



# THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 44 2019-11-15

## Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

## How to be Charming Woo the World

## Party Time An Invitation

*Plus:*

*Is Sugar Bad for Us?*

*The Zen of Sullivan's Travels  
and much more!*



# CONTENTS

*The Voice's* interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

## Features

Minds We Meet: *Interviewing Students Like You!* ..... 4

## Articles

Editorial: *An Anchor on their Necks* ..... 3

Is Sugar Really Bad for Us? ..... 10

The Zen of Sullivan's Travels ..... 14

## Columns

Porkpie Hat: *Party Time* ..... 7

The Fit Student: *How to be Charming*..... 8

Fly on the Wall: *Walking Sticks and in Another's Shoes*..... 12

The Study Dude: *Is Being Studious One of Your Gifts?*..... 16

Course Exam: *HIST 202*..... 17

Dear Barb: *Sick of the Sickness* ..... 20

## News and Events

Student Sizzle ..... 11

AU-Thentic Events ..... 18

Scholarship of the Week..... 19

AUSU Update ..... 22

## Graphic

Poet Maeve: *Tycoon Saviors*..... 21

**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,  
Barbara Lehtiniemi, Jason  
Sullivan, Wanda Waterman,  
Xin Xu, and others

Views and articles  
presented here are those  
of the contributors and do  
not represent the views of  
AUSU Student Council.

*The Voice* is published  
almost every Friday in  
HTML and PDF format.

For weekly email reminders  
as each issue is posted, fill  
out the subscription form  
[here](#).

*The Voice* does not share its  
subscriber list with anyone.  
Even I don't look at it, it's  
all on auto.

Volume 27, Issue 44

© 2019 by The Voice  
Magazine

ISSN 2561-3634

# 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

### An Anchor on their Necks

Karl Low



What fun times in education these days. The Ohio state government has just amended their legislation with a piece called the Ohio Student Religious Liberties Act of 2019 that says, in part, “No school district board of education, ... shall prohibit a student from engaging in religious expression in the completion of homework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments.”

I’m okay with that. That seems like a reasonable thing, in that it doesn’t specify any particular religion, and if we’re going to allow belief in unprovable things to be a legitimate ground for human rights, it makes sense to include all such beliefs, whether those of Buddhism, Christianity, Satanism, the Flying Spaghetti Monster, or whatever else comes to mind.

But then it goes on to say “Assignment grades and scores shall be calculated using ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance, including any legitimate pedagogical concerns, and shall not penalize or reward a student based on the religious content of a student’s work.”

Now this, for me, is a problem waiting to happen. I’ve seen it argued that the phrase “calculated using ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance” means that the phrase about not penalizing based on the religious content does not really apply when we’re talking about scientific facts, such as the age of the earth, evolutionary biology, etc. However, I can see a lot of wiggle room in how that “and” between the two clauses essentially puts them on even keel, and this piece of legislation will be used as a wedge by some groups to try to impose specific morals within the education system.

While I don’t think that any belief in unprovable things should be held above any other, I do think that when we have provable things, things that anybody can do the same experiments and achieve the same results, those things should trump the unprovable.

What remains to be seen is just how much noise this clause will end up causing, and what will happen if it’s brought to the court by some group that wants to insist that their specific religious teachings are equal to the scientific teachings we all can access. Even if it’s eventually forced to be removed or better defined, if it makes a lot of noise, it will do damage to students who graduate in Ohio, because so much of education is personal, and so much of how society judges a person’s education is reputational. There’s a reason people pay more to go to the schools that are well recognized, after all. I hope that the Ohio state legislature has not just put a huge anchor around the necks of their own children with this legislation.

Meanwhile, in this issue, our feature is an interview with student Heather Guerette, who came to AU looking for some way to stimulate her mind beyond the TV shows of her children, and is soon to be walking away with a degree in Psychology and perhaps plans to further it. We also have a great story from Marie Well this week on how you can increase your charm, a skill useful in almost any situation, and Darjeeling Jones is nice enough to extend us all an invite to his next soiree, it sounds like an event not to be missed. Now I just have to figure out how to receive the directions! Plus events, advice, scholarships, news, a look at why you should be avoiding sugar, and more! Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl', with a stylized flourish at the end.

# MINDS WE MEET



*Psychology major, Heather Guerette, is a 41-year-old wife and mother of three teenagers living in Sarnia, Ontario. She is currently in her final semester of the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology 3-year program at AU and has given us her feedback on the program and on her experience studying at Athabasca University.*

**Can you provide us a bit of background information about yourself?**

I am a forty-one-year-old wife and mother of three teenagers. I have been married for nearly 22 years. I am from Sarnia, Ontario and have lived here all of my life except for the 4 years my husband was in school near Chicago, Illinois.

**What program are you in? Are you enjoying it?**

I am in the 3-year Bachelor of Arts program with a psychology concentration. I am hoping to convert to the 4-year option of the degree when I am finished. The program is very interesting with a lot of choice available.

**Can you describe the path that led you to AU? What made you realize you wanted to go back to school, and what pushed you into the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology program?**

I started studying at AU in 2013 when my kids were young. At first, I wasn't in a program and I only took one course at a time. As my kids got older, I took on more courses. Originally, I started studying because raising three small children was making me feel a bit stupid. There is only so much Dora a person can take! I was uncertain about whether I wanted to finish my previous studies and apply for the Bachelor of Commerce program or take psychology, which is a topic that always interested me. I registered in a general psychology course without applying to a program while I was deciding what to do. I really enjoyed the material and so I decided to apply to the psychology program.

**How far along are you in your degree?**

There have been a few setbacks, but I'm happy to say that my last semester began on October 1st and I plan to be at graduation in June!

**What caused you to stop studying before applying to AU?**

My first attempt at college was an accounting diploma, but the school cancelled my program while I was on medical leave in my second year. I decided to stay home and raise my babies instead of starting a new program.

**Do you have any advice for people who are on the fence about going back to school?**

My advice to those on the fence about going back to school would be to just start with one course. Even if you decide it's not for you, learning is never a waste.

