



THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 02 2020-01-10

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Navigating Education

While Dealing with Chronic Illness

Random New Year Thoughts

Feeling Undone in the New Decade

Plus:

Lunch with Munch

Dear Barb

and much more!



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you!
Send your questions and comments to voicemagazine.org,
and please indicate if we may publish your letter!

Hey! Did you know the Voice Magazine has a [Facebook page](#)?

No kidding! We also do the [twitter](#) thing once in a while if you're into that.

Editorial

New for the New Year

Karl Low



The new year has rung in, and at least in Calgary, it's brought with it some proper winter. Maybe it's me getting old, but there's something just *off* when I can see people walking around in Bermuda shorts in January. Even in Calgary.

Unfortunately, it's also brought some increased tensions between the Middle East and the west, with the year opening with a drone attack against an Iranian general, one said to be planning several attacks against western nations, followed by missile strikes into American bases, and now what seems to be a missile strike into a Ukrainian plane that was transporting a large number of Canadians.

Some people are equating the assassination of the Iranian general with that of Archduke Ferdinand, the shot that gave the Austrian government reason to start world war I a month later. But there were a lot of other reasons that that dispute became a world war. Reasons that I think don't generally exist today. Military power was more symmetric then, military alliances more common and more encompassing. These days, it's well understood

that if the US chooses to bring it's full power to bear in a straight-up conflict, there's little that could stop them. Also, alliances tend to be more in line with defensive organizations such as NATO, rather than military partnerships. So perhaps the threat of all out war isn't as great as some people fear.

But that doesn't mean there won't be consequences. The downing of flight 725 is one of these. Even if accidental, it can't be missed that the conditions for such an accident were set by the heightened tensions from the US action, the Iranian retaliation, and the warned US response. Fortunately, cooler heads seemed to prevail, and the US has not made good on its' president's threat to respond to any retaliation disproportionately. So maybe the new year is bringing some hope. Or at least the idea that we have to carry on, regardless.

What else it's brought is a bunch of new students and new interest in writing for *The Voice Magazine*. So this week, we bring you one of the first articles from a new submitter, and Natalia Iwanek starts off with her look at what it's been like trying to get an education while also dealing with a chronic illness and the demands of life.

In retrospect, this issue seems to be one of those that's developed an inadvertant theme, because as I think through the articles this week, many of them touch on the subject of carrying on despite difficulties, whether those are physical issues, apprehensions, or even the difficulties of dealing with the change in ourselves and our world view brought on by learning.

But our feature article this week is from a student who is also a college instructor, and is looking toward the completion of her current degree as a steppingstone toward further academics and administration roles in New Brunswick. And, of course, we also have our selection of news, events, advice, and more waiting for you. Enjoy the read!

MINDS WE MEET



Andrea Waugh is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Health Administration program at Athabasca University and hopes to obtain a position with the provincial health authority, with a strong interest in working in Aboriginal health as a coordinator or manager. She was kind enough to share about herself in our latest interview.

Can you give us a little bit of background information about yourself?

I'm Andrea Waugh. I am a Registered Pharmacy Technician and college instructor in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada where I was born and raised. I am currently in the Bachelor of Health Administration program.

How are you enjoying your program?

I am enjoying the program so far. I feel I am able to extend and elaborate on my previous learning in healthcare and the program is providing me with the knowledge and skills to further my career into a management position within the healthcare field.

Could you 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 Bachelor of Health Administration program?

I have always had an interest and passion for healthcare but did not have the desire to be hands on at the front line (such as nursing). I chose pharmacy as it allowed me to be part of the healthcare environment. I have been in lead or supervisory roles both in my practice and as an instructor and felt that if I wanted to further advance with the field in any type of management position, I would need to further my education. I have a sales and business background as well, obtaining a degree would open the possibility of entering pharmaceutical sales if I choose.

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

My advice for anyone deciding whether they should go back to school or not, just do it! I often tell potential or current students, "Education is something no one can take from you. It will open up doors you may not have known were there. If you have a passion or interest in a particular subject or area, invest in yourself and learn about it."

What do you do like to do when you are not studying? Do you have any hobbies?

With three jobs and a full-time student, there isn't much time for hobbies. My husband and I do make time to get outdoors, snowshoeing or snowmobiling in the winter and boating/camping in the summer.

