



# THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 23 2019-06-07

## Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

## The Waterman Guide

Writing for Businesses Ain't All That

## Congratulations Graduates!

The Hard Road Taken

*Plus:*

*Vintage Voice: Convocations Past  
Some Thoughts on Dancing Lessons  
and much more!*



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**The Voice Magazine**

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

**Email**

voice@voicemagazine.org

**Publisher**

AU Students' Union

**Editor-In-Chief**

Jodi Campbell

**Managing Editor**

Karl Low

**Regular Contributors**

Barb Godin,  
Carla Knipe, Barbara  
Lehtiniemi, Jason Sullivan,  
Wanda Waterman, Xin Xu,  
and others

Views and articles  
presented here are those  
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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

### Congratulations Graduates!

Karl Low



Once again, the time for convocation is here. AU students graduate every month of the year, but every year in June many of them all get together to put a final stamp on the work and learning they've achieved. This year, students attending convocation will unfortunately not be able to tour the campus grounds, as the event is being held in Red Deer to ensure that the wild fires in Northern Alberta don't derail it, but that doesn't make it any less of a celebration. And whether you're attending convocation or not, you could do worse than to give yourself a few moments today to celebrate your achievement. Graduating from AU isn't easy. Even with extensions or supplemental exams, many students simply don't make it all the way through.

And it's not just the self-driven nature of AU studies, though that causes many students to fall by the wayside, unable to muster the discipline to complete their courses while trying to juggle everything else life throws at us. Some of AU's courses are notably more difficult than similar types of courses you'd find at a brick and mortar university. Because for a very long time, AU had something to prove. It had to get beyond the idea that it

was simply a degree-by-mail, or an institution people went to because they couldn't get in anywhere else. You can see that in some of the courses, where a junior level course is asking for a level of research that you normally wouldn't see until third year in a brick and mortar institution.

So it's a hard degree, folks, and if you've made it, or even if you're still struggling with it, take a moment to congratulate yourself. You've already accomplished what few can and fewer do. And whether you're walking across the stage, or just leaning back in your chair with your parchment on the wall and watching the ceremonies on the web, congratulations.

When you're done watching convocation, though, be sure to read through this latest issue of The Voice Magazine. Compare the latest convocation with those from the past by checking out the Vintage Voice. Or take a look at our feature student interview with Lisa Bennett—dual citizen, crime aficionado, AU student. We also have a quick lesson from the Wanda Waterman School of Writing for Business. Honestly, I don't know if I'd recommend taking her advice on this one, but I'll certainly recommend reading the article, especially if you want a lesson in the sardonic.

And then, the Porkpie Hat takes an early morning to reflect on the words of Kurt Vonnegut when he speaks of travel and dancing lessons from God. When you're in your pyjamas in front of the fire, it can be funny how the memories that move you the most later in life are the moves you didn't think would be the memorable ones.

Plus we've of course got our usual selection of news, course reviews, events, scholarships, and, once you're through with convocation, even some advice on how to make that in-flight meal back home a little better.

Enjoy the read!

# MINDS WE MEET



*Lisa Bennett, originally from the UK, moved just outside of Calgary with her husband and young son. She is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Health Administration program and is four courses away from finishing. This is her story.*

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

My name's Lisa, I have been married for twelve years and we have a nine-year-old son. We are originally from the United Kingdom, but we gained permanent residence to Canada in 2012. We then received our citizenship in 2018. We are now dual citizens of both the UK and Canada. I have worked in the medical field since I was nineteen years old and thoroughly enjoy my work. We live just outside of Calgary in Alberta and we love living here so much.

**Where in the UK are you from? Why did you move to Canada?**

I'm originally from Leeds but moved to London. We moved to Canada for better life for us and our child. My

husband was offered a position over here as an electrician, so we moved with just nine suitcases between the three of us. We became fully fledged Canadian citizens last year, so we are dual citizens of both the UK and Canada :)

**What program are you enrolled in? How far are you in your program?**

I am enrolled in the Bachelor of Health Administration program. I am loving the program and have enjoyed all the courses. I have 4 courses left to complete.

**Describe the path that led you to AU. What was it that made you realize you wanted to go back to school, and what pushed you into the program you've signed up for?**

I have always enjoyed a medical background and wanted to further my career by going back to school and getting my brain working again. I love being able to study at my own pace. Having the support from my husband was amazing and he is super proud of my dedication and achievements since I began at AU.

**What do you do like to do when you're not studying?**

I love camping. My family and I do a lot of camping each year. I also love to read and have a huge collection of books, which I brought from the UK, and have added to it often. My family and I love hiking as we have two dogs (Saint Bernard and Bernese Mountain Dog). We just love to be outdoors and active.

**What are some of your favorite places you have gone camping?**

We recently just came back from Boulton Creek in the Rocky Mountains. The place was amazing, so quiet, so much wildlife. We were lucky enough to have a grizzly mamma bear and two cubs nearby and a moose with two new babies. It is just so peaceful and a great getaway. We enjoy staying in the Rockies as it is so breathtakingly beautiful.

**What are some of your favorite books you have read from your collection?**

I love reading, I enjoy crime books such as Patricia Cornwall and Karin Slaughter; however, I recently read the entire collection of House of Night, which were amazing! I would highly recommend these books. I love the other extreme authors, such as Sophie Kinsella and Emily Giffin.

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

I am hoping to get a position in a newly opened chemotherapy and cancer services building.

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

My husband and my son. I am at that stage in my life where I can do what I want to do and work toward something I can truly enjoy.

**Any advice for people who are on the fence about going back to school, or feel like it is too late to go back?**

Absolutely do it, you will be surprised at how much you enjoy it. The tutors have been amazing, and I have really enjoyed the courses. It is never too late to go back and fulfil your dreams.

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

I love online learning, as it is laid back, you work at your own pace, and I can have a family and continue working.

**What has been your most memorable courses at AU?**

I have seriously loved the criminal justice courses, they are so informative and enjoyable to complete

**How do you find communications with your course tutors?**

Generally good. Some tutors take long than some to respond, but overall, I have had no complaints and their responses are detailed and very helpful

**What is your biggest pet peeve, if you have one?**

People who cannot follow basic road safety rules.