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

When I'm not studying, I am a taxi driver for my kids and do billing and accounting for my husband's business. I also sit on the board of directors for our local pregnancy centre as their treasurer. I enjoy swimming and reading in my spare time - not that I have much of that. I also really enjoy travel which is made much easier by studying online.

**What are your plans for this education once you finish? What would be your dream job?**

I am not sure what I plan to do yet. There are a few masters programs that I have been looking at, but honestly, I'm mostly just in this for the learning experience. I'm not really sure what my dream job would be; however, anything that involves helping people live their best lives would make me very happy.

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

I have always enjoyed learning. I don't think there is any one person that is responsible for that. My choice to study psychology was prompted by a desire to understand why people do what they do.

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

Online learning is very challenging, as sometimes self-motivation is hard to find. One of the things I like best about online learning is the ability to learn at my own pace. If I need to take a break because of vacations or health issues or anything else, I have that flexibility available to me. I would not be just a few months away from graduating if I did not have this flexibility.

**Is there anything that you dislike about online learning?**

I dislike e-textbooks. Not everyone learns the same way, and I think it would be more beneficial to allow students to choose the format of their textbooks. As it is, every time I take a course that has an e-textbook I am forced to purchase a hard copy myself because I just cannot manage without it.

**Is there anything specific that you miss from studying at a "normal" university?**

I do miss the community of a classroom setting and having a professor interacting with you on a daily basis and offering assignment advice and exam tips. Though, thankfully there are Facebook groups and other forums to discuss things with other students, which really helps.

**At what point did you waver the most about continuing your schooling? What caused it and what got you through it?**

There have been several times when I thought it would be easier to just give it up. I could get by in life without a degree, and we really don't have a lot of extra money. I got through it by reminding myself that my kids are watching. I did not want to let them see me give up on myself.

**What's your favorite AU course that you have taken so far, and why? Would you recommend the course to others?**

My favourite course is PSYC 402 (Biological Psychology). It is an absolutely fascinating course and well laid out. There is a lot of information to cover, but it is so interesting I found it easy to remember most of it. I would definitely recommend this course to anyone that is interested by how the human brain works as long as they have taken at least some biology previously. It would be difficult to get through otherwise, I think.

**What's your overall feedback of the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology program at AU?**

I really like the structure of most of the courses, and the content is very interesting for the most part. I do not like some of the required courses. PSYC 375 (History of Psychology) is probably the driest course I have ever endured, and Research Methods seemed pretty redundant after taking several senior level psychology classes and the assignments should be more aligned with tutor expectations to prevent frustration and confusion. I'm also not really a fan of required humanities courses either.

**What have you given up to go to AU that you regret the most? Was it worth it?**

I have given up a lot of time to pursue this degree. Time with family and friends that I just can't get back. I can't do everything - something must give. I do think it's been worth it for the most part.

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

Most of the time communication with tutors is great. Many of my tutors have been very helpful. As with anything, there are some not so great tutors. I have found a few that are very condescending in their feedback, which is really not helpful to anyone.

**What's your pet peeve if you have one?**

That's a difficult question to answer as there are so many. Probably the biggest pet peeve I have is when a group of people are trying to accomplish something (fundraising, school projects, kids' activities, etc.) and most of the group sits back and watches while a couple people do all the work. Unfortunately, I have run into this on many occasions. It makes it difficult to want to help out with anything.

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

Queen Elizabeth. I just find her story so fascinating and I would love to hear it from her perspective.

**Could you describe the proudest moment in your life?**

There are three of them; when each of my children were born. I did that. I know it's been done before but look at that. I made a human, which is definitely a great feeling of accomplishment.

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

I really and truly like my teenagers. Most people complain about the teen years and how difficult teenagers are, but I really enjoy watching my kids gain their independence and I love being able to guide them into whatever their adult life holds for them.

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

Just because a person is family, that does not give them the right to treat you with disrespect. If a person is toxic, it is ok to walk away from that relationship no matter who it is.

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

I absolutely love to travel! I have been to several European countries and have travelled through most of the United States. Unfortunately, I have not seen much of Canada because the cost of traveling in Canada makes it difficult.

**Out of the places you have been to, which was your favorite and why?**

My very favourite place is Barcelona. This city combines all of my favourite things - mountains, the sea, old buildings, great food. I would love there if I could.

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





## Porkpie Hat Party Time



## Darjeeling Jones

To me, the beginning of December through to New Year's is the only time of year when I actually look forward to socializing. For the rest of the year, I'm about as approachable as a Gila monster, and have little interest in hosting gatherings of any kind. In the springtime, I prefer to spend my days napping in the cherry orchard and my nights paddling my swan-shaped boat about the lake, weaving a crown of wildflowers for my hair. During the summer, I'm usually pissed on frothy tropical cocktails by the early afternoon, and far too clumsy to orchestrate folded napkins and petit fours. Late fall and winter, though, I'm ready to light people's cigars, kiss them on the cheek, and dance the night away on the balcony in the warm glow of tiki torches.

This year, I already have a couple of elaborate fish and goose soirees in the works, so, in preparation, I've been honing my skills with respect to Cornish game hen stuffing, crème brûlée torching, and constructing champagne glass pyramids (up to six tiers at the time of writing this!). I've also been practising some new parlour tricks, perfecting the Electric Slide, and reading up on the official rules for baccarat and blind man's buff.

I'm also thinking of expanding my already-not-inconsiderable repertoire of theme parties. Winter solstice, for instance, might be a nice time to host a nouveau-bacchanal, replete with jugs of wine and a roasted wild boar or two. I'm already pricing out clavichords, and looking into finding a reliable harpist to play some Saint-Saens, and a few madrigals.