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

I intend on furthering my education once I complete my Bachelor in Health Administration with French courses. Being in the only bilingual province in Canada, I will need to have the ability to speak French to apply and obtain a position with the provincial health authority. I have a keen interest in working in Aboriginal health as a coordinator or manager.

Has anyone influenced your desire to learn?

My dad. I can remember being in elementary school and my dad continuing his education as an adult to obtain his MBA. The hard work and perseverance paid off for him. He showed me that if you want to achieve something, with hard work and determination, you can!

Could you describe your experience with online learning so far? What do you like?

The best part of online, is having the ability to set my own time and hours. I am not committed to specific class times and having to travel. It has its challenges, balancing work, life, and study schedule is difficult with a traditional education.

Is there anything you have found that you dislike about online learning?

Online can be more difficult as you must master discipline and time management. Not having an instructor directly in front of you can also be difficult if I do not fully understand a concept or have questions, but the tutors provide excellent support. I have had to find additional resources in some courses, such as videos etc. to help learn certain concepts.

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

The first term! I asked myself daily for those first four months, "what am I doing and what did I get myself into"? I struggled to adjust to university level writing, assignments and workload. At some points of the first term I felt I fumbled my way through. When I felt frustrated or felt like giving up, I took a break, reviewed my reasons for committing to the degree and sought out any extra help and guidance I could both within and outside AU. I am just finishing my third term and feel more confident in my abilities and those "what am I doing" questions pop in my head much less.

What's your favorite AU course that you have taken so far, and why?

HLST 200 (Introduction to Human Health) has been my favorite so far. My passion and interest for health made this course very interesting to me. I learned a lot about health and statistics. The information I learned I have applied to my own teaching and personal health.

Would you recommend the course to other students?

I would recommend to anyone who wants to more about basic health.

Have you given up anything to attend AU? Do you find that it has been worth it?

Most of my personal time. The end result of a degree is well worth it.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

I have had a great experience with my tutors so far. They have been quick to respond and have provided very helpful guidance and support with any questions I have had. The feedback they provide on the assignments has been helpful and I have been able to apply to additional assignments and exams.

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

At the moment, the Premier of New Brunswick. I would love to have a discussion with him surrounding healthcare in our province.

Could you describe the proudest moment in your life?

My kids' success! Two of them are finishing up college courses and are on their way to becoming successful in their lives.

Could you tell us something that few know about you or that some would find surprising?

To see me working with the public as a Pharmacy Technician or even as a College Instructor, you would not guess I am a fairly introverted person.

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

Nothing comes easy, if you want something you have to work hard for it.

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

It's been some time since I've travelled, although, I have been across the country, all provinces but the territories and Newfoundland. I have been to New York, Florida, some of the Eastern States. I also have two trips planned for 2020. One to Myrtle Beach with family and the other on an Alaskan Cruise with my husband!

Which was your favorite destination that you have visited and which trip are you looking forward to the most?

New Hampshire has been my favorite so far, as it was a week of skiing in the White Mountains and I am most looking forward to the cruise!

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



Navigating the Educational System with Chronic Illness or Disability

Natalia Iwanek



Canadian students can have difficulty navigating today's educational systems. Globalization has rapidly increased in recent years, resulting in a faster paced society; one driven by consumption, relentless productivity, and a hunger for external validation. There is pressure for students to excel in school, obtain high-paying careers, take care of their families, and accumulate wealth. But these goals are unattainable for many—for those struggling with the added challenge of living with a chronic illness

and/or disability, they are increasingly being left behind.

A 2017 report by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC), *“Left Out: The treatment of persons with disabilities in Canada’s educational system,”* states that for Canadians with disabilities, quality of education is much lower than the rest of the population, with even more alarming numbers on Indigenous reserves.

Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner of the CHRC states, “Education is supposed to open doors for people, not shut them out. How can we expect persons with disabilities to thrive and succeed in our workforce if we don’t first give them the quality of education they are entitled to?”

The report reveals that “[i]t is generally accepted that education is a powerful influence on a person’s income level and economic well-being and is also a key determinant of one’s physical health.” Higher education often amounts to increased access to better employment.

