



THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 18 2019-05-03

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Behind the Glass

The Hell of Perfection

A Natural Flow

When To Go With It

Plus:

*Linking Minds Through Ideas
AU Does Instructional Design
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,
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 What to Write?

Karl Low



Surprisingly, even though *The Voice Magazine* pays for student writing, I don't get that many students wanting to try their hand at it. Of those who do inquire, one of the most common questions is "What should I write?"

I have a stock answer saved in a file that I tweak a bit based on the individual writer, but the largest part of it remains the same, and always will. It is essentially "Things that would interest an AU student more than they would someone who isn't an AU student." That is, after all, the point of *The Voice Magazine*, to reflect the various interests of AU students.

That rule can be a little fuzzy sometimes though. Is the Porkpie Hat more interesting to an AU student than someone who isn't? I tend to think so, simply because to get some of the themes he is digging at requires the type of independent thinking mind that an AU student has. Is a column on making Greek salad really more interesting to AU students than it would be to others? Maybe not, because food is of interest to everyone. But then again, a quick, easy, and healthy meal, while of interest to everyone, should especially be important to AU students, who are often juggling multiple commitments while getting their education, just as our student interviewee is

in our feature Minds We Meet in this issue.

The other place the rule bends is if I can see an audience of students would enjoy reading it. While our "Dear Barb" column often has no direct reference to students, the questions that I've forwarded on to Barb have been from students, even if they don't mention their schooling, and that counts too. And one thing that the statistics show, we like reading about ourselves, even if it's not quite ourselves.

Where I'm going with this whole thing is that the question to ask shouldn't be, "What should I write?" but rather, "Who am I writing this for?" If that who is to AU students, then you should consider contacting me at *The Voice Magazine*.

In the meantime, in this issue, we delve further into the idea of a brain-to-brain connection for learning in The Fly on the Wall, but, as usual, Jason doesn't look at this from the straight-forward view of what kind of quantifiable effects might this have, but rather what the larger effect would be on the nature of learning itself. The Study Dude also takes a quick look at one aspect of what goes into the courses you're taking—they didn't happen by random, so what is instructional design, and how are some of the ways that it works?

Also, we look at the idea of going with the flow. Is it good, bad, both? And how can we tell which?

Plus, of course, we bring you various events, reviews, scholarships, and goings on around the AU universe, plus advice, ideas, and articles to keep you thinking even when you're not studying.

Enjoy the read!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl".

MINDS WE MEET



Courtney Turner is a single mother currently living in Whitecourt, Alberta. She is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Management in Marketing program and plans to eventually own her own business in the future. This is her story.

Can you give us a little bit of background information about yourself? Who are you, where do you live, and where are you from?

My name is Courtney, I am a single mother to a six-year-old. My life has basically revolved around being her mom, also around children in general. I have a day-home, and I have nannied as well throughout my life. I wouldn't say I come from one place- but many. I was born in Newfoundland, currently living in Whitecourt, Alberta but have also lived in many places during my teenage years. I refer to myself as a gypsy soul.

What do you mean by a day home? Is it like a daycare? How many kids do you watch and what are their ages? Does this support you financially?

I watch kids in my home. I usually have five kids. My daughter is six, two three-year olds, a seven-year old, and a nine-year old. Yes, this is my income during this time!

Did you have to take any courses or become certified in anything to run your day home?

No, I didn't, as they're all children of people I know. I live in a small town and have been in child care my whole life. If you intend on having a subsidized day home, you need to do some courses.

Describe the path that led you to Athabasca University. What was it that made you realize you wanted to go back to school, and what pushed you into the program that you have signed up for?

My personal plan was always to spend as much time with my daughter as I was able to. I wanted to set an example, that it's important to finish high school and go forth to continue with secondary schooling. It was always in the plans to take this journey when she started school.

I had switched my idea of what I wanted to take many times. I am relatively good with computers, so computer science was always in the back of mind, then being a social worker interested me. I ended up choosing marketing because I previously worked with online businesses doing that type

of thing and didn't realize there was a program specifically for it. Once I checked out AU and saw they had a program dedicated to what I was doing- I was sold.

What are your plans for this education once you finish? How does it fit in with where you want to go?

I plan to find a job and start a career that pertains to the knowledge I have learned. I have already started in this type of field but didn't feel confident enough in my understanding to take on a serious job in it. So, it fits perfectly in where I plan to go from here, perhaps even starting my own business.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

I would like to say my mother. She went onto University when she was fresh out of high school. Moved across Canada with her two kids to pursue her career in accounting. She is currently in school again, despite being ill while facing the trial and tribulations of her life.

Describe your experience with online learning so far. What do you like? Dislike?

My experience with online learning is that I love the freedom that comes along with it, the lack of pressure I remember feeling when I was younger. I wouldn't say there's anything I dislike per say. Although, I would mention that it's hard to push yourself to do the work sometimes, when you're not in an environment that's penalizing you for not doing so. Or a teacher to slap their ruler on your desk when you're dozing off.

How do you find the structure of the assignments and quizzes at AU? Do you miss pen and paper, or do you prefer having everything online?

I personally find some of the assignments to be long-winded, which is to be expected when having to cram a lot of material in few assignments. The quizzes are set up efficiently, they're easy to take and brief. I live on the computer, I'm handy with them so I prefer to use it for everything. That and my writing looks like chicken scratch!

Have you ever considered not continuing your education? What motivated you to continue?

I want to say, recently I found myself at a point where I was lacking confidence and it caused me to hinder a bit. The thoughts "Will I fail? Do I even need schooling? Will this make a difference?" Weighed heavily on my mind, until I realized those specific thoughts were coming from the self doubt, I have always suffered from. Picked myself up, brushed myself off and said, "No excuses this time, you can and will do this." Did a quiz, did an assignment, and getting 100% in both, that was the boost I needed. To reassure myself then when I apply myself, I can do whatever I need to!