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

Freddie Mercury, the guy is a legend

**Describe the proudest moment in your life.**

Having my son. He is the most wonderful and perfect little person and I am proud to call him mine.

**Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.**

I have a ginormous heart and will help anyone if I can. Sadly, some people can take advantage of that.

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

Take one day at a time and enjoy every single second.



**Have you traveled? Where has life taken you so far?**

I have traveled quite a lot; mainly European countries having lived in the UK for most of my life. Canada is now our home and I wouldn't change it for anything. Best thing we ever did.

**What (non-AU) book are you reading now?**

*Revealed* from the House of Night series.

**Would you recommend the House of Night series? What do you like or dislike?**

1000% recommend. I have the entire collection plus the additional series relating to the other world too, there is approximately twenty books in the series, and they are so gripping. I love books that you have to keep reading and cannot put down.

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

**The Waterman Guide to Online Writing for Businesses****Wanda Waterman**

The first thing you need to know about writing for business is that you should avoid it like the plague. If there's anything else you could possibly be doing to earn money, such as moonshining or exorcism, do that.

Why, you ask? Because most businesspeople don't know what good writing is or why it's necessary. It seems that the part of the brain that's good at finding and satisfying consumer demand isn't usually compatible with the part concerned with the clarity and accuracy of verbal communication. If you're ever lucky enough to meet one of those rare prizes, a literate entrepreneur, they're probably doing their own writing. This leads to writers being underpaid, underappreciated, and chronically pissed off.

Having said that, we all have to make a living, and let's face it, the bulk of job postings come from businesses needing copy for their websites, newsletters, blogs, advertisements, e-books, and email campaigns. So here are a few pointers

straight from the school of Wanda Waterman.

1. Charge a high hourly wage but don't admit how long it took you to do it. If the job takes you four hours, ask for \$50.00 an hour but say that the job only took you an hour. That way Brad gets to brag to his golf buddies about how much his writer costs him. Businesspeople have no idea how long it takes to research and create accurate copy that's thorough yet easy to read, and if you tell them they'll think you're incompetent. So go ahead and pull the wool over their eyes. Their accountants do it all the time.
2. Learn as much as you can about Search Engine Optimization (SEO), or, as we writers like to call it, "word vomit." This is the practice of stuffing your writing with keywords gleaned from the most common Internet searches. Using these keywords has been shown to improve the ranking of websites on Google, and every business owner wants higher Google rankings because that's what they're told will bring them more money.

Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't; I don't know—I'm just a writer. All I know is we used to write for human beings, and now we're writing for machines.

3. Don't try to write too well. Sure, you know that eloquence will improve the company's brand and ensure customers take them seriously, but your clients can't grasp that and you'll just make them feel stupid. In fact, your best bet might be just to copy the boss's style minus all the spelling errors and grammatical flubs. Any efforts to "educate" the boss about why a certain sentence should be phrased a certain way will probably be met with arrogant dismissal. Don't waste your time.
4. Branch out. Even if your schedule is full, continue to look for new clients. If you find a gig that pays well and has lasted more than six months, don't start thinking of it as a sure thing. Remember that as an online writer you're not privy to those water fountain chats that might alert you to looming layoffs. Take note: when a business is strapped, writers are usually the first to be let go. This goes back to the fact of our being undervalued by these lummoxes who think they know it all just because they're making the big bucks. Well, as a writer you may not be rich, but at least you know better than to shoot out misspelled tweets several times a day, which is what they'll be doing the moment you're out of the picture.
5. Be extra nice to anyone on the team with whom you might have contact, even if it's just emails. You're all in the same hell, so be supportive.
6. Finally, keep getting pickier about who you work for. This is business, after all, so improving the bottom line means never paying someone what they're worth. Wages for freelance writers have been dropping slowly over the years, but if we all keep looking for the best deal we might just pressure them to take us seriously and pay us fairly. We can only hope.

Wanda also writes the blog *The Mindful Bard: The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self*.



## Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** 6th Annual Cover Guy Scholarship

**Sponsored by:** The Cover Guy

**Deadline:** July 1, 2019

**Potential payout:** \$500

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be currently enrolled, or going to be enrolled, in a program at a university, college, or trade school in Canada or the U.S for the upcoming school year.

**What's required:** An email with contact and school info, along with an explanation of why you should be considered for the award, plus a 500- to 1000-word article about hot tubs.

**Tips:** Read the eligibility requirements carefully; lots of material for your article can be gleaned from The Cover Guy's website.

**Where to get info:** [www.thecoverguy.com/en-ca/the-cover-guy-annual-scholarship/](http://www.thecoverguy.com/en-ca/the-cover-guy-annual-scholarship/)





## Porkpie Hat

### Some Thoughts on Dancing Lessons

Darjeeling Jones



I'm typing this at 6:20 in the morning, sitting in my backyard beside a small bonfire, wearing pyjamas, a toque, fingerless gloves, and a lumberjack shirt from the grunge era. My dog is lying beside me on her ratty Mexican blanket. In the east, there's a faint flash of lightning in the sky, but, for now, I'm dry. My breakfast is a slice of last night's homemade pizza (anchovies, good mozzarella, sun dried tomatoes), washed down with a glass of Guinness. The morning smells like wood smoke, stinky dog, and imminent rain.

With every year that passes I more firmly believe that it is the odd, idiosyncratic, specific, and sensual pleasures that make life worth living. Or rather, it is the semi-random, half-planned combinations of those pleasures. Like perhaps you're walking across a field at midnight, eating a Twix bar, when the clouds suddenly drift away, revealing an intense moon, just as a nightingale begins to sing. Or the smell of perfume, roasted coffee, and wool sweater when you hug a friend you haven't seen in several years.