A 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability states that more than 40% of Canadians reported that their disability influenced their choice of career. 35% take fewer courses, 37.4% study part-time, and 11% have had to put aside their educational dreams because of disability. In addition, 35% report exclusion at school because of their disability as well.

I am currently an Athabasca student. Although I have struggled with my health for the past four years, I did not define myself as chronically ill until last year, when my entire body began to fail. A lifetime of internalized ableism convinced me that asking for support was shameful; this has been difficult to unpack.

My life now revolves around juggling a full-time roster of specialists and doctors’ appointments, blood tests, MRIs, and a complex pill schedule. I also work a part-time job, while studying part-time as well. Nothing brings me more joy than receiving my newest shipment of books from Athabasca. If this were not an option, I would not be able to continue my education. Schoolwork is often an escape from the horrific reality of what some days bring.

Chronically ill and/or disabled students struggle to maintain a sense of normalcy in a society that values productivity and accomplishments above all else. Attending class in a traditional classroom setting is unfortunately, not an option for me, as well as thousands of others across Canada and the world. Yet all our experiences are incredibly diverse; my voice is simply one of many. It is schools like Athabasca University, and other non-traditional paths to education, that open a world of opportunities for those of us who are chronically ill, disabled, living in remote areas, working two jobs, supporting families, and trying to survive this unforgiving world.

This summer, I travelled to Ukraine for medical treatment. At the time, I was enrolled in two AU courses; if I had been attending classes in a traditional classroom setting, I would have become one of the 11% who has had to put their dreams aside. Being an AU student allowed me to continue my courses uninterrupted while I was in and out of the hospital each day. I completed my assignments during these three months in a variety of villages, family members’ homes, hostels, trains, and buses. I suffered a devastating flare up during my final exam, and AU’s online invigilation system was a lifeline once more. I wrote my exam from my computer, surrounded by pillows, and was extremely successful. If I had been forced to write this exam in class, I could not have managed.

One of the hardest lessons was realizing that I was guilty of perpetuating ableism. Accessibility and rights were not at the forefront of my concerns, because this was not my everyday reality. Acknowledging this, recognizing my continued privilege, and advocating for myself and others is my goal. I continue peeling away the layers, discarding parts of myself that equated worth with production and undervalued others in society. Rest is productive. Compassion is productive. Empathy and understanding of others is productive.

Losing the privilege of existing in this world as able-bodied has been a harsh lesson, and one that I will cherish forever, despite the cost. Speaking up, clearly stating my needs, and taking up space has been a challenge.

In our society, we tend to look at the world in terms of the binary, as opposed to a spectrum, and this applies to abilities. Existing on the periphery of these divisions, I feel that I do not have claim to either of them, and continue searching for an identity. Perhaps I will never find one, and this is perfectly valid. I will continue to meander through life, finding my own way, as is common in the human experience.

Natalia Iwanek is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English at Athabasca University and is also a freelance editor and writer. She can be contacted at <https://www.nataliaiwanekediting.com>



Fly on the Wall Out to Lunch with Munch

Jason Sullivan



Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream* (1893) is paradigmatic of the sudden piercing realization that something is askew in one's life. Maybe we feel like we don't belong where we are or that the world is all wrong. Perhaps the painting represents a visual answer to Hamlet's famous line: "the time is out of joint" (Shakespeare). This sensation occurs easily at AU when a simple stroll can lead to a sudden bolt of fear that we really ought to be back at home working on coursework. The struggle isn't eternal, but, like Munch's painting with its ominous red sunset, the mortal dangers between here and the horizon feel real indeed.

For Munch, the "actual experience of a scream piercing though nature while on a walk, after his two companions, seen in the background, had left him...must have been heard at a time when his mind was in an abnormal state" (The Scream). Maybe in that instant he was a bit nuts or maybe he was having a moment of clarity in the face of existential malaise, but what's certain is that Munch's facial contortion has become an icon of our modern times. We all feel it; if we're not screaming inside now and then it's possibly because we've become totally numbed to life. At AU, it's useful to make peace with the existential angst that accompanies being simultaneously one's own task master and court jester; wearing many hats merits a giggle and sometimes a shriek. And anyway, life's all about learning; one way or another we at AU become especially crafty at distilling our free time into academic progress.