I believe that contriving a successful shebang is not unlike stocking an interesting wonder cabinet, except instead of showcasing a collection of dried orchids, jeweled eggs, and shrunken heads, you are carefully selecting and displaying a rarefied assemblage of intriguing human lifeforms: eccentrics and mystics, poetesses and misfits, flim flam men and flibbertigibbets are all more than welcome. From what I have heard about you, *Dear Reader*, it is clear to me that you would be an ideal addition to the guest lists! So, don't be surprised to find your invitations in the mail, or possibly delivered to your subconscious via astral projection on ultraviolet wavelengths. You don't need to worry about anything, all will be supplied. And you can wear whatever you like: white satin tux or sequined dress, red high heels, or boots of Spanish leather. Just don't forget to bring your cigarette case, and your stockpile of amusing anecdotes and slick dance floor moves.

To round out the season this year, by the way, I'm already filling up a moleskine notebook with plans for a New Year's Eve Gatsby-style wingding. It'll be a Venetian masque-type deal, with a chamber orchestra playing gypsy jazz, and plenty of canapes and cocaine. When the other guests finally go home in their taxicabs and Ubers, you and I can sit in the solarium until sunrise, drinking Turkish coffee laced with brandy, listening to my scratchy wax records of Maria Callas singing Violetta. Please don't disappoint me, blow off the staff party at Appleby's, and tell me you can make it.



## The Fit Student

### How to be Charming

Marie Well



I know a soul who charms the world. She's the alpha female, the one every toe points toward in a chitchat. She can read your mind, fix your problems, and make you feel like you belong. Men fall for her nonstop, men half her age, men twice her age, men who show up at her hangouts, uninvited. She clearly charms.

Have you ever wondered what makes charmers sizzle? I've stumbled on a YouTube channel called *Charisma on Command*. And I've considered one day enrolling in their course, but it's too costly for me.

They do have free clips on YouTube, though, that profile celebrities.

In addition to watching clips from *Charisma on Command*, I've bought a book called *The Positive Trait Thesaurus* by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi. This book lays out positive traits, including the traits of charming souls. For instance, the book reveals, "Charming characters always seem to know what to do or say to put people at ease and win trust. They can be caring and considerate and make the people around them feel special and unique. These characters are the center of attention not because of how they look or the power they wield, but because people are attracted to their energy and appealing manner" (19%).

I'm going to list some key traits you can emulate to become a charmer. Then, I'll add quotes from *Charisma on Command* and comments from my own experiences with charmers. The charm traits in bold font below are from *The Positive Trait Thesaurus*.

#### **Charm trait #1: Humor.**

Use jokes that put you on the same team as those around you and that elevate the team. Another trick is to stick with absurdly complimentary humor, such as, "Will you marry me?" I've begun analyzing funny people to gain a sense of what makes them so delightful. For instance, my brother told me a funny today. He used to act as a caregiver to me and my siblings, although he himself was only in elementary school. And he served as my parent throughout my teens, clothing me, housing me, feeding me, although he was barely out of his teens himself. So, he told me that, when he gets asked if he regrets not having kids, he replies, "Nope. I had three kids when I was ten years old."

I love this joke because it plays on the impossible while highlighting a noble trait: responsibility. Make mental note of the funnies you hear; jot down what makes them work. And, of course, try to emulate them.

## **Charm trait #2: Good listening skills. Asking questions to show that one is paying attention and interested.**

Don't change the topic with your comment. Whatever the person says, stick with that topic until they choose to change it. Build on what they say, support their point of view, echo their feelings.

## **Charm trait #3: Greeting others with enthusiasm.**

For same sex, try introducing yourself with some form of physical touch such as a handshake. The alpha female makes everyone feel special. She'll walk into a room and call out, "Hey Cody! How did your presentation go? Did you nail it?" She'll remember details about your last conversation. She'll recall the dates and times of special moments coming up in your life. She'll remember your face in crowds of thousands of people—after meeting you only once. Do these things. People love it when you make them feel important. And everyone is important.

## **Charm trait #4: Playfulness.**

Part of playfulness involves reading positive intent in ambiguous or bad situations. If someone lifts your hair and says, "Ooh. You need a new style," laugh a little and say, "I know you want me looking like a 10. I won't disappoint." Another trick is to reframe things to the positive side. Turn a job at McDonald's flipping burgers into the best time of your life. To charm others, everything you say should be upbeat and inspiring: "Every year of my life since I met my true love has been the best year of my life." Another trick: in private, engage in self-amusement, and gradually bring that play into your social world. For instance, if you do a goofy dance in private, show it off to your wife and kids.

## **Charm trait #5: Smiling and nodding in encouragement as someone speaks.**

The alpha female will say, "yes ... yes ... uh huh ... for sure" when listening to others, a big smile on her face. She'll say, "I hear you," "I agree," and "exactly." Or she'll say, "Yes, and that's why..." and fill in her own view. She delights.

## **Charm trait #6: Noticing personal details and offering compliments.**

Spread the praise, and don't worry if you get yours. It'll freely flow back to you. I read once that it's best to compliment and then go back to a normal conversation. In other words, avoid praising nonstop; it makes people uncomfortable. Sprinkle in the praise instead. And make it genuine. After all, everybody has traits worthy of compliments. Thus, directing praise towards others builds charm, while elevating others makes you more likable.

## **Charm trait #7: Attentiveness; making sure the needs of others are being met.**

Yesterday, I looked up the definition of the word "unselfish," and it defined who I'm becoming. I'll feed the magpies and bunnies on the first snowfall rather than feed myself. Putting others needs first feels thrilling. It builds love and trust like nothing else. It brings peace and harmony. And—*bonus*—it makes you more charming. But to be truly unselfish, one should act selflessly without self-praise.

The bottom line? If you're not yet a charmer, tap into these seven traits. If you're already a charmer, spread the praise playfully, as every toe points your way.

### *References*

Ackerman, Angela, & Puglisi, Angela. (2013). *The Positive Trait Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Character Attributes*. JADD Publishing. E-book.



## Is Sugar Really Bad for Us?

Francesca Carone



We all know that eating too much trans-fat or sugar is bad for our health, right? But why is that, and why do we keep eating it? With school and other stress in our lives, is it possible to avoid it?