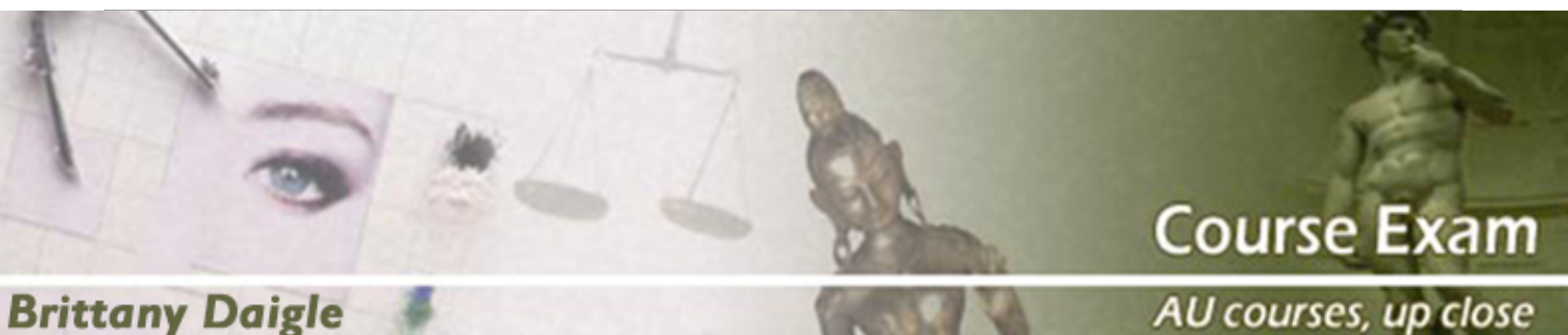
Kurt Vonnegut once wrote that "peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God." I love that idea, that the universe is offering us suggestions of how to dance, how to live our lives with rhythm and grace. Moreover, that what is spontaneous and improvised in this dance is just as important as what is planned and rehearsed—part tango and part disco.

Long ago, I discovered that what happens by surprise is far more memorable than what is carefully contrived. Travel is one clear example. I barely remember, for instance, my dutiful slog through the Louvre, or even the view from the observation deck of the Eiffel tower. I do remember, though, turning a street corner, hand-in-hand with my lover, coming across a sidewalk artist working in chalk, creating a wild picture of flowers and planets. The Michelin-starred restaurant in London was memorable, but the late night curry and chips in Brick Lane was much more so. Honeymoons are nice, but stolen kisses in back seat of a taxi cab say far more about the vital spark of romance, I think.

If there is truly a living, sentient spirit behind the machinations of the universe, I believe she has a trickster's heart. She is always ready to upend your expectations, take you to unthought of places, both good and bad. She has a roguish smile, a winking eye, and a dark sense of humour. She is capable of dealing both sweetness and disaster; I expect there are few lives she has not endowed with generous helpings of both.

It is always easy, though, to recognize calamity when it befalls us. We tend not to be nearly as adept at recognizing good fortune—at recognizing those chance encounters, serendipitous combinations, and lucky finds. You're at a garage sale, say, and you find an art deco lamp and a Velvet Underground record in perfect condition. You're walking down the street, and you catch a glimpse of a woman with a perfectly shaped neck, just as the warm sun falls across your face. Or, you're sitting in your backyard, early in the morning, when the fire is burning down, your dog is farting, and the storm has not yet arrived.



**Brittany Daigle****Course Exam****Brittany Daigle**

CLST 201 (Cultural Studies and Everyday Life) is a three-credit junior-level, three-credit social science course that will provide students with an introduction to cultural studies by exploring, reflecting on, and evaluating how, daily, we are immersed in culture. This course has no prerequisites.

Cultural Studies and Everyday Life is made up of six units with four assignments that weigh twenty percent, twenty percent, twenty-five percent, and thirty-five percent respectively. There are no midterm or final examinations for this course. The six units within this course cover several interesting topics, such as domestic cultures, workplace cultures, culture and community, identity, and recreational cultures. For students to receive credit for CLST 201, they must achieve a course composite grade of at least a “D”, which is equivalent to fifty percent.

Natasja Treiberg has been with Athabasca University for fourteen years and has been the tutor for CLST 201 since its inception in 2012. Alongside CLST 201, she tutors POLI 350 (Women in Canadian Politics), POLI 309 (Canadian Government and Politics), and POLI 330 (International and Global Politics).

Ms. Treiberg provides a brief introduction, stating “My background in in Political Science with specializations in international and Canadian politics. My Masters dissertation examined nuclear pollution in the Russian arctic. In my PhD (ABD) I shifted my focus to a more cultural perspective to focus on country music in relation to the War in Iraq. Personally, I am the proud mom of two sporty girls, one of which is going to the U.S. on an NCAA scholarship for water polo. My spare time is spent chauffeuring my girls and volunteering on various athletic boards.”

When asked to describe the course to students, she states “This course examines different facets of culture. While we often assume ‘culture’ means either ‘high-brow’ arts (like opera) or those things associated with ‘other’ people/ethnicities (i.e. ‘multicultural’), this course asks students to examine as ‘culture’ the everyday activities that we take for granted, as well as home, business, and pop culture. The goal of the course is to get students to examine their own lives and the world around them with a more critical lens.”

As for the structure of CLST 201, she explains that “There are four assignments in this course and no final exam. The first two assignments are learning journals in which we ask the students to provide some critical self-reflection based on what they are learning in the course. This is a great opportunity for them to examine their own lives a bit more critically. The third assignment assesses their ability to engage with the course discussion. They are asked to provide two essay answers to questions on the course content. The final assignment is a critical research paper where they are asked to write on a topic relevant to the course content. Some examples of topics students have written on include Facebook, Instagram, hockey culture, yoga, and gaming.”

Ms. Treiberg believes that “Students will need to take some time to read, view, and reflect on the course content. Often the course discussion will become relevant to them when they are out in

their daily lives. For example, waiting at a bus stop or in line for a coffee. Thus, it is important to not rush through the course.”

When asked to provide some advice for students taking this course, she states “Take this opportunity to find your own voice and examine your own preconceptions and culture. We recommend this course to any undergraduate student.”

As for what she thinks students will take away from this course, Ms. Treiberg states “What we hope students take away from this course is a more critical perspective on their own culture and the world around them.”

Ms. Treiberg also explains that “Many students struggle with finding their own voice in the assignments. The tutors are looking for them to provide their own critical self-reflection in the first two assignments. Additionally, in the last two assignments they need to provide the right mix of their own argumentation combined with their research and course content.”