Munch's scream reminds us that each moment is personal—a sudden fracture opened a gap between him and his friends and his whole world felt different. At AU, to momentarily lose oneself may be to remember the place of academic passion in our lives. Others may be lost in their life drama, but we have our schoolwork to sweep us away from the mundane. In art analysis terms, *The Scream* embodied "a subjective linear fusion imposed upon nature, whereby the multiplicity of particulars is unified into a totality of organic suggestion with feminine overtones.

But man is part of nature, and absorption into such a totality liquidates the individual” (*ibid*). We're all absorbed in something and risk liquidation if we don't stay balanced.

Munch's scream was in response to a scream presumably audible only inside his mind, something triggered by, yet not reducible to, a cavalcade of sensory inputs including the redness of the sunset, the starkness of the horizon, the coldness of the wind or, perhaps, the lonely abyss betwixt himself and his companions. He was with friends, maybe, but not ones who shared his precise mental space. This is part of being at AU too; we navigate away from our normal realms and into the murk and mire of book learning; it changes us and, screams aside, we are bound (almost for sure!) to emerge feeling stronger and wiser and more radiant than before. Like a toddler after a good cry, our screams will melt into dawning realization at the opportunities we behold.

See1 and See2: Perceiving and Imagining

When our courses are completed the textbooks will lie there looking a bit morose and just as inanimate as when we first opened them. What was the spirit that enlivened the words that they lit upon our mind's eye? Rooted in our consciousness is a fuzzy fissure between “the kind of seeing that happens when I see a flowering tree 'in my dream' and the kind of seeing that happens when I see a flowering tree 'in my garden'”. We might call them *seeing1* and *seeing2*” (Wilson, 61). For Rene Descartes *seeing1* is “a state of awareness that does not imply the existence of an object or event that is perceived or misperceived” (Wilson, 61). Seeing (or in Munch's case hearing) can happen in a dream or a memory or a realization. For Descartes it is the mental apparatus of *thinking* that forms the core of our being; we think therefore we are. Thus, the imaginative *seeing1* morphs and transforms the sensory *seeing2* “as a way of getting to know the world outside myself” (Wilson 62). Sensory inputs map onto cognition without which the world's ocular visions and auditory vibrations wouldn't make sense.

In terms of our senses, we can never be sure that even familiar sights are what they seem when we enter society: “the hat and coat-covered objects could be automata moving hither and thither and not human beings at all; ... sensory experience of them would be no different” (Wilson, 65). In this sense Munch's scream was actually more real in his mind because his friends

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

AUSU Member Consultation #2 for Bylaw Revisions

Fri, Jan 10, 5:30 to 6:30 pm MST

Online, Hosted by AUSU

www.ausu.org/event/member-consultation-2-for-bylaw-revisions/

No pre-registration required; access info at above link

Hack the Library: Using Discover to Access Journal Articles, Books, and E-Books

Tues, Jan 14, 3:00 to 4:30 pm MST

Online, Hosted by AU Library

library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

MBA for Executives Webinar

Wed, Jan 15, 10:00 to 11:00 am MST

Online, Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

news.athabascau.ca/events/mba-for-executives-webinar-20200115

Register through above link

Ignorance is no excuse: Don't be an accidental plagiarist

Wed, Jan 15, 2:00 to 3:00 pm MST

Online, Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

www.eventbrite.ca/e/fgs-presents-ignorance-is-no-excuse-dont-be-an-accidental-plagiarist-tickets-86695710203

Register online at above link

Science Outreach - Athabasca: Speaker Series

Wed, Jan 15, 7:00 to 8:30 pm MST

Athabasca University, Governing Council

Chambers, 1 University Dr, Athabasca AB

In person, Hosted by AU

news.athabascau.ca/events/science-outreach-athabasca-speaker-series

No pre-registration necessary

AUSU January Council Meeting

Thurs, Jan 16, 6:30 to 8:30 pm MST

Online, Hosted by AUSU

www.ausu.org/event/january-council-meeting-4/

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

All events are free unless otherwise noted

did not hear it; our private realms bequeath our reality more essentially than our actual physical surroundings. This is why sitting and studying appears physically like a form of inactivity to someone who merely saw us working at our desk. From raw sense data our minds deftly decide what to believe and how to forge interpretations. With a sprinkle of imagination life springs abundantly into shape whenever our mind acts upon reality; think of a wood carver who sees a possible face in an old gnarled log.