Well, sugar is bad for us in several ways. First, it overloads your liver and could lead to fatty liver disease because of the way sugar is metabolized and stored as fat. “Tuft University researcher discovered people who drink one sugar-sweetened beverage a day face a higher risk of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease compared to those who steer clear of beverages containing added sugars” ([Zerbe, online](#)). To be fair, there are different types of sugar. Sugars that come from fruit mainly contain 50 % fructose and 50% glucose and are not generally bad in moderation ([Lewin](#)). When they make white sugar, it is called sucrose and it comes mainly from sugar cane. Fructose is generally better tolerated in the body and thus healthier, but most things that contain fructose also contain glucose.

But fructose also causes diabetes by failing to stimulate insulin which “which in turn fails to suppress ghrelin, or “the hunger hormone,” which then fails to stimulate leptin or “the satiety hormone.”<sup>6</sup> This causes you to eat more and develop insulin resistance “which in turn fails to

suppress ghrelin, or “the hunger hormone,” which then fails to stimulate leptin or “the satiety hormone.”<sup>6</sup> This causes you to eat more and develop insulin resistance” ([Mercola, 2019](#)). Some studies have shown sugar may also increase the risk of cancer, such as research by the National Health Institute ([Zerbe, online](#)). Another reason why we should avoid sugar is because it may cause metabolic dysfunction, which means increased LDL (bad cholesterol) and decrease of the good cholesterol, which then increases blood pressure and triglycerides, which, in turn, may lead to heart attacks and strokes. It also increases weight gain, more than dietary fats.

So why do we keep consuming sugar? Well, mostly because it is in everything we buy. It can be hidden in the long list of ingredients, or even substituted with corn syrup (which is worse). It is in your bread, crackers, sauces and almost everything else processed. But that is not the only reason we consume too much. Studies by a medical journal, namely, The British Journal of Sports Medicine showed that sugar is as addictive as cocaine, and that is because “Consuming sugar produces effects similar to that of cocaine, altering mood, possibly through its ability to induce reward and pleasure, leading to the seeking out of sugar” ([Davis, online](#)). Despite this, there are differences between drugs and sugar. For example, drugs hijack the brain’s rewards system, while it has not been proven to do so with sugar yet. While some researchers disagree citing that there is no withdrawal from sugar like there is with drugs; having been off sugar myself, I can testify that, for me at least, and also some others that I know of who did it too, there were



physiological impairments that I suffered during the first week or so. I would consider that withdrawal of some sort.

So while the sweet taste of sugar seems bitter to one's health, it may be hard to avoid, especially when you're too busy to cook for yourself with school, work and family. So try to seek out healthier options. Sugar-free options are popping up everywhere, so it is a good idea to check the ingredients next time you are buying a quick meal or even ingredients to make meals at home. Again though, some sugar is not bad, especially in its natural form. Fruits have many health benefits that overrule the effects of glucose/fructose on the body.

#### References

- Davis Nicola. 2017. Is sugar really as addictive as cocaine? Scientists row over effect on body and brain. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/25/is-sugar-really-as-addictive-as-cocaine-scientists-row-over-effect-on-body-and-brain>
- Mercola, Joseph. 2019. *What Happens to Your Body When You Eat Too Much Sugar?* Retrieved from: <https://articles.mercola.com/sugar-side-effects.aspx>
- Zerbe, Leah. 2017. *Is Sugar Bad for You? Here's How It Destroys Your Body*. Retrieved from: <https://draxe.com/nutrition/is-sugar-bad-for-you/>
- Lewin, Jo. *Sugar Explained*. <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/sugar-explained>

*Francesca Carone is a full-time mother and student completing her BPA in Criminal Justice. Most of her time is spent outdoors with her children and dog.*

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

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



#### **AthaU Facebook Group**

Group admin JoAnne reminds students to use their tutor as their primary resource—not other students. Razanne wonders how heavily PSYC courses rely on the textbook; responders suggest very heavily, indeed. Abeer seeks recommendations for courses with no exams; students respond with their exam-free faves.

Other posts include citing an AU study guide, long quotes in essays, Grammarly, and courses CMNS 420, COMP 210, EDPY 389, and PSYC 289.

#### **Twitter**

@AthabascaU tweets: "#AthabascaU is making it easier for students to get important information. Beginning Nov. 14, emails will be sent letting students know they have new correspondence from AU."

@austudentsunion tweets: "AUSU wants feedback from #AthabascaU undergrads - tell us how we are doing! Fill out our AUSU Services Survey for a chance to win great prizes, like a \$500 Amazon Gift card! <https://bit.ly/2WTrPgA> #igo2AU."

## Fly on the Wall

### Walking Sticks and in Another's Shoes

Jason Sullivan



can enter our garden of understanding. Yet when it comes to really *getting* what it is to walk in another's shoes and think along another's mental trail, it requires as much empathy as it does understanding.

Powys writes: "Mary's ecstasy of mood increased rather than diminished as she walked by John's side, following his step with her step and even picking up a stick from the ground as she went along. This she did with the conscious desire to have some sensation of her own exactly parallel to that which her cousin enjoyed as he pressed the end of *his* stick into the ground. Mary felt that everything she looked at was bathed in a liquid mist and yet was seen by her for the first time in its real essence" (Powys, 33). Worth noting here is that Mary's feelings are hers and hers alone; no matter the love they share they each receive its joys in their own way. Otherwise, sincere imitation (her picking up a stick) would be unnecessary. She can never become who he is and ascertain precisely how he feels, but, with empathy, she can map an approximation. And, ironically, if the two ever really became one there would no longer be either of them!

That the basis of our consciousness is one of this essential isolation means that, at some level, we are always distance students in life. Classrooms provide spatial proximity but are no guarantee of intellectual, felt affinity. Even when academic relations draw us close to others, this closeness inevitably contains a fleeting sensation because we know that life will draw us apart once again. Even when considering our own selves, we find that we are not quite who we were before or will become in the future. Our unity of identity rests on precarious metaphysical foundations.