What is your most memorable AU course so far, and why?

I haven't finished any courses yet but my favorite one thus far is MKTG 396, as I am learning all the ins and outs of marketing that I had no idea about, which certainly piques my interest!

Where do you spend most of your time studying? At home, a library, or elsewhere? Any study tips and tricks?

I study at home almost always, though I do have to admit I have studied while being passenger in the car on the way to Jasper because I waited so last minute. Sometimes you have to take what you can get. I learned to not underestimate how much time you need to study and to always give yourself more leeway when it comes to your schedule. Be sure to study in silence, as it is hard to retain information if you're in a noisy environment, even if you think you're capable of multitasking and handling it!

Do you find it difficult studying while taking care of your daughter? Any advice for other mothers in a similar position to you?

If I'm being honest, it can be a struggle as a single mom. It is difficult trying to maintain a healthy household and taking on children to earn an income, all while studying full time. The advice I would give is to simply take it one day at a time, breathe and don't psych yourself out. By the end of the night I'm completely exhausted and slump into my bed. However, nighttime is the optimal time to crack open the book.

Some days I want to throw in the towel, but I can't, and I won't. My daughter asks about schooling all the time and she's the motivating factor when things seem to get to be too much. Manage your time, believe in yourself, and remember there are little eyes watching so push yourself for them and for yourself.

Have you given up anything to go to Athabasca University? Was it worth it?

I haven't given up anything to be quite honest, maybe a little time I wouldn't normally have to sit down and focus in a day but it's worth it. I can't complain.

What's your pet peeve if you have one?

People chewing with their mouths open, even worse when it resembles the sound of a horse chomping on hay.

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

Hmmm, I have never actually thought about this before. I would say Ellen; not only is her humor out of this world she's such and intelligent, giving and loving person. I like everything she stands for and have never looked at her and thought ill-minded. I would just hope she doesn't chew with her mouth open!

Describe one of the proudest moments of your life.

Becoming a parent, the most trying yet rewarding thing I will ever do in this lifetime. I was 20, with the dad for a couple years at this point and it showed me the person I was capable of being. Forming me into a much better version of myself than I was.

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.

What distinguishes me from most people? Would probably be that I have an online community that I take part in. I have had some of the same online friends for twelve years. Most of these communities are hacker or computer related. So, when someone has a problem with anything technological, they give me a call. With that said I don't look like the typical "nerd." Everyone knows this about me, that I have these strange talents that they don't understand. I am pretty much an open book.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

Never think you have all the time in the world to fix or do things- because the thing about time is you never know how much you have of it. It's a gamble, and I have learned that's a game you don't want to play. When it comes to relationships, friendships, family, schooling, sports, etc. Do it. Fix it. Change it.

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



Porkpie Hat Behind the Glass

Darjeeling Jones



Somewhere in the crystal looking glass world, beyond the other side of actual human life, there exist the rarest and most precious beings. I picture them as a combination of mannequin and angel. They are digital divas basking in the pixel limelight, virtual mermaids doing the breaststroke through an ocean of self-regard. These creatures have never made a mistake, never been derailed by fear, crippled by regret, or paralyzed by doubt. On ivory balconies, they sip cocktails made with champagne and snake oil. They attend the opera with envoys, pole dance on the lightning rod of the Chrysler Building, snort lines of coke off the asses of royalty. They hang glide from the Eiffel Tower, frolic about in Icelandic waterfalls, make love on tightropes a thousand feet above the upturned faces of a billion slack-jawed punters. All these experiences, the moments themselves, in real-life time, are meaningless to them, numbed as they are by the

novocaine of narcissism. These minutes, days, and hours of their lives are their gift to us, sacrificing the moment for the sake of eternity, and maybe some lucrative product placement.

I know these legendary, beautiful creatures exist because I scroll through Instagram feeds. As much as I despise sympathy, I feel so sorry for them. I cannot imagine what it must be like, this burden of living so far apart from the visceral human world. Stranded forever on an archipelago of fleeting adulation, burning alive in the cold red-green-blue flames of a million Fyre Festivals. I cannot imagine what it would be like to never have a genuine smile play across my botoxed lips. To fill swimming pools with crocodile tears, but never feel a dark part of your heart tremble to the sound of a voice on the telephone, or the notes of a steel guitar. What existential sadness it must be to have no chance to write a real poem, sing a real song, taste the salt of a real wound. What a profound loss, to never see the world as it truly is, so filled with magic and with shit. I would not wish that upon any enemy, no matter how profoundly I hated them. And hate is one of the things that makes me human. Hate, and love. Dizziness and revenge. Sadness, madness, badness, and wonder.

But then, I think to myself that perhaps my sorrow for these dry, self-obsessed beings is misplaced. Perhaps they are not different after all, but only pretending to be? I wonder. Do they think that, by pretending to perfection, they will somehow evade the natural rules that govern the universe? What a delusion this is. The goddess is a trickster. She wears an infinity of masks. She is the Fatal Seductress, the Priestess of Surprise. She is the Reaper and all the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. She is the Widow Bride, her white silk dress stained with the offal of our vanity. She comes for us all, welders and housewives; diplomats and dishwashers, oligarchs and influencers, too.

So, I think of these perfect beings, living one-dimensional lives of supposed perfection, and I wonder if they are not truly bleeding and crying in the shadows on the other side of that black mirror. I like to believe that this is true, that they are sad and ugly, beautiful and deformed, ordinary and unique, just like everybody else.

Natural Flow and When to Move With it

Wanda Waterman



Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like. ~Laozi

In my early teens I became obsessed with macramé, knotting belts, bracelets, and purses like the future depended on it, relying on a library book to teach me. When I got to the part about how to make those lovely spiraling rows of square knots, my craft book told me that I didn't have to put any effort into it—just let the string do what it wanted to do.

The book pointed out that while making rows of square knots I'd been holding the string straight so it

wouldn't twist, and in order to make spiraling knots I had only to stop holding the string straight. I had only to "go with the flow." I was so delighted with how well this worked that it took a while before I could go back to making simple straight knots.

