. My friend called them sympathy pains. But I've had next to nothing until now.

Today at Walmart, I felt the need to alert staff that I had brain pain, just in case I collapsed. And then I called my doctor to see if I should visit her within the next twenty-four hours. My brain feels eerily tight all the time.

Headaches and brain pains are not normal, according to author Dr. Amen. So, us headache sufferers needlessly endure pain. Instead, we should take action: eliminate threats and welcome healers. After all, we can build a better brain—grow new brain cells—at any age through a process called neurogenesis, according to author Brant

Cortright. He claims that "the brain keeps growing new brain cells your entire life. [This] process of neurogenesis is how the brain upgrades itself and enhances your quality of life" (location 126 of 593, 21%).

So, for brain pain, "exercise, diet, and brain activities all show great preventive promise" (Stillman & Safai-Waite, 2017). Exercise especially "increase[s] the production of new brain cells" (Cortright, 2015, location 228 of 593, 38%). So, aim to exercise at least five hours a week. I train seven hours a week with two rest days.

Exercise your brain, too. Do brain activities like reading and writing, but also seek out visually stimulating environments: “Giving mice an ‘enriched environment’ increased neurogenesis by four or five times” (Cortright, 2015, location 210 of 593, 35%). Even better, “when this enriched environment began in middle age, there was a five-fold increase in the rate of neurogenesis and when it began in old age there was a three- to five-fold increase” (Cortright, 2015, location 228 of 593, 38%). So, seek the bustle and beauty of museums, malls, and busy places.

For head pains, try ice-cold showers: nothing relieves the skull like freeze. For me, ice-cold showers are neurohealthy: “Broadly speaking we can call anything that nourishes the brain and increases neurogenesis neurohealthy, whereas those things that hurt the brain and decrease neurogenesis can be considered neurotoxic” (Cortright, 2015, location 175 of 593, 29%).

Also, for healing the brain, focus on diet. After all, “the decay in quality of life, memory, and emotional resilience usually associated with aging is really only a side effect of a neurotoxic lifestyle and diet” (Cortright, 2015, location 194 of 593, 33%). Your brain thrives when fed Omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants.

So, eat omega-3 rich flaxseed, walnuts, and wild salmon. I’ve noticed these foods boost my mood and brain power. But keep your ratio of Omega-3s to Omega-6s in the stable range of 1:4. Better yet, a 1:1 ratio of Omega-3s to Omega-6s delays aging, according to experts (Bulletproof, n.d.).

As for another healer, eat antioxidant-rich dark chocolate. When fed dark chocolate, the brain may stop throbbing and the tongue surely starts drooling. Dark chocolate treats brains and bellies.

Also, eat blueberries daily to ease brain pain. Like dark chocolate, blueberries brim with antioxidants, and antioxidants combat inflammation. No-one wants an inflamed brain. Turmeric offers antioxidants, too. So, drink hot water sprinkled with turmeric and black pepper several times a day. Pretend it’s a latte.

I’ve noticed that all these treats bring brain relief. But what if your brain still aches? Well, then try the next step: elimination. In other words, cut out activities that unsettle the brain. Then gradually bring those activities back one-by-one. If the pain resurges, cross those activities off your daily to-do list.

So, here is a list of items to eliminate for headache relief:

First cut out all added sugars, trans fats, and fast foods. These foods cause inflammation and can lead to disease. Next, figure out the activities that started around the time your head pains began. Cut out those activities.

For instance, I began steam baths around the time my brain pains began. Steams help headaches, but in my case, they worsened the pain. Since cutting out steams, my brain pain has subsided.

Also, I bought a scented laundry detergent during the time the brain pain began. The scent of the detergent sickened me. So, I’ve since bought a different brand. That lessened the pain, too.

As yet another example, I started doing Wim Hof meditation around the time the brain began to ache. While meditation heals the brain, I need to test whether the Wim Hof helps or hurts. After all, what works for most may not work for you or me.

As for long term habits, minimize use of your cell phone. But you (like me) might refuse to give up the cell phone. From my phone, I read e-books and watch Amazon Prime health documentaries. Without the cell, life just wouldn’t be the same.

But a friend of mine died of brain cancer. She was super athletic and ran a successful company. And she drove an electric car. According to Dr. Mercola, research is surfacing on cell phones’ link

to brain cancer. How much more electrified does the brain grow inside an electric vehicle? I'll stick with a bicycle: sadly, an electric bike.