### Our Selves as Objects to Our Selves

Jacques Derrida notes that when considering ourselves we have to beware of the pitfalls implicit in taking our being as an object to our own subjectivity. To know thyself is perhaps to interrogate who we are in the wrong way. Each instant and each self, not to mention each encounter with others of our academic ilk, is unique: "The absolute alterity of each instant, without which there would be no time, cannot be produced-constituted within the identity of the subject or the existent. It comes into time through the Other" (Derrida, 91). In other words, we're never alone because to feel something is to feel it in relation to something else even if that else is within ourselves. When considering ourselves, whether in a mirror or within our minds' eye, this act is

John Cowper Powys' classic novel *A Glastonbury Romance* illustrates how, with a little effort and some natural inclination, we can come to understand the perspective of someone else and, for a time, walk the same path with them. At AU, that means that we need to translate our course material into digestible morsels for the consumption of interested interlocutors. To use our learning in conversation means pulling on our best pedagogical pedal-pushers and learning to relate to others by explaining our course material in understandable terms. Less jargon from us means others

of a nature and flavour that is unique and independent of any other consideration. Each moment is timeless and yet abstracted from a flow. This is especially true when considering the vibe of another person and how to explain our learning to them.

### **Power and our Selves**

We can't know all of an Other but we can consider the parts we relate to; expecting to bring the light of truth to someone is as asinine as a door to door salesman thinking that all the world requires his wares. Derrida sees this simplistic approach to truth and identity as rooted in ancient Greece with Plato: "The ancient clandestine friendship between light and power, the ancient complicity between theoretical objectivity and technico-political possession" limits our acceptance of, or adaption to, different points of view (Derrida 91). Assuming a unitary standpoint on an issue not only makes an ass of you and me but also illustrates a learned narcissism; Emmanuel Levinas stated that "solipsism is neither observation nor sophism; it is the very structure of reason" (Levinas in Derrida, 91). In other words, no argument or illustration is full and complete, and if we cannot account for other viewpoints, we are simply lowing pathetically, like a moon-struck calf.

Derrida writes that, when considering the miraculous phenomenon of our being as an awareness capable of considering itself in Rodan-like reverie, we must recall our cultural inheritance that conjures a faith that somewhere, somehow, absolute totalizing truth is about to shine through the murk of real reality. "More than any other philosophy, phenomenology, in the wake of Plato, was to be struck with light. Unable to reduce the last naivete, the naivete of the glance, it predetermined Being as object" (Derrida, 85).

Often, consensus rests more on violence than upon evidence. Minority views risk becoming roadkill. And worse still, truths and paradigms change over time depending on methodological expectations. Newton's clockwork universe was swamped by Einstein's theory of relativity (to name a common example). Philosophies of identity are not immune to blind spots and false visions that no fog light can pierce. We cannot even look at ourselves without the baggage of our beliefs and, even when unpacking those, we are left with the belief that we can divest ourselves of our ideological impediments. For real? Perhaps we're all emperors without our clothes and perhaps this is what education teaches us most of all.

Lest we become psychological roadkill in our desire for certainty, the truth of how we feel or cognate in any given instance may best be understood in terms of shadows and mezzotints rather than in hard facts and cold calculations. The finality of our learning, simplified in a letter grade, only hints at the many metamorphoses we undergo at AU. We are never distant from our studies as new versions of ourselves are called forth. That we are not even alone within ourselves, given our many facets, flaws, and feelings, opens us to the boundlessness of our essence as human beings.

### **Foraging Forth in Discourse**

To unify our learning into a whole that we can share with others means that we must contend with chaotic contradictions. Many views arise from within a singular academic discipline just as many interpretations of events allow for stimulating conversation. Discourse depends on difference and, especially in the social sciences, our learning is ripe for translation into dialogue that transcends differences of demography. To the extent that we adopt an independent—that is, personal—perspective, we inhabit a building forged from the shifting sands of our own isolated reality. But that's only a jumping off point for interaction. For instance, whereas my Intro to Women's Studies course led me to study with Margaret Atwood's *A Handmaid's Tale*, later social relations with friends who loved to watch *Orange is the New Black* and read *Fifty Shades of Grey* led



me to reconsider people's enjoyment and abhorrence towards themes of being locked up, restrained, cared for or contained. That's a lot of ambivalence and ambiguity to unpack and AU provided the gateway to just such a discursive journey. Remembering that we and others each embody multiple selves means that we don't have to feel alone in our learning and that we can always accomplish the happy discovery of affinity with others. AU allows us to maximize our mental independence while also forging confidence to engage with the world and put our learning into practice.

#### References

Derrida, J. (1978). 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas'. In *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Powys, JC. (1967). *A Glastonbury Romance*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

*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 Zen of Sullivan's Travels

## Wanda Waterman



"There's a lot to be said for making people laugh. Did you know that's all some people have? It isn't much, but it's better than nothing in this cockeyed caravan."

-John L. Sullivan in *Sullivan's Travels*

"*O Brother, Where Art Thou?*" did seem like an odd title for a film. Rumoured to have been lifted from *The Odyssey*, also the story of a hero trying to make his way home, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* was in fact named after a fictitious film within the fictitious tale of the fictitious director John L. Sullivan in the

1941 film *Sullivan's Travels*.

It's the earlier film that I'll be talking about today, because it wasn't only the Coen Brothers who saw in it a cinematic treatise on karma, dharma, maya, enlightenment, and salvation. (Spoiler alert: You may want to watch the movie before you finish reading this article.)

### Sullivan's Plight

John Sullivan has had a pampered and sheltered upbringing. His high station, work ethic, and creative gifts have granted him access to the higher echelons of Hollywood's film industry, wherein his very person is identified with valuable capital—a mind that can generate mountains of dough for a lot of people. But his education has granted him a yearning for social justice, as well as a rather naïve love for the common man.

Sullivan wants to make films that dignify the poor yet feels ashamed that he himself has never suffered want. He believes that for his new film project (*O Brother, Where Art Thou?*) to be authentic he must understand poverty first-hand. His assistants try to talk him out of it, pointing out the danger of placing his inexperienced self in harm's way as well as the fact that the poor prefer prosperity to being "understood."