Sadly, going with the flow is an excuse used as often by lazy ne'er-wells and vapid celebrities as it is upheld by ancient pundits, and only because it isn't always a good thing.

We know that to self-actualize we need to take the road less travelled, i.e. the road that may not be as convenient or familiar as the road everyone else seems to be taking. We know that sometimes we have to delay gratification, eating gruel today to enhance our chances of chicken and wine on the morrow. Besides this, we know that not all natural tendencies are as amenable as the aforementioned macramé strings.

In order to make going with the flow work, it's essential to develop a deep understanding of *things in themselves*, cultivating a respect for said things without obliging them to confine themselves to some distant ideal. A good example is yourself; you can't be real until you stop comparing yourself to others, and the only way to reach your personal goals is to ensure that those goals are in keeping with your deepest knowledge about your true self.

Women seem only now ready to learn that beauty comes in all shapes and sizes and that anyone can be beautiful if she understands her own unique beauty and dresses to flatter it. Once you learn to love yourself, recognizing that you're beautiful and worthy of love just as you are, you'll realize that going with the flow means honouring that.

Respecting yourself means honouring your deepest wishes, no matter how out of whack they seem to be with reality. The world holds countless people who went ahead and did what they wanted while surrounded by people who couldn't believe they had it in them. But they knew themselves, they knew they had it in them, and they went with the flow.

When should you *not* move with natural tendencies? Being mindful means being aware. It means asking yourself if heading out on this road, as natural as it might seem now, might have unhappy consequences, for example lying to shareholders, entering a relationship with an attractive but

deeply troubled person, giving in to a friend's demands to go out drinking, or not reporting a mistake you've made at work.

It really does all come down to being mindful, to respecting the nature of things in order to know which natural tendencies to embrace. Going with the right natural tendencies will open up the world for you, leading to greater freedom, wisdom, joy, and enriching experiences, not the least of which may be the ability to make spiraling macramé knots.

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



The Study Dude AU Teaches Instructional Design

Marie Well



How do your professors decide what to teach? A tool called “instructional design” guides them. AU offers post-baccalaureate certificates and post-baccalaureate diplomas in instructional design (Athabasca University, 2019, Post-Baccalaureate Certificate; Athabasca University, 2019, Post-Baccalaureate Diploma). As an instructional designer, you may take on careers in large organizations, at e-learning vendors, or as a freelancer or consultant (Tucker, n.d.).

I once yearned to do instructional design at, say, an energy firm. I longed to work with online course design software, but I needed more than design skills. I needed to know how instructional design began, who does it, and what is its theories.

So, let's start at its roots. War led to destruction—and instructional design: “The discipline known as ‘instructional design’ originated during World War II, when the military developed training materials based on principles of instruction, learning and human behavior” (Shillington, 2017, p. 59 of 72, 80%).

The psychologists modeled instructional design: “psychologists began developing various instruction methods with specific strategies to accomplish different learning outcomes” (Shillington, 2017, p. 59 of 72, 80%). Psychologist B.F. Skinner laid much of its foundations: “the model for much of today's instructional design models came from B.F. Skinner's 1954 article titled ‘The Science of Learning and the Art of Teaching.’ Skinner suggested that instructional materials should allow for self-pacing and include small steps, frequent questions and immediate feedback” (Shillington, 2017, p. 59 of 72, 80%). From a student perspective, I prefer learning materials that ask questions but don't demand on-the-spot answers. I like to steal away with the problems until I master them. Only after hours of home study do I feel ready to face an exam.

Now let's look at the theory behind instructional design, namely its models. One type of instructional design model is called *The Addie Model*: “Addie stands for *Analysis, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate*” (Shillington, 2017, p. 59 of 72, 82%). These letters stand for different stages of course design.

First, the analysis stage centers on setting goals: “This ... stage involves defining your target audience and ensuring that the program matches the skill level and educational level of your audience” (Shillington, 2017, p. 60 of 72, 84%). Instructors sometimes struggle to set goals. I made course goals for a marketing class at a college once. But I hadn’t taken a single marketing course. At times, instructors get assigned courses for which they have no background. A computer science post doc, who was my colleague, taught a course he learned on the spot. And he succeeded.

Second, the design stage demands “strategy for the course design The focus is on writing learning objectives, developing the content, analyzing the subject matter, lesson planning, assessment tools to be used in selecting media” (Shillington, 2017, p. 60 of 72, 84%). Students should photocopy and laminate a good syllabus. A good syllabus saves you stress come exam time. While some profs struggle to make syllabi, many profs write thoughtful ones. They may teach the same course, year after year, steadily refining their syllabi.

Third, the development phase acts on the analysis and design stages (Shillington, 2017, p. 60 of 72, 84%). The development “phase includes writing, production and evaluation” (Shillington, 2017, p. 60 of 72, 84%). As a TA, I received one criterion for teaching my class: do class discussion only. I couldn’t make slides or instruct. If I had been crafty, I could’ve written, produced, and evaluated scripts for each lesson. But I didn’t receive the textbooks until a few days before the class began, which I later learned is common practice.

Fourth, the implementation phase depends on constant tweaking:

“It continually modifies the program to ensure it achieves maximum efficiency and positive results. Instructional designers strive to redesign, update, and edit the course to make sure it can be delivered effectively. The majority of work in this phase is continually revising and evaluating the further improvement Through feedback from instructional designers and participants, much can be learned and addressed” (Shillington, 2017, p. 60 of 72, 84%).

Why constant tweaking? It’s like editing a theatrical film script—you want every sentence to advance the story. Similarly, instructors want every lecture, assignment, media choice, or group activity to advance the goals listed on the syllabus.

Lastly, the evaluation phase checks whether “goals have been met and to establish what will be required moving forward” (Shillington, 2017, p. 61 of 72, 86%).