The passing nature of consciousness, and life itself, like course deadlines and any sunset worthy of the name, is at the root of what *The Scream* represents. Descartes writes of the essential magic of a candle as it melts and passes away from our senses but remains in our consciousness: “I put the wax by the fire, and look: the residual taste is eliminated, the smell goes away, the colour changes, the shape is lost, the size increases, it become liquid and hot; you can hardly touch it and if you strike it, it no longer makes a sound. But does the same wax remain? It must be admitted that it does; no one denies it, no one thinks otherwise. So what was in the wax that I understood with such distinctiveness?” (Descartes in Wilson, 64). While we wouldn't burn a textbook (hopefully) our readings do illuminate the way to knowledge. Magically, learning transforms us through an alchemy not explainable by the mere act of reading textbooks and writing essays. Like the candle and its light, learning is more than the sum of its parts. We learn by learning to see differently and to see things hermeneutically as what they are to us. There's no need to scream for more than an instant; we are the candle at the centre of our conscious academic progress.

Peanut Butter and Jain Sandwich: It All Died For You!

While there's more than one way to pet a cat, usually they'll let you know what they prefer. But what about organisms that communicate in ways less obvious? A moment of perplexity or horror, a scream akin to Edvard Munch's archetypal imagining, may arise when our preconceptions are challenged. Like our first anthropology elective where we learn that normal can mean many things we'd never dream of eating, piercing, or dancing, our core beliefs are often challenged in divergent directions as our learning progresses.

Noble sects such as the Jains practice vegetarianism and preach that we mustn't bring harm to any living organism. Jainist cosmology divides the universe into two types of things, the living and the non-living. Simple enough, right. “Jainists state that each living being, not only humans, but the smallest insects, plants, reptiles, and birds, has a soul, called *jiva*. Non-living things, which lack a soul, are called *ajiva*. Because each living being has a soul/ *jiva*, you are forbidden to harm any living being, even the smallest insect. Jainism prescribes that we should not harm any life, and in particular we should not kill any life, because all life has equal rights on this earth. You must understand that if you kill any living thing, you kill a soul” ([Imamkhedjaeva](#), 2018)

This culinary pacifism seems fair, yet modern plant biology contends that there is a definite “continuity between humankind and plant existence” (Gagliano et al, 2017) Cue the scream; even a carrot stick once had a life to live out there in the garden. So, for those about to try and resuscitate their salads, we salute you.

But wait, there's more! We're not quite akin to two peas in a pod with the plant kingdom so much as we inhabit a communicative spectrum with our tendrilled brethren. This realization allows us to respectfully “transform our notion of plants as unresponsive beings, ready to be instrumentally appropriated” into an approach engendering more respect for all that we eat, be it vegetable or meat (ibid). So, vegans can climb off their high horse, if not donate the old quadruped's meat to their local food bank, and we can all consider the planetary consequences of respecting

ecosystems chock full of living beings. Screams, like bolts of sanity from the blue, can be productive acts indeed.

Breathe Deeply in Delicious and Deadly Inspiration?

At least we can enjoy nature without eating it, right. A walk in nature is a great study break, especially out in our great Canadian forests. Yet even a deep breath of fresh oxygenated air contains living yeasts and bacteria that quite possibly will perish in the teensy marshy wetlands of your lungs. Remember the *Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*? Well with a microscope slide we can see that a *Musca domestica* was not the smallest of her unwitting catch. Every breath brings possible death to something and every footstep too. Yet everything lives on in everything else; our very molecules are icons of reduce/reuse/recycle as they ebb and flow and replace one another. There's life and death everywhere and both must occur constantly for the system to proceed. When the scream subsides you gotta smile; we're all the killers and life-givers we've been waiting for, just as we're our best study buddies and hooky-pressurers. At AU we're always learning, even as we dream and even as we doodle, and, somehow, we live to tell the tale. Adding our studies to the natural processes of our cognition is about finding what feels right; our minds are natural sponges of learning and growth, after all.