The historical setting looks like the year the film was made—1941. The boys are still at war and the country is suffering the hangover of a long economic downturn, one that has allowed a large and manifold culture to grow up around the hobo life.

Sullivan is smart enough to know he needs awakening but not quite smart enough to know a tiger can't change its stripes. He's certain that to be truly awake he must experience hardship firsthand (he's wrong, but he achieves enlightenment anyway). Despite his best efforts Sullivan keeps getting bounced back to Hollywood, or else his crew shows up to rescue him. Karma can be a bitch, but it can also save our butts.

A reversal of Sullivan's good karma appears in the form of a hobo who wants to be rich and pays for his hubris with his own life. There are penalties for trying to hand back the cards life has dealt you, and this turns out to be just as true for Sullivan as for the dead hobo.

### **How to really help the poor**

Our hero discovers that the poor are the best at delivering themselves from their own misfortunes because they're in the best position to understand each other's true needs. It's not the nobleman in the castle that frees the serfs but rather the serfs themselves. Sullivan sees that anything he gives them will just be sucked into a poverty vortex, and nothing will change. The real reason for his failure is suggested in the words of Jesus when he told the young rich man that if he wanted to be whole he would need to give all his wealth to the poor, which of course the rich man could not do. Neither can Sullivan, who's only playacting in the world of shadows.

When he gets truly cut off from his highfalutin world Sullivan realizes that no one who experiences extreme want would choose it voluntarily. He also learns how poverty degrades the character, compelling people to commit crimes they would never have done had they had enough and been treated with respect.

In the most moving scene a black preacher exhorts his congregation that all men are created equal and leads them in singing "Let My People Go." The small church is about to open its doors to a horde of dirty prisoners chained together at their ankles, treating them to a series of comic films. For one brief shining hour their troubles are forgotten, their burdens lifted. The kindness with which these descendants of slaves welcome in these prisoners of all races, allowing them to sit up front to enjoy the films, is both touching and illuminating.

### **A Call to Awakening**

Eckhart Tolle has pointed out that laughter is a means of awakening us to what is, that is, a way of not taking things seriously, of allowing the light of acceptance to flood our beings, of recognizing that our pain is brief and that contentment can be found only in gratitude for reality.

After Sullivan is rescued, he goes back to Hollywood deciding to make comedy films instead of the cinematic pity parties he'd planned. He foregoes work on *O Brother, Where Art Thou*, and that's fine; the Coen Brothers took up the torch in 2000, with superb results, telling the comic tale of three escaped prisoners and their constantly changing fortunes. It made us laugh-- and helped us accept.

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

## The Study Dude

### Is Being Studious one of your Gifts?

Marie Well



I saw a near death experience (NDE) video. The female, who had an NDE, said she died and went into a brilliant light of unbelievable love. She said, during her short stint in the light, she discovered that God gives us all gifts, each gift unique. Her gifts were inner beauty and patience. But after the light, she was given two more, one of which was wisdom.

But you don't have to believe in NDEs to possess gifts. We've all got them. When I meet people, I try to discover the gifts they've been given. That way, I join in on the celebration.

And I think I've spotted one of your gifts—without having met you. My guess is you're studious.

So, what does it take to be studious? The *Positive Trait Thesaurus* by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi outlines the characteristics of studious people. Here are some highlights from the book, which I've bolded below:

**“Having a great respect for truth and knowledge.”** I saw many near death experience stories where angels supposedly asked the NDE person what they had learned. According to many NDE experiencers, knowledge and unconditional love seem to be the two top traits worth developing. So, if you're studious, you've got a gift worthy of reverence.

**“Frequenting the library.”** If you're studious, you'll study at the library. Or else, you'll visit the library for fun on a Friday night. You may even take your date out to the library and read silently side by side. Does that sound like you?

**“Being widely read.”** I've noticed that most librarians read, not nonfiction, but fiction—especially if they're young. I prefer to read nonfiction, but I tend to stick to four topics. To be truly wide read, explore beyond your comfort zone. That way, you'll hone your studious side.

**“Reading the classics.”** Bleh. The classics. But to be fair, I haven't given them a chance. Some people tout them as life-changers, must haves for any up-and-coming writer. But if I have a choice between reading the classics and reading about disease, I'll choose the latter. But don't listen to me. If you have Emily Dickinson, Charles Dickens, or Homer on your bookshelf, you've got the studious gift.

**“Neglecting one's appearance.”** At university, the only time I neglected my appearance was during a feminist studies course. I bought unattractive clothes that my friend said looked “reasonable for a change.” And I considered shaving my head. I smelled better during wrestling practice than I did during feminist studies. But in grad school, the tide changed. I spent two hours a day on my appearance. My supervisor said, “Imagine what would happen if you spent that time studying Foucault.” Fortunately, now I focus on the inner beauty of others. But studious people focus mostly on studies—so much so that they might spend fifteen minutes a day grooming. Perhaps less.