Thus, if you sense within you a passion for instructional design, you’ve now got a taste of its theory. And if you love its theory, you may find yourself in a comfortable office at a large corporation.

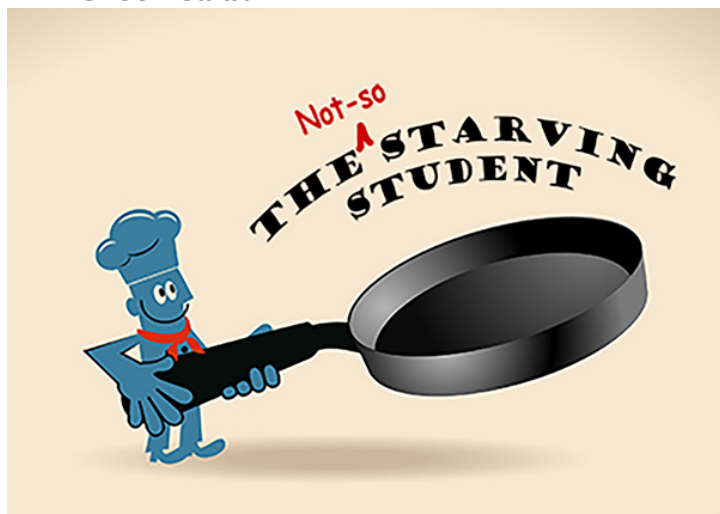
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The Not-So Starving Student DIY Greek Salad

Xin Xu



With the dawn of the warmer weather comes the access to a variety of vegetables at an affordable price. The easiest way to make use of the arrival of new vegetables is to toss them into a salad bowl. For myself, after trying an array of new recipes, Greek Salad seems to be the one recipe that I can't rave about enough. The colorful vegetables, tangy taste of lemon zest, and the fragrant herbs in this Mediterranean cuisine can be a perfect weekday dinner option. For busy AU students who are balancing their multiple commitments, Greek salads are also make for a great meal prep option during the year.

Greek salad also boasts some impressive health benefits, including reducing the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. The ingredients are so nutritious and the preparation steps are so simple that one questions whether it could be delicious too (it is!).

Whether you're preparing for your summer beach bod or looking for a backyard patio dinner option, Greek salads should be at the top of the list. Here are some qualities of authentic Greek salads.

No lettuce allowed

Authentic Greek salads will not use leafy greens but instead focus on chunky veggies

Generous amounts of feta

Fresh feta is the highlight of any Greek salad. Season your salad and cover the mixture with feta. Ideally in large chunks.

No fancy garnishes

Unlike its commercially offered counterparts, Greek salads should come with no additional garnishes. The colorful mixture alone is enough.



Very simple dressing

While Greek Salads seem to carry an exotic charm and origin, the dressing itself is in fact simple. Rather than the addition of multiple peppers and seasoning ingredients, traditional Greek salads is comprised of only extra-virgin olive oil, wine vinegar and salt.

Can be refrigerated for up to 3 days

Because Greek salads use incredibly fresh ingredients and acidic dressing, the salad could be kept for 3 days in a sealed container



Ingredients

1-2 cucumbers	5 tbsp of chopped parsley
2 red, orange or green peppers	1 tbsp oregano flakes or fresh oregano
½ can of black olives	1 tbsp black pepper
200 g Grape tomatoes	2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 Red onion	3 tbsp olive or avocado oil
30 g Feta cheese in brine	½ tbsp minced garlic
1 tsp black pepper	1 tbsp lemon juice
	1 tbsp fresh dill

Instructions

1. Dice the cucumbers, peppers, onions, olives and combine them in a large salad bowl
2. Drizzle the top with extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil
3. Gently toss the salad: the salad should not be overly mixed
4. Crush the feta cheese on top
5. Mix evenly and marinate in the fridge for optimal taste before serving

Bonus:

To add more flair to your greek salad, try pairing it with some protein such as baked cutlets or serve them with some rice for a balanced meal.

What to serve with Greek Salad:

- Pita
- Souvlaki
- Tzatziki
- Hummus
- Falafel

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



Course Exam

CMNS 302 (Communication in History) is a three-credit communication studies course that is one of the three foundation courses for the Bachelor of Professional Arts (Communication Studies) degree program. It follows the interactions between media and society in a few technological contexts: oral and literate cultures, manuscript and print cultures, electric and electronic cultures. This course has no prerequisites and it has a Challenge for Credit option if students are interested.

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

Brittany Daigle

management system support, and learning design and development. All the course materials are online.

Communication in History has eight units, one assignment that weighs fifteen percent (focused summary), two assignments weighing twenty-five percent (comparative analysis, reflection, and learning object), and a term paper worth thirty-five percent. There is no final exam for this course. The eight units focus on topics such as the age of information, scribal culture into print, technology and society, literacy and orality, radio, the wired and wireless world, and TV times. To receive credit for CMNS 302, students must complete all assignments and obtain a minimum composite course grade of at least a “D” which is equivalent to fifty percent.

Dr. Karen Wall has been full-time with the Communication Studies program since 2006 and prior to that was a tutor for almost twenty years. She has coordinated CMNS 302 for the past three years. Alongside CMNS 302, she coordinates CMNS 308 (Understanding Statistical Evidence), CMNS 401 (Cultural Policy in Canada), CMNS 402 (Global Communication), CMNS 423 (The Television Age), CMNS 425 (Film and Genre), CMNS 333 (Research Methods in Communication Studies), CMNS 444 (Media Relations), CMNS 445 (Directed Readings in Communication Studies), CMNS 455 (Media Ethics), and CMNS 450 (Individual/Group Projects).