Sometimes having our priorities straight means cocking our head to one side and seeing things in a new light. Shattering preconceptions is key to critical inquiry. In my case I read a lot less random articles on the internet when, as now, I have a course in active progress. Maybe I miss learning some neat new facts and interpretations, but I have to sacrifice that time to the benefit of my grades. We may always be learning in life (as with children for whom the world is full of so much new to do and see) but how we focus our learning is what gives it real impetus.

Anyone can do what feels right and natural in the moment; it takes true academic craftiness to make the magic happen on demand. We must sort our sensory, sensible, even commonsensical gestures (as they appear in our mind) from the imaginative and intelligible interpretations that, hermeneutically, appear as modes of true understanding and hearty comprehension. The heart comes before the mind or, as the ancient Taoist proverb states; "the eye envies the mind" And the mind is the key to how we see.

That we'll bring both harm and renewal by walking in nature (if you've ever used a rototiller or aerator you know how great it is to stir up soil) is a reminder that we invariably will have wasted time during our days of scholarly study no matter how rigid our schedule may be. No need to scream! Unless it's a primal scream, that is. Those can be epically cathartic. What we do at AU is something special and life-affirming and the consummation of our learning is an event worthy of a good yelp, if not a howl of joy!

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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.



Porkpie Hat

Random Thoughts on a Brave New Year



Darjeeling Jones

Can I get some confirmation that I am not the only one who feels a little bit undone by the start of this new decade? I woke up on January 1st feeling unsettled and unready. Not ready for another decade of worry and toil. Not ready for sadness and rumours of war. I woke up hungover, cold with fever dream sweat, feeling like an unfinished entity, a half-drowned straggler washed up on the bone-white sands of a frightening new year.

When it comes to New Years' resolutions, I always tend to reach for the slightly more low-hanging fruit, such as eating more tofu, and "from now on, smaller olives in my dirty martinis!" This year, though, I can't even seem to commit to such token gestures of virtuous asceticism and moral self-improvement. This year, I feel as if I need creature comforts more than ever. Like the cliché moth to the metaphorical flame, I find

myself drawn to the pursuit of extravagant, bacchanalian pleasures. I want to soak myself in a bath of condensed milk and long-stemmed roses. I need mystery, romance, and adventure. I crave cigars and chocolates. I desire flamingo feathers and caviar. I yearn to paint the town red, wearing a white silk tuxedo, with a rare orchid in my buttonhole.

Don't get me wrong, I really do want to fashion myself into a better person. But I don't want to do it by giving things up; I want to do it by taking things on. I want to crack open my mind and open up my arms a little bit wider. I want to learn calligraphy and rhumba dancing. I want to set the bar higher, and watch my soul go pole vaulting over. I want to know more, experience more, care more, laugh more, love more, help more.

And yet ... and yet ... I find myself afraid. I have been told that earthly pleasures are no more than illusions. I have been told I have the wrong kind of fun, the wrong sort of love. I find myself nervous, fragmented, and lost. The glowing dome of the holiday season has given way, and the ominous flood of world events is rising and rising. The tidings are dark as the winter nights, and I find myself struggling through the short but long days. So, here I lie, shivering in the crashing waves, staring up at the foggy skies, waiting for who-knows-what sort of visions to appear.

And yet it occurs to me that I still have breath in my lungs, and the salty sea air actually tastes pretty sweet on my tongue. It occurs to me that, bereft as my heart may feel, my tangled hair is adorned with sea glass and tiny shards of priceless bone china. That I am held together by the miraculous glue of hope and chance. That I can pick myself up, and leave some footprints in the sand, as I toddle off to see what surprises this brave new world may have to offer. I mean, curiosity has gotten me this far.

I guess I'll keep on going.



Course Exam**Brittany Daigle**

COMM 277 (Group Communication) is a three-credit introductory Business and Administrative Studies course that focuses on building stronger group interpersonal communications skills by observing teams and groups at work. It challenges students to think critically about group communication problems and their effects, as well as the effectiveness of the course of action you choose to implement. Students will also learn to use the concepts and principles of interpersonal communication to plan ahead to solve potential communication problems. COMM 277 has no prerequisites, however, COMM 243 (Interpersonal Communication) is recommended. There is also a challenge for credit option if students are interested.

Students should note that COMM 277 may not be taken for credit if credit has already been obtained for COMM 377 or ADMN 348. COMM 377 (Communication and Problem Solving in Groups) permanently closed April 8th, 2009.