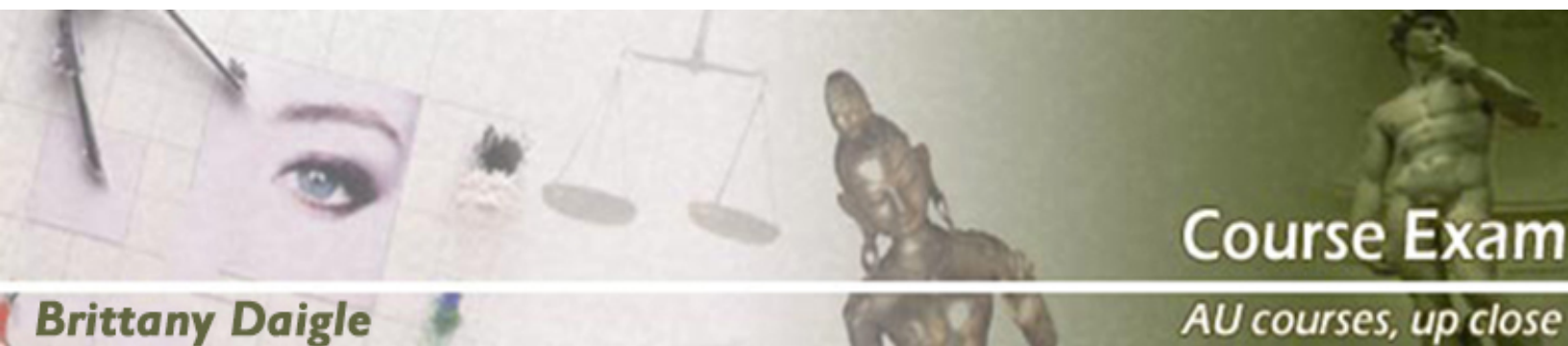
**“Taking great pride in one’s academic achievements.”** Do you have at least one academic award hanging on your wall? Or do you still have a K12 report card? Or do you phone a loved one whenever you get an A? Those are signs you’re studious. I used to phone Papa after every 100% math test. And he would say, “With the daughter’s brains and the Papa’s resources, we’ll go far.” I love that guy to pieces. Or do you plan to have your university degree(s) framed beautifully, hung front-and-center on your wall? Aha! Studious.

Other traits show your studious side, too. Are you known as a walking dictionary? Or did you take on one too many classes last semester, and still succeed? Or are you a first-year student taking a third-year class? Sounds studious to me.

So, now we’ve unwrapped a gift of yours, haven’t we? You don’t need every trait—one or two will get the grade. And the best secret? Your one gift will lead to many others.

#### References

Ackerman, Angela, & Puglisi, Angela. (2013). *The Positive Trait Thesaurus: A Writer’s Guide to Character Attributes*. JADD Publishing. Ebook.



#### Course Exam

#### Brittany Daigle

HIST 202 (Western Thought and Culture II: Since the Reformation) is a three-credit introductory history course that is the second of two three-credit courses. Together, they survey the development of Western civilization from its origins in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt to the complicated and sophisticated world of the post-industrial era. This course has no prerequisites, however, HUMN 201 or HIST 201 (Western Thought and Culture I: Before the Reformation) is strongly recommended. There is also a challenge for credit option if students are interested.

This course is intended as a foundation course for Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of General Studies students and is designed for learners with little or no previous university experience. It provides a good starting place for new students intending to study history, literature, philosophy, or other aspects of the humanities.

Students should note that HIST 202 is offered as an individualized online study that contains a video component. Any overseas students should contact the University Library before registering in a course that has an audio or visual component. Also, HIST 202 is a cross-listed course, meaning that it is a course that is listed under another discipline as HUMN 202. HIST 202 may not be taken for credit by students who have obtained credit for HUMN 202.

Western Thought and Culture II: Since the Reformation is made up eight units, one essay assignment weighing twenty-five percent, a second essay assignment worth thirty-five percent, and a final examination that weighs forty percent. The eight units within the course cover topics

such as romanticism, nationalism, realism, early modernism, late modernism, and post-modernism. To receive credit for HIST 202, students must achieve a grade of at least a "D" or fifty percent on the final examination and an overall grade of at least fifty percent in the course. The final examination for this course must be taken online with an AU-approved exam invigilator at an approved invigilation centre.

Louise Robinson is 39-year-olds and is a full-time student, full-time mom, and works thirty hours a week. She is currently enrolled in the 3-year Bachelor of Arts program with an English concentration. She provides a brief introduction, stating "I work twenty-five hours a week in an elementary school and teach yoga five hours a week. I have been married for fifteen years, and have two girls, Isabella who is fifteen years old and Sophia who is twelve. I live in Calgary, Alberta and am working really hard to finish my degree so I can apply for my teaching degree in March 2020. With eight classes left, every spare minute is dedicated to school. I do, however, like to watch Food Network, bake with my daughters, and take our golden retriever into Fish Creek Park for hikes."

When asked to explain HIST 202 to students, Louise states "History 202 is the second half of History 201, which covered the dawn of man to the 1400's. History 202 covered 1400's to current date (well 2000's). The class covered everything from war, art, literature, music, architecture, important people such as rulers, and important events such as the industrial revolution, scientific revolution, world war one and two, and the cold war."

As for the structure of the course, she explains that "The class had two papers, both of which I believe required up to 2000 words. The class also had a final examination. The exam consisted of three sections. The first section required students to pick five out of seven questions and give a short 200-word response to each, the second portion was similar to the first but required longer responses. The third portion of the exam was the longer essay portion, which required students to pick one response from three and write a 1000-word essay."

When asked if she would recommend this course to other students, she states "The textbooks were easy to read, but I found I gained more information from the online videos with Eugen Webber. I found the level of detail a bit hard to wrap my head around. So many dates, names, and details. Both of the exams for HIST 201 and HIST 202 relied more on the arts portion of the class than the actual events, such as wars."

As for tips and tricks to completing this course, Louise recommends focusing on "the names of artists, the names of the art they produced, what "timeframe" it came from and why it was

## AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

### Wikipedia and Academic Research

Thurs, Nov 20, 2:00 to 3:30 pm MST

Online

Hosted by AU Library

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

No pre-registration necessary

### AUSU November Council Meeting

Thurs, Nov 21, 6:30 to 8:00 pm MST

Online

Hosted by AUSU

[www.ausu.org/event/november-council-meeting-5/](http://www.ausu.org/event/november-council-meeting-5/)

No pre-registration required; e-mail [governance@ausu.org](mailto:governance@ausu.org) for meeting package

### Looking ahead...

AU Seasonal Cheer events in Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto, Kelowna, and Winnipeg, from Nov 26 through Dec 11.

[alumni.athabascau.ca/events.php](http://alumni.athabascau.ca/events.php)

*All events are free unless otherwise noted*

significant. I lost a lot of marks on my exams because even though I knew the name of the artist, and what the painting looked like, I did not know the actual name of the piece, so I lost marks. There were hundreds of art pieces to remember. Add that to all the events, people, musicians, architects, and writers. It was a lot and seemed unfair that I could not remember the name of a painting. I noticed that in both classes, exams and rewrites (because I had to rewrite both) not a lot of focus was put on wars.”