When asked to describe CMNS 302 to students, Dr. Wall states “The course surveys an intriguing range of technologies that have mediated communication in different eras and cultures, concentrating mainly on Western societies. It draws certain patterns that have persisted through the ways that people have invented to send and receive information from early writing systems to the printing press and on into more familiar media of contemporary life. Complex factors of social power and imagination that we see in how we use today’s electronic devices can also be traced to machines such as the telegraph and radio. It assumes that, if these connections between human communication technology and human patterns of thought and action hold, then studying the history of communication is central to the study of human history. The course asks students to think about their own technology use in the contexts of our present lives.”

She continues, providing insight into the structure of the assignments and term paper, stating “The first assignment asks for a short commentary on themes and concepts using your own illustrations and drawing connections to your experiences and observations. The second is a short essay also asking you to reflect on your own insights as well as study materials on social and political contexts, how technologies operate to support the dominant power relations of their time, and any other aspects that seem important to you. You will then produce a learning object that teaches history from a communication perspective, in a choice of forms such as video, blog, magazine article or graphic short story. Finally, you’ll be asked for the traditional research paper of about 4000 words on your choice of a range of topics. There are no exams or quizzes in this course and the vast majority of students are successful in completing it.”

As for what kind of work ethic students will have to have to be successful in this course, Dr. Wall believes that “The usual advice applies! As with most AU courses, organization and motivation are the best weapons, and the chance to bring your own ideas and experiences into your work should help focus and expand upon the assigned reading materials. The readings are all quite accessible, and study questions help to guide you, so stick to a schedule and you should be fine.”

She provides some advice to students who are currently enrolled in CMNS 302 or who are interested in enrolling, stating “This sounds obvious, but oddly enough often missed: start by reading all instructions from the course overview and objectives to individual assignments. If in doubt, ask your tutor. You could also chat with an elder of your acquaintance about their

experiences with media and communication technologies, just to think about perspectives of what changes and what remains over time.”

Dr. Wall recommends Communication in History to “All students interested in communication in everyday life as well as how we got here. Besides that, of course, it is required for Communication Studies majors.”

After completing CMNS 302, she believes students will walk away with “New ways of thinking about how human beings connect with each other and with ideas and social phenomena through our relationship with technologies, as well as a sense of how central communication processes are in shaping so much of what we think and do across time and space.”

As for what she believes students struggle with most, she states “No one thing comes to mind, though of course if students fall behind in readings and assignments they will find it difficult to maintain the thread of main concepts that link the different units and readings. Most students find the course quite engaging, so it is just a matter of commitment to taking regular steps forward so as not to struggle with end-of-semester panic. And be in touch with your tutor!”

Whether CMNS 302 is a degree or program requirement of yours, or the topics discussed above are of interest to you, this course will have you learning about communication throughout history.

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



Fly on the Wall

From Tetris to Essence; Linking Minds Through Ideas

Jason Sullivan



What would happen if not only the logical but also the poetic aspects of our human nature were linked electronically? The human brain, with its heavily developed prefrontal cortex, allows reasoning and planning far exceeding even a lab rat's such as seen in *Pinky and the Brain* (the Brain, online). There's a lot of brain to map if a computer is to represent and transmit what makes us human. Even our closest relatives are from another mindscape: the human brain contains 86 billion neurons compared to a garden variety chimp's mere 7 billion (King, online). Nonetheless, if, as with Andrea Stocco's research team,

we could connect brains to work collectively on tasks, things might get very interesting indeed.

Minds linked by metamorphic wire would certainly reduce the need to decide who does the scariest part of the presentation: talking in front of the class! A computer would combine our input and create a living specimen of our thoughts. At AU we don't have a classroom per se but we do interact with others in grouped study courses and in individual study with tutors, ourselves, and our real world peers. As text messaging altered the nature of conversation, both academic

and personal, perhaps a deeper change is coming: minds linked by computers, thus erasing the 'distance' in distance education.

A Flow of Ideas Pixelated?

When considering the nature of ideas, I am reminded of a water exhibit in a grand park; the park is the brain and the water fountain is our mind's thoughts as they jet, bubble, swirl, and drain. It takes a lot of piping for the system to work but the joy of running through a fountain is beyond calculation.

Creative expression rushes forth; that is, all that we say and do that is not a simple repetition of rote facts and figures. Thinking is a flowing process and renunciation of the Sudoku-esque realm of logic is part of what a humanities education is about; it's an endeavour to embark on a journey of creative expression where we take the facts we learn and apply critical thinking to them. After all, no final exam question desires of us (and here we can momentarily note the difference between the inanimate desire of a computer algorithm as compared to the living, pedagogical, desire of a course instructor writing an exam question) merely to recount and recapitulate what we have learned. Exam questions are asking us to give $n+1$; that is, to take previously unknown facts and figures, interpretations and heuristics, imparted to us by our time in the course, and then add our own twist to the proceedings.

C.F. Meyer illustrates the productive grandeur of this beautiful creative process in a poem titled 'Roman Fountain':

- “The jet ascends and falling fills
- The marble basin circling round;
- This, veiling itself over, spills
- Into a second basin's ground.
- The second in such plenty lives,
- It's bubbling flood a third invests,
- And each at once receives and gives
- And streams and rest” (Meyer, 163).

Where a quiet crossword puzzle or a rousing match of Brainzilla is implicated, not to mention a Lego construction with paint by numbers instructions, then there can be in each case only one possible final answer. So, brains connected by wires, wireless wires that metaphorically imbibe our thoughts and digest them before expressing them as a group effort, will arrive all at once at the finish line of production. That's how computers work; they're programed with source code that provides limits and borders.

This is all well and good for gamers racing cars with their mind, but it won't be academically creative, at least not in the magical human sense to which we are accustomed. If our minds could be linked in a deeper way than happens with a co-written play or novel, or a jammed out new rock song, then that would be something amazing. However, in music, as in a classroom, there is usually a central composer to the tune and even the best joint ventures require much conscious whittling away of ideas before they are shared. A computer reading our mind would either have to have one heck of a filtering algorithm or we'd have to select what we input into the machine. In other words, write notes and ideas onscreen as we do already. Group activity means paying the piper and following her tune; to write good AU assignments we have to be our own judge, jury, and executioner of what counts. Ideas don't decide how to sort themselves.