But so much more exists for nurturing the brain: “a holistic approach to developing the brain means engaging with life in all its dimensions—physical, emotional, mental, spiritual. Our personal growth and our brains’ growth are one” (Cortright, 2015, location 516 of 593, 87%).

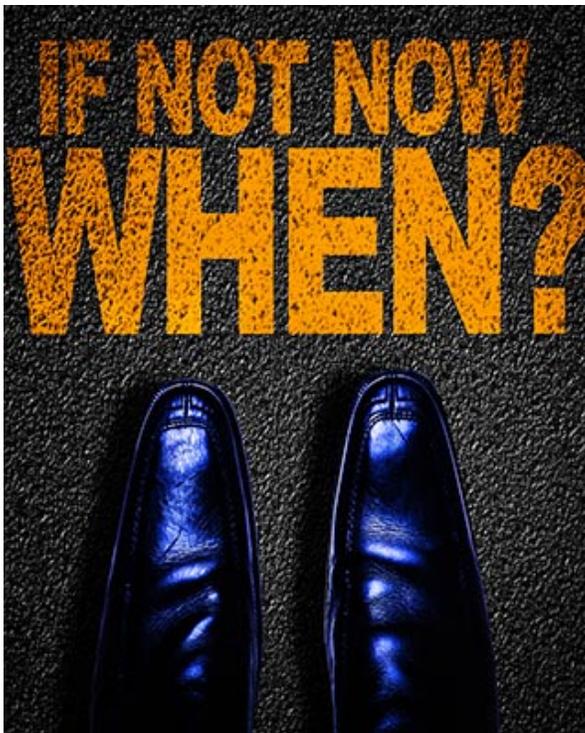
So, grow your brain to ease pain.

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## The Study Dude Stop Procrastination

Marie Well



Do you need a push to study, to workout, to diet, or to win at work? Then you need tips on how to stop procrastinating. When I apply for jobs, employers ask how I manage time. I don't impress anyone when I say I color code tasks based on priority. I need to instead reveal a time management plan. After all, we all need a plan. And time management skills kill procrastination.

So, how does time stop you from achieving your goals? I need to master marketing skills: theory, design, social media, and software. Yet, I stall. I never have the time. I fear failing. I feel overwhelmed. Sounds like study excuses, right?

But time is a choice, says author Garland Coulson. What do you always make time for? Your loved ones? Your hobby? Clubbing? I always make time for fitness. In fact, I count down the minutes until the next workout. Many people say they don't have time to train. But they'd have time if fitness marked a priority. Whatever your heart longs to achieve, you've always got the time (Coulson, 2019).

When it comes to learning marketing, I feel overwhelmed. So, I clean instead. Or I watch a health documentary. Or I read a health e-book. What do you do instead of your goals?

I also fear failure. I don't have the skills needed to serve as a marketing manager for large-scale firms. And what if I get let go by the company? Yet another blow to the self-esteem. Does fear hold you back from your goals, too?

On the bright side, I do have dreams that overlap with my goals. I long to make a documentary, and I need to master YouTube for marketing. So, why not focus on that skill first? You, too, may have goals that overlap with your hobbies and interests. Tackle those straight away if they top your priority list.

But beware of dreams that lead you astray. I love studying for an MCAT I'll never write. And I enjoy watching health documentaries or reading books on health. These tasks only take me so far toward my goals. But I justify these tasks, believing they'll open unexpected doors. While that may be true, the door I need open now is the one on which I fail to knock.

Author Garland Coulson says when we map out our workday, we need to add time for hobbies and fun. This brings balance. Just make sure your hobbies don't consume your day.

Coulson also says don't multitask. Instead, focus on one task at a time. When I try to tackle marketing skills, I feel dizzy wondering where to begin. Instead, I need to focus on one task until it's done. And then move on. So, focus on one subject at a time with your studies. Also, you can download an app for tackling projects like one called Trello.

As for timers, author Garland Coulson says study or work on task for thirty minutes and then take a five-minute break. During my undergrad program, I timed myself for thirty-minute stints followed by fifteen-minute breaks. But I did little else during the day, aside from exercising in the gym. The timer system helped me gain a GPA of 3.92 out of 4.0. But I took only three classes a semester. Whether at work or school, use a timer.

If those tips tickled your taste for anti-procrastination tools, read *Garland Coulson's book Stop Wasting Time: End Procrastination in 5 Weeks with Proven Productivity Techniques*. Garland offers the best insight into procrastination management I've seen yet. So, if time management holds you back, Coulson's got you covered.