As for communication with her tutor, she states “Sometimes my tutors were vague in response, because they can not give proper feedback for what I am sure is fear of giving any answers. All of my items were marked quickly and fairly.”

Louise provides some final thoughts, stating “I feel like HIST 201 and HIST 202 could have been broken down into three classes just because of the sheer volume of information you are expected to remember. I have spoken to a few that have taken these classes and agree it is a heavy course load.”

Whether HIST 202 is a degree or program requirement of yours, or the topics discussed above are of interest to you, this course will have you learning a lot of interesting, historic content surrounding western culture over the past five hundred years.

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



## Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** Prime Scholarship

**Sponsored by:** Prime Medical

**Deadline:** December 15, 2019

**Potential payout:** \$1000

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be working toward a two- or four-year degree, with the intention of becoming an RN or LPN upon graduation.

**What's required:** A completed application form, along with a maximum 500-word personal statement, and at least one letter of recommendation.

**Tips:** Read the second page of the [application form](#) for details about the personal statement and the letters of recommendation.

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







Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## Sick of the Sickness

*Dear Barb:*

*I work in an office with about 15 other people. We all get along well for the most part. My issue is people coming to work when they are sick. Why would someone do that and end up making everyone else sick? Two weeks ago our receptionist came in coughing and sneezing, so she not only risked getting all of her coworkers sick, she also put our customers at risk. As a result, four people in our office came down with a cold this week, obviously they caught it from our receptionist. I understand that people may need the money and not want to lose pay, but we have 6 paid sick days a year, so why not take a few days off and get well? I don't know whether I should bring this topic up at a staff meeting, or just accept that this is the way it is.*

*Thanks, Marilyn.*

Hi Marilyn:

Thanks for your letter. I can completely sympathize with you. When people come into work sick and risk getting others sick it does appear to be a selfish act on their part, however, there are several reasons why someone would arrive at work with an obvious cold or other ailment. The number one reason would be money. Even though you say you have paid sick days, often people want to save their sick days just in case a more serious illness occurs. Additional reasons may be that they fear missing an important meeting, or deadline and perhaps end up losing their jobs or being

reprimanded.

Going to work when you are ill, is not good, whether it is a cold or an injury, as it may cause the illness to linger because you are not getting the proper rest required to recuperate. Making others in the office ill may cause a major reduction in overall production. According to a 2011 research study, sick days are costing the Canadian economy \$16.6 billion a year, with the average worker taking 9.3 sick days. Mental health issues, possibly as a result of workplace stress, account for many of these sick days.

I think it would be a good idea for you to bring this topic up at your next staff meeting, and, if you don't want to be seen as a problem, maybe you could discuss it with your boss before the meeting and have him bring it up. Your boss would be more effective at encouraging employees to stay home when they are ill, by reassuring them that their job is not in jeopardy if they don't come into work because they are ill. Also, as a group, you may want to look into negotiating more sick days, or see if vacation days can be used instead.

Hope this helps.

*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**  
**Tycoon Saviors****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

- **Nov 15:** [Dec degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Nov 21:** [AUSU Public Council Meeting](#)
- **Nov 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Jan](#)
- **Dec 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Jan 1](#)
- **December Note:** No AUSU Public Council Meeting
- **Dec 23 – Jan 2:** AUSU Holiday Closure

## Get out the Vote Results

Thank you to all our members who pledged to vote in our 2019 [Get out the Vote Campaign](#)!

AUSU partnered with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations for a nation-wide Get out the Vote Campaign to encourage students across Canada to vote in the Federal Election.

We are happy to announce that the campaign successfully collected over **35,000 pledges** to vote from students across Canada! You can read more about the campaign success online [here](#).

## AUSU also gave out some great prizes to our members for pledging to vote:

- **Colleen Warren** and **Awume Delasi** won a FREE AU undergraduate course
- **Breanna Delyster, Krystin Hunley, Cindy Grove, Amanda Bauer, and Stephanie Cherewyk** won an Amazon Gift Card
- **20 AUSU members** won free AU online exams from home through ProctorU.

If you have won a prize and not yet collected it, please contact AUSU at [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org).

**Congratulations to our prize winners and thank you to everyone who pledged!**

## Take our Survey to WIN PRIZES!

AUSU values your opinions! We want to know how we can best serve our student members, and help you have a positive experience as a student at Athabasca University.

Your feedback helps us set our goals each year, so we encourage all AU undergraduates to take our [Student Services Survey](#)!

## You could win a \$500 Amazon Gift Card!

### TAKE THE SURVEY NOW

AUSU is giving away **over \$1,200 in prizes** to members who complete our survey, including:

- **\$500 Amazon Gift Card** - Grand Prize!
- \$50 Amazon Gift Card - 4 available
- \$25 Amazon Gift Card - 4 available
- AUSU Prize packs - 5 available
- 10 free AU online exams from home via ProctorU

*Note: Prize winners will be selected at random after November 25, 2019. The prizes awarded cannot be exchanged for any other prize, monetary value, or service. Only current AUSU members as of November 2019 will be qualified for a prize.*

If you have any questions, contact [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).

## Deadline to take Survey: Nov 25, 2019





---

# CLASSIFIEDS

---

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

---

---

## THE VOICE

---

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

<b>Publisher</b>	Athabasca University Students' Union
<b>Editor-In-Chief</b>	Jodi Campbell
<b>Managing Editor</b>	Karl Low

**Regular Columnists** Barb Godin, Barbara Lehtiniemi,  
Jason Sullivan, Wanda Waterman, Xin Xu and others!

---

[www.voicemagazine.org](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

---

*The Voice* is published almost every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

Contact *The Voice* at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org).

To receive a weekly email announcing each issue, subscribe [here](#). *The Voice* does not share its subscriber list.

© 2019 by *The Voice Magazine*

ISSN 2561-3634