Alone or With Others; The Virtues and Vicissitudes of Groupwork

Computer intervention or no, groupthink in a classroom can be a challenge and a blessing. When we sit in the invisible online shared space of an AU classroom we may discover affinities with others such that we feel enough like peas in a pod to genuinely work together on a given topic. Yet, much must be left out. Even in the interdisciplinary realm of MAIS, and certainly at the undergrad level, we can't just let all our thoughts enter our assignments or we won't meet the learning requirements of our course. A lot of chiseling and culling occurs.

Learning, as always, is about learning how to learn. And that means attaining the necessary focus. With others involved this can be challenging but, as at AU when we learn by describing what we are studying to non-students, interaction can only help. But what if a computer decided what our brain was saying for us? Being linked to one another means also to have much of ourselves shorn away just so we can share space. It's not a lobotomy so much as a learned focus, a mystical entrance into that realm of active education requiring a concerted and diligent attention span.

How could Andreas Stocco and his research team create a computerized mind map that retained fidelity to the mysteries of creative expression? Perhaps the answer lies in the essential nature of truth itself; we assume an end point in each instance of thought wherefrom originates an originally causative moment. Say I'm hungry for a peanut butter chocolate chip cookie; well, tracing my thought back archaeologically to its mental origins I could comfortably surmise that this is because as a boy I enjoyed when my mother baked them. At the sensory realm I can still taste the raw batter I'd collect if it spilled from the mixing bowl and at the cognitive level I can get why I'll always enjoy the wondrous mixture of protein, sugar, fat and carbs the finished product delivered to my precocious (self-defined, possibly pretentious!), brain. It would totally suck if a 'hey google' device saw little boy me eating raw dough and zapped out some command about salmonella! How much more of a drag would it be for a computer to discount some new creative concept because it didn't fit in with its programming. And anyway, what about more exotic sensations like Meyer's depiction of a whirling eternity fountain and its connection to the Roman Empire's power and prowess?

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

AU Open House

Wed, May 8, 10:00 to 11:00 am MDT

Online

Hosted by AU

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

Register online at above link

second session: Wed, May 8, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT

Inferring Deterministic L-systems using Artificial Intelligence Algorithms

Thurs, May 9, 2:00 to 3:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

www.eventbrite.ca/e/fgs-presents-the-graduate-student-research-series-featuring-jason-bernard-mscis-phd-student-tickets-55307197316

Register online at above link

Library Orientation

Thurs, May 9, 2:00 to 3:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Library

library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration necessary

AUSU Council Meeting

Thurs, May 9, 6:30 to 8:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AUSU

www.ausu.org/event/may-council-meeting-5/

No pre-registration required; e-mail governance@ausu.org for meeting package

Bannock and a Movie "The Story of the Coast Salish Knitters"

Fri, May 10, 12:00 to 1:00 pm MDT

Athabasca University, Peace Hills Trust

Tower, 12th floor, Room 1222,

10011 - 109 Street, Edmonton AB

In-person; limited seating

Hosted by Nuksahtowin, AU Centre for

World Indigenous Knowledge and Research

news.athabascau.ca/events/bannock-and-a-movie-4/

Register by phone (780)428-2064 or e-mail ivyl@athabascau.ca

All events are free unless otherwise specified

Unhinging Creativity; You're Not Unhinged When the Magic Takes Over

For Martin Heidegger, truth and essence unravel (or, to use 21st C social science vernacular, can be unpacked) to reveal flavourful ambiguity. Heidegger wrote “What does 'in truth' mean? Truth is the essence of the true. What do we have in mind when speaking of essence? ...What does the essential essence of something consist in? Presumably it lies in what the entity is in truth. The true essence of a thing is determined by way of its true Being, by way of the truth of the given being. But we are now seeking not the truth of essence but the essence of truth. There thus appears a curious tangle. Is it only a curiosity or even merely the empty sophistry of a conceptual game, or is it-an abyss?” (Heidegger, 75-76).

So where does creativity come from? It can't just be a glorious swamp monster from the abyss of our unconscious, or can it? If we just cut and paste collective ideas into a file folder, we might combine a few students' best work. But that would just be a copy or imitation of a stark original. Jean Baudrillard famously dubbed this a simulacrum; a feeble attempt at a depiction of an original destined to fall short of the primal mind-magic, the product of which was, itself, originally an imitation of that magical eureka moment. Stocco and his team in Seattle seek to create and utilize “computational and mathematical models, neuroimaging techniques, and brain stimulation methods to determine and predict how these mental representations are encoded in the brain, how they are transformed into behavior, and how this knowledge can be used to improve learning and skill acquisition.” (Stocco, online). Are they finding our real and essential human magic there? And can all those moments of inspiration be reduced to a series of binary codes? It's tantalizing to consider a print-off (ok, an app download) of our genius at work.

Maybe the proof is in the pudding; after all, being around real people involves a collective conversational process. At AU, this process involves conversation within ourselves as we take notes and consider different approaches to the course material. Years ago, I began attending a local sociology club and soon realized how little textbook sociology was being discussed; in those most human of fields, the social sciences, personal opinion easily stands in for rigorous discourse about the ideas of a litany of theorists. Group discussions often veer away from their ostensible disciplinary rubric. As AU students our education suffices to provide us with a credible and illustrious academic background in our field of study so that, upon encountering academics from brick and mortar universities, we can hold our own in conversation because we've learned and evolved with our course material. In a sense we're already programmed into our academic discipline, computer or no.

Beeps and Boops and the Technology of Thought

It's the subtleties of interaction that a map of Tetris misses out on but these are still fascinating times for neuroscience; of course, the underlying materialist ideologies do seem to desire a removal of the lustrous mystery from creativity but hey, that's where we AU students in the social sciences get to flex our learning and provide balance to the discussion. All of this synergy would certainly make for an interesting painting if a brainscan computer expressed us that way.