Whether CLST 201 (Cultural Studies and Everyday Life) is a degree or course requirement of yours, or if the topics mentioned above are of interest to you, this course will have you learning interesting material surrounding the topic of culture.

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



## Fly on the Wall

### Every Picture Tells a Story, but not the Whole Story

Jason Sullivan



### AU as a Seasoning for Raw Intuition

Elementary school class photos are as ubiquitous as report cards and leave a lot to be desired when answering that timeless question: *how is school going?* From kindergarten on through graduation, these wallet-sized mementos tell only a fragment of the story of our schooling. For instance, many hijinks are left out of the picture. Nowhere in a yearbook or class picture does one see a juice box foot bomb (where you stomp a full carton of fruit nectar and scare the bejesus out of your

classmates), or the infamous toilet paper rip tides (such as the tried and true, yet absent from Harry Potter, act of stuffing a toilet bowl so that it overflows).

Ok, maybe those two examples aren't as universally prevalent as they were at my elementary school, but you get the idea. Yet a lot remains absent from those artfully presented 3" by 5" pictures that get handed out to friends and relatives every year. Happily, at AU our fancy new student ID card is a mere scanner click away and we are allowed more leeway in our self-presentation than, say, a passport photo! (AU Student and Academic Services, online).



## **Looking Out, Looking In; Inversions and Projections**

Lots is missing from a staged photograph or even from a work of art; the Mona Lisa is interpretively famous for whatever it is that she is smiling at or about or in response to. With art, we reflect upon the object of our gaze as it seems to encounter us with a life of its own. The Mona Lisa seems to be saying something to us; good art functions to implore us to think deeply about meaning or to encounter strong emotions or unsettling imagery. It's true that our school photos bring to mind stories and emotions, but this is only because the simple pictures trigger deeper memories. They incite interpretation by way of memory. Taken on its own, such photos have limited appeal because every student looks about the same: dressed up nicely and wearing a benign, if forced, smile.

Even a school photo's innocuous background of vague patterns or dull leaves betrays no detail of school life as it's actually lived. No bullies lurk in the shadows and no true loves await under the bleachers. School photos all look basically the same. There is not a blander cheese in the world than the one we had to say as kids. So, to interpretively take these pictures as they are is to completely miss their forced and contrived nature. In fact, a truer picture might be derived from viewing a multitude of humorous outtakes that capture with clairvoyant precision the actual character and persona of each individual student in all their stunningly precocious glory. Happily, in 2019 the world is a video playground and kids are movie stars in a way parents could only dream of back in the day.

## **AU Life; Less Peers, More Pure?**

Here at AU we don't have to perpetually present ourselves for photos or otherwise. However, our studies aren't more pure because they are outside the social snake pit of a classroom setting. It's true that AU grants us the privacy of engaging fully with our minds (and hearts) on course material ranging from the compelling (sociology statistics related to gun ownership) to the harrowing (anthropological practices such as genital cutting). But we all arrive with baggage at the study table of our dreams. This we must interpret and comprehend if we are to throw ourselves headlong into new learning.

Not only has our earlier schooling gone into making us who we are, but patterns of precognitive reality formed our selves before we even possessed self-awareness. There's a creepy uncanny oddness implicit when a family member says they knew who we'd be even when we were babies; after all, we didn't know ourselves yet! Others interpreted our actions in a way that, either retroactively or with loving clairvoyance, painted a richer ontological picture than our little brains were privy to. Like an episode of Bob Ross, we are painted into reality and drawn into being. We weren't fully us until we formed a picture of ourselves to ourselves. To this day, as we continue to grow and evolve, we invariably remain unaware of all of our ingredients. Some might even be unpronounceable!

So who's that person in the mirror or selfie? It depends on who you ask. And if that person is ourselves it may well depend on the day. From an AU point of view, as we gaze down the barrel of new course material, we can't assume an aloof posture and expect to just interact with and absorb our textbooks as though we are empty vessels awaiting fulfilment. We come pre-programmed and, particularly in the social sciences, we likely have already formed opinions on a given course's key themes. As humans we naturally adopt social norms, values and ideologies and to question these requires a certain interrogation of our intuitions. Once aware that we contain and embody core beliefs from the rest of our life, past present, we can interpret our studies with a greater and more dutiful degree of objectivity. We might even discover a new version of our future we'd not imagined yet!



## Interpretation in Many Guises

Susan Sontag, 55 years ago, claimed that to truly *get* a piece of art or other artifact of social reality, we must actually resist the urge to interpret the piece and just let it be as it is. Student photos may not be art so much as craft but they do tend to come to represent the whole of us in the eye of others; sometimes, what's left out is what's most important.

Asking what a piece of art is to us requires us to ask what it is in itself, if anything. A tree falling in the forest may make a sound but the concept of sound itself contains a lot of social definitions. Bang, crash! There's a lot more going on there that's wholly outside the world of physics. Springing to mind are a whole series of calamities separate from the gravitational essence of the act and any photos taken thereof. Why did the tree fall; was it cut, or did it die of natural causes? And what was in the path of its descent? However, and here we may hear echoes of peers who wonder, aghast or annoyed, at our newfound powers of analysis (thanks to our AU studies), Sontag states that we humans have, in modern times, been conditioned to over-think when it comes to works of art and life itself.

## Imagine A World Before Screens

Prior to the predominance of colour television, when buses and subways were jammed with newspapers and their attendant readers, and telegrams conveyed notes of love and longing spiced with 'stops', Sontag outlined her position on what she deemed to be an over-intellectuality of interpretation. To Sontag, interpretation "is the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world—in order to set up a shadow world of 'meanings.' It is to turn the world into this world. ('This world'! As if there were any other.) The world, our world, is depleted, impoverished enough. Away with all duplicates of it, until we again experience more immediately what we have." (Sontag, online)

Each artful depiction would seem to contain a prescription that functions to ruin the spontaneity of the original. Here we can immediately think of the angst imposed upon objects of photography when asked to perform the seemingly simple task of smiling. When animals smile, baring their teeth, it's an aggressive snarl but somehow humans have learned to value the motor functions attended by this facial grimace. For Sontag a natural smile is irreplaceable and cannot be duplicated any more than a great work of art can be reduced to a scholarly essay. She has a point in that much can be lost in translation. School photos give a paltry account of the educational process in the same way that a degree, famously derided as a mere piece of paper, fails to express the lifelong enrichment that an AU education provides.

## AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

### Convocation 2019

Fri, Jun 7 and Sat, Jun 8, 11:00 am to 4:00 pm MDT

Westerner Park Exhibition Hall, 4847A 19th Street, Red Deer AB

In-person and online

Hosted by AU

[convocation.athabascau.ca/index.php](http://convocation.athabascau.ca/index.php)

Live streaming available through above link

### Keeping Organized as You Search

Wed, Jun 12, 3:00 to 4:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Library

[library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html](http://library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html)

No pre-registration necessary

### Edmonton Student Social

Thurs, Jun 13, 5:00 to 7:00 pm MDT

Rocky Mountain Ice House, 10516 Jasper Ave, Edmonton AB

In person

Hosted by AUSU

[www.ausu.org/event/edmonton-student-social/](http://www.ausu.org/event/edmonton-student-social/)

Email [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) to RSVP

*All events are free unless otherwise specified*

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### **Context Requires Consideration**

So experiencing the fullness of life and art is Sontag's goal. What a great world that'd be, if we can imagine it. But what is there without that which gives something context? Can we deign to imagine ourselves out of the mental focus that gives our consciousness form? Curiously, Sontag leaves out how we may see something (including ourselves) differently at different times. Waking up on the proverbial wrong side of the bed can affect a whole day and the natural interpretations of life contained therein.

In a practical sense AU gives us the tools to succeed in direct interaction with our course materials. Like a prisoner in solitary confinement given his choice of ethnic cuisine (samosas?) and vices (coffee?), we have the basics provided. Textbooks and a tutor give essential, if skeletal, form to our studies and its up to us to make sense of it all. If our studies were a class picture, Sontag would have us see things exactly as they are, or were, or appear to be. Schooling is what we make of it and that's the unvarnished truth.

### **Social Media: The Art of Interpretation**

However, today we don't have to rely on that once a year moment of individual school photos to present to the world the case for our awesomeness. Social media provides participants a chance to curate and express their lives. But no matter what pictures or links or memes we post to the web there will always be detractors, cynics, and roustabouts waiting to pounce and critique.

Sontag does seem to anticipate this problem of being misunderstood by an audience; she notes that "interpretation amounts to the philistine refusal to leave the work of art alone. Real art has the capacity to make us nervous. By reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting that, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comfortable." (Sontag, online).

Sontag rightly sees interpretation as potentially an act of vandalism on the work of art itself. After all, artists have artist statements and, should we choose to use them, photos on social media typically allow us to provide a caption for explication. But anything we say can and will be used against us. Gratefully, our AU studies don't place us in such a fishbowl of social judgement. We can write essays on course topics without too much concern that we are taking an unpopular stance. This academic freedom can only broaden our scholarly scope.

On social media we're stuck between the rock of our own words being infinitely interpretable and the hard place of the reality that our consciousness itself is an evolved and evolving thing. We're never precisely who we were yesterday, and we can not be certain who we shall become tomorrow. A fun test of this is to look back over past course notes and textbooks and see what we wrote in the margins. Interesting from a Sontagian point of view is the fact that much academic material nowadays is digitized, such that we cannot write our comments into the margins per se, or at least not as readily. Digital pdfs in a sense limit interpretation. Likewise, Heidegger, in his time, famously criticized typewriters as alienating the hand from the craftsmanship of written creation. We might think also of Lucille Ball foundering in a factory or the scene of a writer being borne fecklessly along by the machinery of her word-presser come to mind with frightening ease. Damn you, autocorrect, right?

### **What Are We Saying When We Are Seeing?**

Essential to the psychology of over-thinking a creative work, says Sontag, is that "interpretation of this type indicates a dissatisfaction (conscious or unconscious) with the work, a wish to replace it by something else." (Sontag, online). Often AU studies begin with us only knowing what we think about a topic and then, gradually, we add new information and theories so that we can learn new meanings.

In other words, in University we learn to critically interpret the world around us. With works of art, no matter the proverb that art is never really done, the finality of the work suggests singular meaning as well as openness of interpretation. What we learn to do in our academic studies is to apply conscious interpretation rather than unconscious projection of our personal facts and fantasies onto what we see, hear and read. In this sense Sontag aptly reasons us away from the tendency to pigeonhole everything we encounter onto familiar terrain of meaning.

Sontag ends her plea to reduce interpretation and apprehend the world on its own terms with the phrase: “In place of hermeneutics we need an erotics of art” (Sontag, online.) To interpret is often to limit meaning to a particular point of view; if we proceed with our AU studies with as open a mind as possible, we allow ourselves to glean the most from our studies. In terms of the art of education, we are all creative scholars; each essay is a personal world of art as we dance with learning objectives and create new worlds of meaning and, yes, interpretation.

### **And Now a Word from The Unique Realm of Art**

While a class photo limits life to its limited realm, the rest of life has an artfulness all its own. In 1925 the Soviet art theorist A.K. Voronsky claimed that artists and artfulness are of a special sort, an almost mystical blend of insight and craft that reveals new avenues of exploration and consideration. He literally saw art as an essential aspect of the cognition of life, a potential we all enjoy (Voronsky, online). We might therefore consider our distance studies as embodying an art of learning.

Voronsky wrote that “Intuition, inspiration, creativity, or feeling are the names we give to opinions, truths, or the sum of notions and ideas of which we are certain, without being assisted by conscious, analytical thought. In intuition, necessary ideas and opinions are formed in the sphere of the unconscious. They erupt onto the surface of consciousness suddenly, immediately and unexpectedly. They are not the simple play of feelings and imagination. We know, we feel, or we sense that it is so, but this (intuitive) knowledge is not achieved through logic” (Voronsky, online). Our received life logic acquired through non-academic development thus comes to face new ideas and intuitions about the world we live in; they don't call it the sociological imagination for nothing.