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## Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** HotDeals "Magic Travel Experience" Scholarship

**Sponsored by:** HotDeals

**Deadline:** March 30, 2019, 11:59 pm Pacific Time

**Potential payout:** \$1000

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and enrolled at an accredited university or college in Canada, the U.S., the UK, Australia, or Hong Kong for the 2018-2019 school year. See the [Official Rules](#) for full eligibility info.

**What's required:** An online application, along with a recent academic transcript, and a written description and photographs of one of your favourite travel experiences.

**Tips:** Read the six-page [Official Rules](#) carefully.

**Where to get info:** [www.hotdeals.com/saving-money/scholarship.html](http://www.hotdeals.com/saving-money/scholarship.html)



## Woman of Interest Pema Chodron

Barb Godin



The principles of Buddhist philosophy (The Core Beliefs in Buddhism) in practice are: The Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and The Five Precepts.

Unsatisfactoriness and suffering exist and are universally experienced. Desire and attachment are the causes of unsatisfactoriness and suffering.

Pema Chodron is a divorced mother of two children who became a Buddhist nun, a pioneering accomplishment for a woman of her time. She was the first Western woman to achieve this honour and therefore was able to share Tibetan Buddhism with the Western world. Chodron is a teacher at the Gampo Abbey Academy, a "Western Buddhist monastery in the Shambhala tradition in Nova Scotia, Canada." Founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in 1983, it is a lineage institution of Shambhala and a corporate division of the Vajradhatu Buddhist Church of Canada." In 1986 Chodron became Gampo Abbey's first director.

Pema Chodron was born Deirdre Bloomfield-Brown on July 14, 1936 in New York City, New York. She received a bachelor's degree in English literature from Sarah Lawrence College and a Master's in Education from the University of California, Berkeley. In 1974 she became a novice Buddhist nun studying under Rangjung Rigpe Dorje and in 1981 she became the first American to become an ordained nun in the Vajrayana tradition.

Chodron suffered for years from chronic fatigue syndrome, which she was eventually able to overcome through the help of a homeopathic doctor. Because of her ill health she was able to experience the pain and suffering that are an important part of the Buddhist teachings. An accomplished author of at least 86 books, Chodron's first published book was "Start Where You Are." In 1996 Chodron wrote "When Things Fall Apart" which is about finding happiness in difficult times and it is still on Publisher's Weekly bestseller's list.

At the age of twenty-one, Pema Chodron married and had two children. She divorced and married a second time and is the grandmother of three. She continues to teach at Gampo Abbey during the winter and spends summers teaching on the "Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life" at Berkley in California. Her teachings have inspired many people to find peace and compassion in these tumultuous times.

*"Rather than letting our negativity get the better of us, we could acknowledge that right now we feel like a piece of shit and not be squeamish about taking a good look."* - Pema Chodron, When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult times.

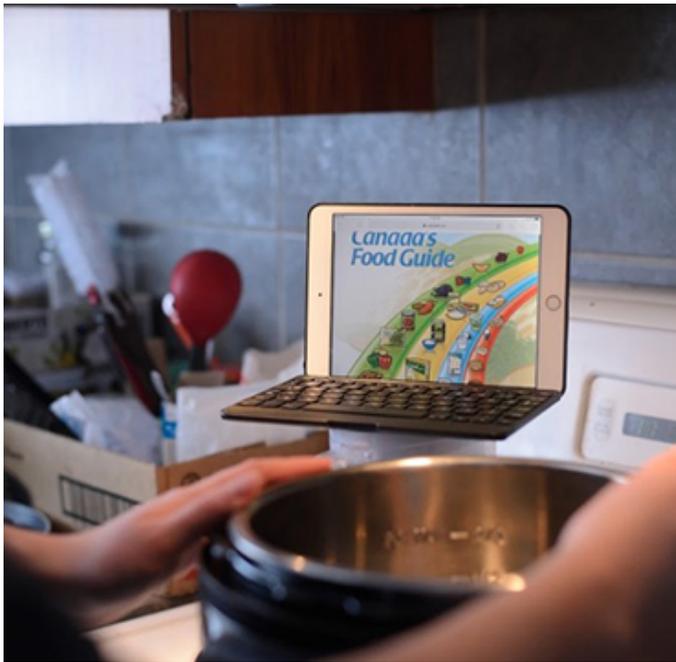
Additional information about this compassionate and spiritual woman can be found at:

<https://pemachodronfoundation.org/>



# Reading Nutrition Labels 101

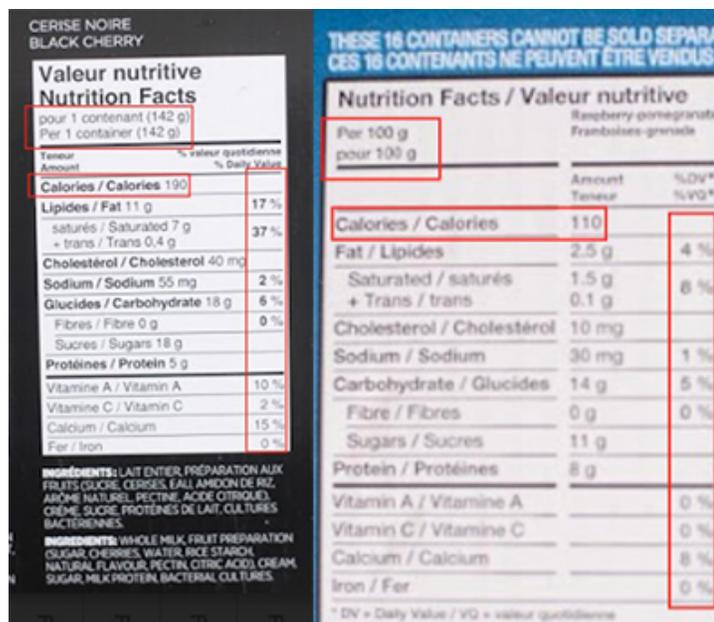
Xin Xu



Regardless of whether one is on a diet, food labels are a necessity to being knowledgeable about our food choices. For example, how do we discern between the value of two cans of soup when the serving sizes for each are so different? For busy AU students, deriving health value from nutrients can be a way of maintaining a healthy diet. Various food corporations use tactful marketing schemes to entice our appetite. For example, the “healthy dieting movement” has created advertising campaigns that appeal to health-conscious consumers, but how many of these claims are true? Enter the nutrition label; potentially the holy grail that dissects the actual nutritional value of a food item with little bias. The food label has several components worth mentioning. With a better understanding of these components, you’ll be more equipped to make sound decisions on your next trip to the

supermarket.

1. **Serving size:** the serving size denotes the quantity of a food item the average person consumes in one meal. Sometimes one serving size may not be a full amount contained within a package. For example, one serving size may be half a can of soup rather than a full can. Paying attention to the serving size can offer a clue of the quantity a person should consume in a single meal. Over-consumption of one food item may lead to excess of calories and a less balanced diet.
2. **Calories:** For athletes and certain diet-followers, calories-tracking can be valuable to understanding the energy intake levels. However, tracking this number is only one aspect of maintaining a healthful diet. In fact, for individuals eating a diverse, balanced diet, this number is only a reference point rather than an absolute target for the day.



Side to side comparison of two different yogurts.

3. **Daily percent value:** The % daily value refers to the nutrient content in a single serving of a food product. It is also an approximation of what portion of the nutrient should fill up your entire day's worth of food consumed. For example, taking all the food I eat in a day to be 100%, 25% Daily value in Fibre would mean that eating four times that food item would mean I have satisfied my daily fibre intake. While this may seem simple, manufacturers do not always share what percent is optimal for a healthful diet. **General rule: 5% of a daily value is less or little whereas 15% of a daily value is more or a lot.** Aim for food high in fibre, Vitamins, calcium and iron while aiming for food low in Saturated and trans fats as well as sodium.

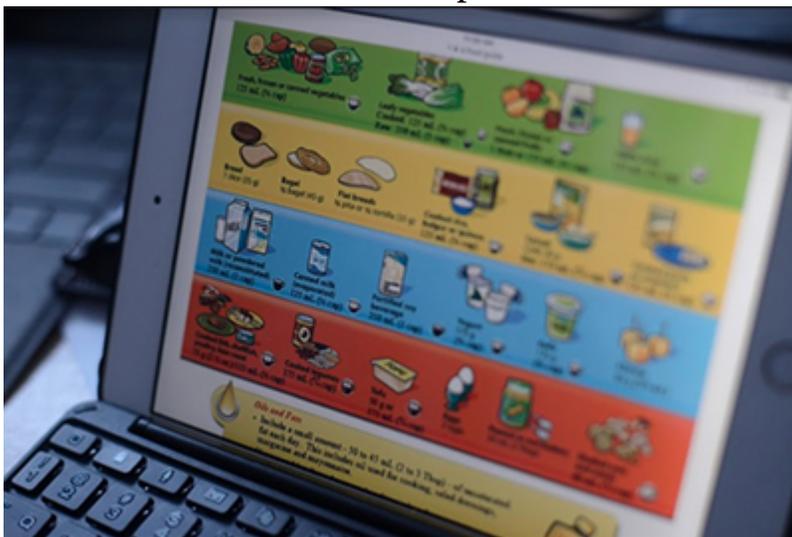
4. **Nutrient:** Different nutrients are often shown in the food label. Targeting foods that contain more of the desired nutrient and avoiding food high in other contents can help AU students keep a balanced, healthful diet. Here are some popular nutrients in a food label:

Fat  
(Saturated + Trans)  
Cholesterol  
Sodium  
Carbohydrate  
Fibre  
Vitamin A  
Iron  
Calcium



This fish sticks package contains more than 15% fat, making this a high-fat per serving

With these pointers in mind, comparing two packaged food items is the next step to making a more informed choice. Nutritional labels are only one part of being a more conscious grocery shopper, other ways include using the Canada Food Guide as a reference for meal portion sizes.



The 2019 Canada Food Guide is a good reference for taking control of your meals

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



Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## Ex Parte

Dear Barb:

*I need some advice. I met this girl in a bar, and we had a wild night of sex. Three months later she came to me and said she was pregnant. At the time I had some concerns about whether the child was really mine, but she assured me it was. We got to know each other and even moved in together. Once our daughter was born, everyone said she looked like me and I knew she was my child. We continued to parent together, but with the stress of the child and financial pressures, we began to argue. Eventually, I moved out, and we agreed to share custody of our daughter, so no money was exchanged for child support. Everything was going smoothly, I had my daughter one week and her mother had her one week. Then I met someone else. My daughter and her get along great, and we've decided to move in together. My ex is fuming! She doesn't think I should leave our daughter alone with my girlfriend, or even allow her to bathe her or care for her in any way. I told her I think she is being ridiculous, but she is starting to make it difficult for me to see my daughter. Since we didn't have anything legally written up, I don't know what I can do about this. My girlfriend tried a heart to heart with my ex, but I think my ex may be jealous that someone else has come into the picture. Do you have any suggestions about how I can work this out so everyone is happy? Especially my daughter.*

Thanks, Greg.

Hi Greg:

Thanks for your letter. Your situation is all too common. I agree your ex may be jealous, or she may have some other reason why she doesn't want you to see your child. You said your girlfriend has talked to your ex, but I think you need to talk to your ex and find a way to reassure her that your child is safe. It is normal to be leery of a new person coming into your child's life, especially someone you don't know. Spend some time with your ex discussing her feelings, then if she is willing bring your girlfriend in, the three of you can sit down and have a discussion. If you can't get anywhere, then there are other things you can do. You can get legal help through Alternate Dispute Resolution, which may include using a mediator, or through arbitration, or through the use of a parent coordinator. You can find a parent coordinator in your area by calling Family Services in your province and they will direct you to the proper facilities.

You may find <https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/divorce/mediation/> helpful, as it is a government website giving information for Family Mediation in Ontario through the Ministry of the Attorney General

*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  
Rejecting Rejection

Wanda Waterman





**AUSU**  
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS' UNION

## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Feb 15:** [March degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Feb 18:** [Office Closure](#)
- **Feb 19:** [AU Zotero and Mendeley Citation Webinar](#)
- **Feb 19:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Feb 28:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Apr](#)
- **Mar 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Apr 1](#)
- **Mar 14:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)

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## Pharmacy Savings and FREE Prescription Delivery!

Did you know that AUSU teamed up with Alliance Pharmacy and Direct2U Prescriptions to offer our members some great pharmacy savings and perks?

### The promotion includes:

- Free, next-business-day delivery to the location of your choice, anywhere in Canada through Direct2U Prescriptions.
- Lower drug costs and dispensing fees on your prescription and over the counter needs with preferred pharmacy pricing.
- Refill reminders by phone, text message & email.
- 10% off purchases at the Alliance Pharmacy online store – just use the promo code “AUSU” during checkout.
- Free phone consultations with qualified pharmacists.

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## AUSU Student Survey Results

In November 2018, AUSU sent out our annual Student Services Survey to the entire AUSU membership.

Our survey results are in! Over 1,100 AUSU members responded with some great feedback, which we will use in planning AUSU goals, budget, and advocacy priorities!

Check out the survey results online [here](#).



## AUSU Career Resources

Looking for a new job or career?

Need to create a resume or work on interview skills?

Looking for job fairs in your area?

AUSU's [Career Resources](#) page has tools to help!



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students!  
Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

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