The closer we get to the abstractions of daily human existence the murkier a possible map of our real thoughts, replete with contradictions, loop-de-loops, and backdrops, becomes. Yet just as photographs can piece together a recollection of a wedding, and crucially incite us to remember things lost to the sands of Kodachrome or Photoshop time, so too could even a rudimentary map of our more esoteric ideas potentially help future artists and thinkers, scientists and caregivers, do a better job at being their educated human selves. Life can be made to appear as a Now. And a now. And a now once again—in perpetual flashbulbs with limited context. But we the humans are good at making sense of a stack of data, especially if we relate to its thematic content and contextual message.

To sit back and analyze like a computer, then, is one way to understand the creative process. Another is to consider the source itself; are we creating from singular flashes of inspiration, bolts from the blue? Compared to solving an eminently solvable puzzle, how might we map the ephemeral and wondrous world of inspiration itself? AU is about inspiration; surely we'd not have returned to school if we didn't feel a certain ephemeral yet insistent pull towards the proverbial halls of academia.

Where Does the Truth Lie?

To return to Heidegger, creativity surpasses a mere transition (perhaps by brain-wire) between an original creative spark into a tangible expressive artifact. To begin with the final product, say a gorgeous poem, is to assume that it expresses an antecedent mental state. Yet, "in fine art the art itself is not beautiful, but is called so because it produces the beautiful. Truth, in contrast, belongs to logic. Beauty, however, is reserved for aesthetics" (Heidegger, 162). If we're in an AU group forum seeking the finality of problem-solving we're in the land of truth; if we're working together with others to create something beautiful the art is in the making and the triggering brainwise of expressions of a beautiful nature.

A Rubix Cube might be beautiful when it's completed but what human monkey among us has the patience for one? Their essence is an exercise in frustration. Creativity may well spell itself out best by someone simply removing the stickers from a Rubix Cube and affixing them each to their appropriate side such that the cube appears finished. Who's to know when the outcome is the same? As in math, where the answers reside in the back of the book, there is more than one way to skin a logical cat. Instructors often suggest working backward from the final sum; yet, how could brains connected start at their end and work back into the original impetus for mutual collective production? Typically at AU, our creative production involves considering many aspects of ourselves as they relate to the course material such that multiple versions of our singular identity connect in a written pastiche or collage.

As with Meyers' poem, it's expressively clear why Heidegger states that "This is neither a poetic painting of a fountain actually present nor a reproduction of the general essence of a Roman fountain. Yet, truth is set into the work." The truth of experience, of our multifaceted private mental realms, allows us to share with fellow students, beloved peers, and family relations, something especially significant for us otherwise isolated AU students. We at AU aren't bunked into a collective corporeal landscape with our fellow students. Instead we get to amalgamate our learning with the unique social worlds we find in our daily life.

To be an adult learner is to combine the artistry of life with the pedantic details of course material; there may come a time when we can plug into our AU peers, but, for now, the joy is in the creative distance we employ away from the conformism of a social setting. It can be an isolating experience, but isolation can also be splendid; plus, no one bugs us to borrow our notes or filch our ideas!

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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.



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: DeBeers Group Scholarships for Canadian Women

Sponsored by: DeBeers Group

Deadline: June 1, 2019, 11:59 pm EDT

Potential payout: \$4800 USD

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be female, Canadian citizens or permanent residents, and entering their first year of an undergrad STEM or STEM-related program at an accredited institution.

What's required: An online application form, which includes elements that will only be revealed once you set up a login.

Tips: Preference will be given to women who are Indigenous or of Indigenous descent, and/or are from Northern Ontario, Southern Alberta, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut.

Where to get info: debeersgroup.scholarshipscanada.com/



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group

Mach asks whether it's worth the time and expense to go to AU Convocation; lots of feedback both ways on this one! Amélie is looking for course suggestions that will get her away from her HR program. Thomas wonders if proctor fees can be claimed with tuition on his tax return; most responses agree that yes they can!

Other posts include AU's honour roll, access to courses after course end date, transferring AU credits into other uni programs, and courses BIOL 204, FNCE 249, and PHIL 152.

Twitter

@austudentsunion tweets: "Take a free MOOC (massive open online course) and get credit for it! @AthabascaU and Synergia Institute are working on MOOC called "Towards Cooperative Commonwealth: Transition in a Perilous Century". <https://bit.ly/2Y0f570> #onlinelearning #disted."

@AthabascaUBiz tweets: "The countdown to convocation is on! Are you ready? <https://bit.ly/2VeJaiq> #AthaU19 #Classof19."

Youtube

Relive 25 years of disruption in 2 ¼ minutes as AU's Faculty of Biz celebrates 25 years of its online MBA.



The Fit Student Go Vegan?

Marie Well



A [vegan](#) is a “a strict vegetarian who consumes no food (such as meat, eggs, or dairy products) that comes from animals”. So how do our vegan friends build muscles? After all, muscles need protein, and eating animals gives us protein.

Well, a vegan can use protein sources such as “tofu, tempeh and edamame ... lentils ... chickpeas and most varieties of beans ... nutritional yeast ... spelt and teff ... hempseed ... green peas ... spirulina ... amaranth and quinoa ... breads made from sprouted grains ... soy milk ... oats and oatmeal ... wild rice ... chia seeds ... nuts, nut butters and other seeds ... protein-rich fruits and vegetables ... [such as] broccoli, spinach, asparagus, artichokes, sweet potatoes and Brussel sprouts” (Healthline Media, 2005-2019).

But these items tend to have less protein than, say, beef. But there are exceptions: “Measured by calories, broccoli has more protein than beef” (dherbs.com, Sept 8, 2017). So, how can vegans boost their protein intake? Well, they can guzzle vegan protein powder. But, better than that, they can center their diet around protein-rich vegetables; protein-rich carbs (such as oats and wild rice); and protein-rich fats (such as nuts,

nut butters, and seeds). It all adds up—especially around the biceps.