Being open to new academic realms means we suspend quick judgement, the type that makes it a byline of internet savvy that we not read the comments section—because so many people fail to give a level-headed personal analysis of material—and reserve our interpretation until such time as we have read, viewed, or heard the entire text under consideration. Schooling can be a lovely process that teaches us to think critically besides simply taking subject matter as it first appears. At AU, knowledge acquisition meets creative germination as we grow to see the world in new and educated ways.

Next week we'll enlist Charles Darwin to consider the value of interpretation when it comes to other species and specifically their human-like behaviour and mannerisms.

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

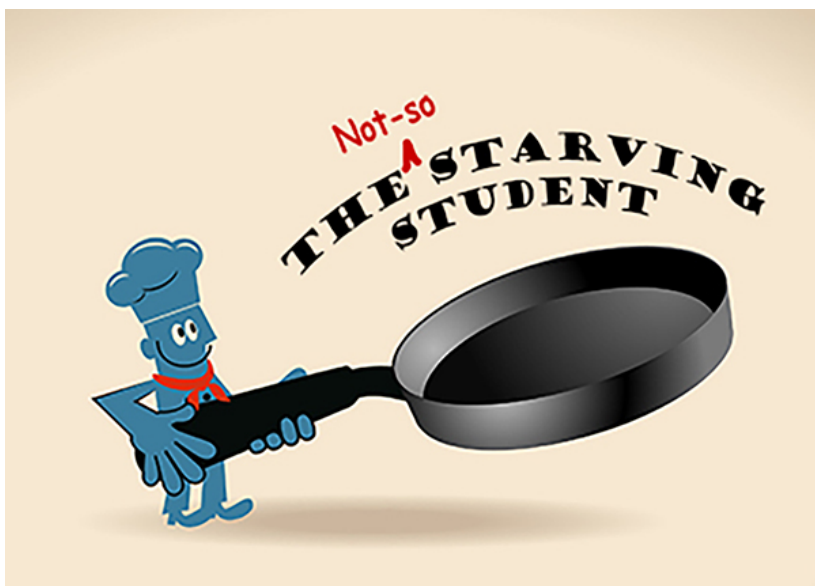




## The Not-So Starving Student

### Tips and Tricks for Enjoying In-Flight Food

Xin Xu



For AU students planning on long-haul flights across the globe, airplane food can be either a blessing or a curse. For most of my student peers, it turns out to be the latter. Hence, when I began planning for this post, I felt like the sole advocate for airplane cuisine. While airplane food can vary depending on the type of seating, I will cover economy-class food for long-haul flights to areas like Australia, Asia and Europe. For AU students looking to travel this summer, here are some tips on how you can make the most out of your boring airplane meals.

#### Pace yourself

Once, my uncle finished not one but two individually packed meals in the span of an hour. Very shortly after, he felt queasy and nauseous. While in flight, even if your appetite is excellent, don't feel obligated to finish the entire meal provided. In fact, for myself, I like to save the dessert or snacks and munch on them throughout a long-haul flight. On my last flight to Hong Kong, I did not finish the side of fruit until two hours after breakfast was served.



#### Eat outside of your comfort zone

Sometimes when we hear of an exotic sounding dish that we haven't heard of, we tend to shy away from them. Especially when we're in flight, surely we shouldn't be taking risks right? Well, not exactly. Some of my best experiences in flight has been trying unique dishes I don't have on a daily basis. A braised pork chow mein seemed pretty adventurous to me at first. However, after a few bites, I was more than content with the mix of ingredients. Sure, it wasn't a Michelin star quality bento box, but it was enough to satiate me for the next couple of hours in flight.

#### Tip the flight attendant and hope for the best

While the success rate of winning a first-class meal in economy class isn't 100%, tipping your flight attendant may help you land some specialty meal items on the menu. For example, a close friend tipped the flight attendant while flying to Australia and landed herself a small bottle of sauvignon blanc. You never quite know, but you can be sure that your flight attendant will treat you that much better.







### Buy your food before you board

Especially for long-haul flights, buying your food after going through security can be an excellent way of avoiding the expensive in-flight meals. Often airports have an array of options of cold and hot dishes. Bringing cold items such as sushi and dessert pastries can greatly spice up your meals and make a boring spinach pasta more tolerable.

### Bring your own food

Given the lack of options for food on a long-haul flight (with exception of flying first-class of course), AU students with food intolerance or allergies might enjoy their flight experience significantly more if pre-packaged snacks and food were brought along. For example, my favorite in-flight snacks are these flavored pretzel sticks.

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



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

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

#### AthaU Facebook Group

Curtis shares a link to the big news that AU Convocation 2019 is relocating to Red Deer due to the wildfire situation. Kayla wonders what a "reduced resource fee" indicates; responders clarify it's for courses that either don't require a text or the text is open-access. Faye wonders what's up with a MuchLearning exam expiring before the actual exam date; a call to the exam unit is in order.

Other posts include showing off the parchment, project courses, student support centre, and courses BIOL 204, COMP 318, and WGST 304.

#### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "It was incredibly special to join together with our #AthabascaU family, friends, allies, and Indigenous partners for this name change ceremony. Nuksahtowin is a place of reciprocal respect and relationship building."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Need new glasses or contacts? Get discounts on eyewear through AUSU - available at FYiDoctors across Canada! Visit <https://bit.ly/2WeQniN> for details!"



## The Study Dude

### Study at AU, and then Become a Pilot?

Marie Well



Not sure where to go with your career? Why not get AU accreditation and *then* study to become a pilot? A degree in management and teaching seems compatible with piloting as do degrees in French, politics—or nursing. After all, what deathly ill soul doesn't cry out for a doctor onboard a flight?

But what do I know about planes? A little, I suppose: my roommate had a pilot friend who flew small planes. I went flying once with my roommate and this so-called pilot. The pilot did upside

down circles in air until I became sick.

Later, my roommate asked if I wanted to go flying again for the day—with the same pilot. I said no and begged my roommate not to go. I told him he'd die if he went. So, he stayed home. That night, we learned that the pilot crashed mid-air and passed away. He'd been guzzling the bubbies the night before.

Not long after, another friend of mine bought a flight simulator game. It featured all the flight controls of an actual airplane. I tried playing it, but I crashed within five seconds each try. But at least I didn't get sick in the lav.

Decades later, a tiny female friend said she'd entered flight training school. Her brain seemed perfect for piloting: she smiled lots and played along with my boyfriend's friendly teasing. But unlike her, I don't have a carefree pilot's brain. In the past anxiety attacks would strike me daily. So, I'd hide in my cubicle, shaking, until quitting time. But where could I hide if mid-air? Ah, yes, the lav.

Yup. That's my background with airplanes.

But AU students can become pilots fast. You've got the smarts. And you can go from not knowing how to drive a car to flying commercial planes within a year (Turpeinen, 2019). Better yet, "you can start your flight training straight out of high school (or even before that)" (location 64 of 2328, 3%). And "there is a global shortage of pilots, which is predicted to last for at least the next two decades .... That means a pilot career might still be a good option for people in their 30s, 40s or even 50s" (Turpeinen, location 76 of 2328, 3%). Even I might qualify if not for mid-air anxiety.

But what if you have a disability or chronic disease? Well, "the medial requirements for pilots are also not as strict as you might think. There are commercial pilots who are deaf, armless, or who have other disabilities. Some limitations apply to those pilots of course, and they may not be able to work in passenger transportation. But they can still work as commercial pilots for other types of flying" (Turpeinen, location 64 of 2328, 3%).

It's costly to get pilot licensing, yes, but "there are many scholarships, student loans, and other types of financial aid available for hopeful pilots" (Turpeinen, location 64 of 2328, 3%). So, if you want to pilot, why not cap off your air training with an AU certificate in Management Foundations? Or go the graduate route with accreditation in Global Studies or Blended and Online Learning and Teaching?

But why study teaching? Well, you can also teach as a pilot: one student "started flight training in 1998, and one year later was already teaching other people how to fly. It seems becoming a professional pilot, and even a flight instructor, can be accomplished that quickly" (Turpeinen, location 135 of 2328, 6%). With know-how from AU, you can make your mark midair *and* on ground.

But, whatever you do, please don't do doughnuts with a commercial jet.

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## The Fit Student Get Rich and Famous with Fitness

Marie Well



Imagine you weigh over 180 pounds as a five-foot four-inch femme. And earlier that day, you've been featured live on local news. And now, you're about to watch, for the first time, the replay. As the camera opens to the sight of you, you coil back in horror. You look fatter than Momma June before the turkey neck operation.

Shaken up, you begin a weight loss and fitness program. Within a year, you lose sixty pounds. Later, you start body building, able to compete in professional body builder competitions.

That was once me.

But there's more to the story. There's also the question of, "How can I get rich, or at least famous, from health and fitness?" Ah, now that's an article worth writing.

### Body Build

First, you'll need to sculpt your physique. Start bodybuilding with heavy weights—or at least body weight. Buy a bodybuilder's book (think Arnold Schwarzenegger). Or find an online body building routine you can mimic. Bodybuilding struck me as easier than my first time flossing teeth.

But beware—during competitions, bodybuilders follow strict diets that can make them hungry or even angry. But bodybuilding competitions also make for great photo ops. So, to gain fame, post your photos at gyms or in fitness magazines. Go further and act on television or model pro bono for supplement companies. Hey, anything for publicity, right?



## Do Personal Training

Once fit, consider becoming a personal trainer (or fitness instructor). But get accredited. As a certified personal trainer, you'll need knowledge of "exercise science, nutrition, physiology, and more." As for fame and riches, you may write fitness books, make fitness videos, or even land gigs on reality TV. Who doesn't want to film a fit bod?

## Become a Celebrity Trainer

Once a personal trainer, you might branch out to become a celebrity trainer. But, first, become a celebrity in your own city. Do so by making your mark in local media. When I did media stints, I phoned TV, radio, and newspaper stations and asked for the media news contact. After that, I emailed the contact a draft of my story pitch. As a result, I found myself featured in newspapers, on radio stations, and on TV. You just need a phone to score more than fifteen-minutes of fame. But it's not easy to find celebrities to train. Most athletes don't have dough "unless they're fully professional." Sadly, you'll find yourself giving free or discounted services to small-time athletic stars. But if you want to train high-profile athletes—or celebrities—then "be in the right place, at the right time, while the right guy endorses your abilities." To secure celebrity gigs, you must flex more than your muscles and flash more than a charming smile.

## Make Fitness DVDs

I know a local Bollywood guru who makes dance videos. She could gain fame on Amazon Prime. Amazon Prime offers little guys (like me) a place to perform. Unlike Amazon Prime, Netflix is geared for the big guys: to gain fame and fortune on Netflix, try featuring your video at film festivals or buddying up with a Netflix distributor. And whether you're a small potato or a top dog, aim high.

## Train for the Olympics

You can't get any higher than on an Olympics podium. As an Olympian, you gain fame, but likely not riches unless you land endorsements or speaking gigs. As for fame, snowboarder Shaun White earned twenty million dollars from endorsements and events. But without endorsements or speaking gigs, you'll need to reach the Olympics by passion—and at least a part-time job. The Canadian Olympic Committee Athlete Excellence Fund pays out "\$20,000, \$15,000, and \$10,000 for winning Olympic gold, silver, or bronze medals respectively. It also provides funding of \$5,000 for performances at World Championships (or equivalent) during non-Olympic years, to support living, training, and competition expenses." In other words, train but keep your day job. But training five hours a day and working eight gets you knackered, right? Yes, so do it for the love, not the dough.

## Do Competitive Sports

I had a friend who played in the NHL. He's long retired but has a cozy home and splashy sports car. But landing yourself an NHL gig isn't likely: "according to ESPN and Total Sports Management, you have better odds of winning the lottery than you do of becoming an NHL player .... [and] most professional hockey players take up ice skating in elementary school, if not before, and are expert skaters by high school." So, if you can skate backwards and score, you've got a teeny-weeny chance.



### Copy the UFC Model

If you like putting on events, try copying the UFC Model. Host your events at venues like the UFC's first fight at McNichols Sports Arena in Denver, where the winner took home \$50,000. Also, feature your events on pay-per-view and home videos—just like the UFC did. But expect pitfalls: “Companies refused to carry Ultimate Fighting Championship shows, and distributors weren’t even willing to sell videotapes of the events.” And now look at the UFC. And just wait until we look at you—with your newfound love of fitness.