But if you don’t get enough protein, a vegan diet has its downside. A female friend who body-builds read *The China Study*. The book “examines the link between the consumption of animal products (including dairy) and chronic illnesses such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and bowel cancer” (Wikipedia, The China Study). So, my friend went vegetarian, dismayed by diseases that meat and dairy may cause. But on a vegetarian diet, she grew less lively. Her smiles and laughter grew more somber. And she’d chomp ice cubes, likely due to iron deficiency (Pruthi, 1998-2019). What she and many other vegans need is a version of *The China Study* for high intensity athletes, particularly for bodybuilders.

Aside from health factors, veganism often stems from ethical concerns.

For instance, many vegans wish to not harm animals. Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) “keep and raise more than 1000 animal ‘units’ in extreme confinement At factory farms, animals raised for food suffer unimaginable cruelties: extreme confinement; brutal mutilations; and bloody, violent deaths” writes Joe Lorea (June 5, 2017) from Mercy for Animals, “Furthermore,” he says, “animal excrement and other agricultural runoff from large-scale farms have already polluted nearly one-third of the nation’s rivers” (June 5, 2017).

Many vegans also wish to preserve the land: “33 percent of agricultural land worldwide is used solely for livestock feed production. And when you combine that with the amount of land used for grazing and housing animals, you’ll realize that we have a huge problem” (Pittman, Arianna, 2 years ago).

On the flipside, I’ve seen documentaries on farms that ethically raise cattle. My dietician says Canadian farms have fairly strict guidelines for raising cattle. It makes sense. When I drive past Albertan farmlands, I see vast grasslands and big bales of hay laid alongside grazing cows (and calves). Yes, in Canada, our cattle get a quality life:

Canada has one of the healthiest national cattle herds and one of the most wholesome beef products in the world. The production of high quality beef begins the way it has for more than a century in Canada – with the raising of calves alongside mother cows on pastures and

grasslands. There is no better method for getting beef cattle off to a good start than fresh air, clean water and the individual attention a mother cow provides her calf. (Canadian Cattlemen's Association, 2013)

My dietician insisted that, in Canada, there's no need to seek free range beef from the butcher. So, if you buy beef, buy Canadian.

But, if you go vegan, consider eating organic fruits and veggies. If you buy organic (especially from farmer's markets), you support small local farms: "If you could buy local produce that's also organic, you're laughing all the way to the checkout. You're supporting local farmers, saving the planet, and raising healthier families" (Milbrath, February 8, 2018).

Sadly, small farms are more and more displaced by inhumane Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs):

The control of agriculture by multinational corporations, through contractual arrangements, is allowing agricultural operations to grow far larger than was previously possible for individual farmers or even family corporations. The smallest Class 1-A CAFO (7,000 animal units) creates more biological waste than a city of 70,000 people. If this trend is allowed to continue, it will not only destroy the natural environment of rural America, it will result in a few corporate executives essentially controlling American agriculture, as there will be very few real farmers left. (Ikerd, Sept 29, 2007).

As well, buying organic helps you support pesticide-free crops: "Exposure to large amounts of pesticides is usually more likely for people such as farmers who may frequently touch and/or breathe in pesticides. The effects of long-term exposure to small amounts of these pesticides are unclear, but studies have linked them to a variety of chronic health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and neurological defects" (Hsaio, August 10, 2015).

Going vegan may help the welfare of the world's agriculture. But if you chow on animals, eat only humanely raised critters. And always buy organic. The future of small farms—and the health of all beings—may depend on it.

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Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Determining a Daughter

Dear Barb:

Hi, I got a strange call from a young lady who was claiming to be my daughter. She told me her mother's name and where she lived. I did not recognize her name, although she did grow up in my old neighborhood. She wants to meet with me, but I'm reluctant. When I was younger I had relationships with lots of girls and didn't always use protection, I trusted them when they said they were on birth control. I had no indication that any of them had become pregnant and none of my friends from the old neighbourhood is aware of any girl that I had dated becoming pregnant. This girl told me that her mother passed away, but apparently before she died she named me as the girl's father. This girl knew my birthday and the address of my childhood home. I am married now and have two young children. I have not told my wife about this phone call. I'm not sure whether I should ignore this and assume this was just something some woman said on her deathbed, or whether I should tell my wife and try to find out if there is any truth to this.

Thanks, Ryan.

Hey Ryan:

Thanks for writing. I don't think it would be possible to ignore something like this. It will always be in the back of your mind, wondering whether this was your daughter. This is an important issue and you need to be honest and open with your wife. You both have to find the best way to handle this situation. It sounds like you are not ruling

out the possibility that this may be your daughter, as no protection is 100%. My suggestion would be to do DNA testing and I wouldn't think this girl would be opposed to the testing. Since we inherit 50% of our DNA from our mother and 50% from our father, paternity testing will determine whether you are the biological father. The procedure is a simple, it requires the inside of both your mouths to be swabbed for 20 to 30 seconds, and then the swab is sent to a lab. You do not need a referral from a doctor; you can even request a kit online which will include the swabs for testing and a return addressed envelope. Once received at the lab, the results will be available in 5 to 7 business days. The results are 99.999% accurate. Pricing is around \$200 and for an additional cost the results can be expedited. I feel it is necessary to do this testing for you to have peace of mind. If it turns out that you are the biological father, then you need to decide how you and your daughter want this relationship to progress. This could be the beginning of a wonderful relationship!

Best of luck Ryan.

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
Pacifism**Wanda Waterman**

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IMPORTANT DATES

- **May 9:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **May 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Jun 1](#)
- **May 15:** [June degree requirements deadline](#)
- **May 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for July](#)
- **May 31:** [Gatineau Student Meet & Greet](#)
- **June 7-8:** [Athabasca University Convocation](#)

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