### Do as I Did, but so Much More

Once I dropped the turkey neck, I tried out for the university wrestling team. I toyed with competing in body building. I cycled to a neighboring city. No fame. No wealth. Just fitness.

As for you, no matter your age, you may gain wealth, fame, or merely fitness, but whichever way, you’re richer.



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

With AU's Convocation ceremonies underway June 7 and 8, we take a look back at how convocation played out in years past. (Spoiler: convocation used to take place in a tent!)

**Under the red and white tent.** Veteran Voice contributor (and former AUSU council president) Debbie Jabbour provides her impressions of attending her own AU convocation. “[W]e left the building towards the graduation tent, walking under the canopy... I almost lost it when

I turned to my right to see three of my daughters, cameras in hands, their smiling faces full of pride as they cheered, 'yeah mom!'.” From My

Perspective—Graduation Special—The Class of 2003, June 18, 2003.

**Convocation moves indoors.** Writer, and former Voice editor, Sandra Livingston goes behind the convocation scenes with AU Event Coordinator Mel MacGregor. “This year, we were well protected from the elements inside the multiplex. It could have rained, snowed, sleeted or overheated outside and we would have been fine inside.” Convocation 2009—Behind the Scenes, July 3, 2009.



Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## Death with Dignity

*Dear Barb:*

*My mother is 56 years old and was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. She was given approximately one year to live. She was completely devastated, as was our whole family. My aunt died three years ago from the same thing and it was an awful and painful death for her. Mom doesn't want to suffer the same fate and we do not want to watch her endure the same slow painful death as her sister. So Mom talked to her doctor about her options. He mentioned MAID - Medical Assistance in Dying. Mom is pretty sure this is what she wants to do and she wants all of us to support her decision. My dad and siblings would like more information before making a decision such as this.*

*I would like to talk to others who have chosen this route and how they feel about their decision afterwards, if there were any regrets. Would you be able to provide more information about MAID, and maybe some of your readers can share their experience? It is a very big decision and my family would like to consider all options.*

*Thanks, Kate.*

Hi Kate:

This is such a hard thing to go through; my deepest condolences to your family and you definitely need to consider all your options before making decision such as this one. I hope the following information will be helpful and if

any readers write in, I will definitely include their letters in future columns.

MAID (Medical Assistance in Dying) is a way of providing an option for many to end the pain and suffering of a life that has become devastatingly hopeless. There are many stipulations and you need to do some research to make sure you understand what they are. The Dying With Dignity website has a page where you can read up on the laws around MAID.

I think what you are looking for is support and through the following sources you should be able to find what you are looking for by calling 1-844-395-3640 or emailing [support@dyingwithdignity.ca](mailto:support@dyingwithdignity.ca) to contact their personal support program

They also have a story where a family shares their journey to help their mother to end her pain and suffering, you may find it helpful

It is important that as a family you are all on the same page, and all want what your mother wants, but ultimately it is your mother's decision. Your mother is fortunate to have such a loving caring family. Thanks for your letter Kate.

*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  
Be Just Like Me

Wanda Waterman



The information on this page is provided by the AU Students' Union. The Voice does not create this content. Contact AUSU at [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) with any questions about this article.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- June 7-8: [Athabasca University Convocation](#)
- Jun 10: [Deadline to register in a course starting Jul 1](#)
- Jun 15: [AUSU In-Person Council Meeting](#)
- Jun 15: [July degree requirements deadline](#)
- June 30: [Deadline to apply for course extension for Aug](#)
- Jun 10: [Deadline to register in a course starting Aug 1](#)

## Follow AUSU for a Chance to WIN!

AUSU has over \$1000 in prizes to give away in our Spring #igo2AU Contest!

### HOW TO ENTER:

- FOLLOW AUSU on social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#))

AND

- TAG A SOCIAL MEDIA POST with the hashtag [#igo2AU](#)

*That's it! If you already follow us, great! Just tag a post with #igo2AU to enter!*

### PRIZES INCLUDE:

- Bluetooth Flip4 Wireless Waterproof Speaker
- Sony On-Ear Headphones with Microphone
- Free Online AU Exams through [ProctorU](#)
- Amazon Gift Cards (valued at \$25 or \$50)
- S'well Bottle Prize Pack

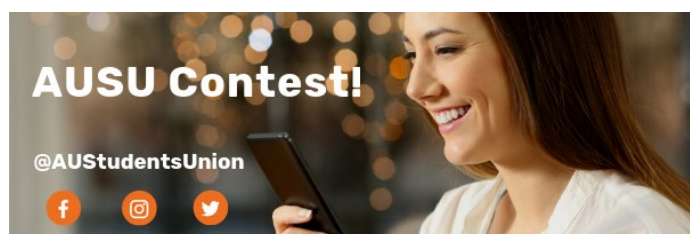
**CONTEST DEADLINE: June 14, 2019**

*One entry per person. Winners chosen by random draw.*

Follow us @AUSUStudentsUnion



For more information visit our website [here](#).



## Student Events in Edmonton

Your AUSU council will be gathering from across Canada to meet up in-person in Edmonton next week. They would love to meet up with fellow AU students, so come on out to our events!

### Student Social Event

*Come on out to chat with fellow students, get some free swag and appetizers, and connect with your student council!*

**When:** Thursday, June 13 from 5:00 - 7:00 pm MDT

**Where:** [Rocky Mountain Ice House](#), 10516 Jasper Ave, Edmonton, AB. T5J 1Z7

### In-Person Public Council Meeting

AUSU's June Council Meeting will be held **in-person** in Edmonton during our 2019 Council Retreat. Members are welcome to attend the council meeting either in person or by teleconference. The agenda & teleconference instructions will be posted [here](#) at least 3 business days prior to the meeting.

**When:** Saturday, June 15 from 1:30 - 3:00pm EDT

**Where:** [207 Energy Square](#), 10109 106 Street NW, Edmonton, AB. T5J 3L7

Help us plan! Please RSVP to [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) or on our [Facebook Events](#)!





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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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## THE VOICE

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

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