Group Communication is made up of ten lessons, three assignments weighing twenty percent each, ten quizzes worth one percent each for a total of ten percent, and a final examination weighing thirty percent. Throughout this course students will learn how to communicate effectively, focussing on group and team communication, group formation, intercultural communication, decision making and problem solving, leadership, and conflict management. In order to receive credit in COMM 277, students must achieve a composite grade of at least a "D" or fifty percent and a grade of at least fifty percent on the final examination.

Abhay Raghuram enrolled at Athabasca University in September of 2018. He is currently in the Bachelor of Management program with a major in Marketing and has recently completed COMM 277. Abhay provides us a brief introduction, stating "I'm currently living in Edmonton where I work and study full-time. I was originally born in India but I grew up in Ontario."

When asked to explain the course to students, he states "COMM 277 is a communications course that helps you gain good communication skills. You learn interpersonal communications in a group setting, how to facilitate group meetings and navigate conflict. It also teaches you a little bit about how you can deal with difficult people, whether it is in a group setting, individually, or in a workplace setting. It teaches you how to communicate effectively and gives you the skills and tools to be successful in group and team settings."

Abhay continues, "Communicating effectively takes practice, many skills, team effort, and most importantly, teaches you the difference between a competent and effective leader and one who is not. Most of the information seemed relevant and the textbook has good theories and explanations. Along with the textbook you also have alternative sources which will really help you gain an understanding of the core concepts. It challenges you to think critically about groups, their communication problems, and what effects the problems have on group members. You will also learn valuable principles that you can use to be proactive in solving potential communication problems."

As for the structure of the course, he explains that "There are ten lessons in total and each lesson has a Part A and Part B component. The key to the structure of this course is go by lesson numbers because the chapters in the textbook will not be in chronological order with the lessons. For example, Lesson 8 is Chapter 9, lesson 9 is chapter 11 and lesson 10 is chapter 12 and appendix A."

He continues “The structure of each assignment and lesson is in the form of “3X2” thinking process. Concepts and objectives of each lesson are divided into three stages. At each stage you perform a specific activity through which you practice and evaluate two sets of communication skills. Stage one is group and team skills, as well as individual skills. Stage two is assessing the ability of the groups and teams to achieve their goals. Stage three is thinking through the communication options available to the group and actively working towards improving the group’s communication skills to find outcomes that will be agreeable to all group members involved.

Furthermore, Abhay explains the breakdown of each of the three assignments and the ten quizzes, stating that “There are three assignments, each worth twenty percent, for a total of sixty percent of your final grade. Each assignment is structured in the three-stage process and worth one hundred marks. Assignment one and two have twenty-six short-answer questions worth between three marks and five marks each. Assignment three has nineteen questions: Eighteen short-answer questions and one long answer question. Seventeen of the questions are worth five marks, one question was worth six marks, and one question was worth nine marks. There are also then quizzes each worth one percent that need to be completed after each lesson.”

As for the final examination, he explains that “The final exam is written online and worth thirty percent of your final grade. There are ten multiple-choice questions worth a total of twenty percent, thirty true-or-false questions worth a total of thirty percent, and ten short-answer questions worth a total of fifty percent. The textbook helped with the multiple-choice and true—or-false questions. The short answer questions are based on applying theories to different scenarios. The exam is not difficult if you do the course work and quizzes. Your quizzes and assignments will prepare you for the final exam.”

When asked if he would recommend this course to other students, he states “I would recommend this course to other students. Students will learn valuable tools of communications and it also helps you understand what kind of leader you are and how you can improve. I would especially recommend those going into management careers to take this course.”

As for any tips or tricks to completing this course, he stresses “Do all of your quizzes!” noting that “It is an easy ten percent and they will help you ace the multiple-choice and true-or-false answer sections on the exam. When you study for the final exam use the Mastering Management and Mastering Business Communication websites to learn core concepts. Watching those videos will help you formulate answers to hypothetical questions that are on the final exam. Do not leave your quizzes and assignments for last minute because they are time consuming and you want to avoid system crashes like I experienced. Follow the objectives and instructions on navigating the course in the syllabus! It will really save you a lot of time and help you focus on the core concepts.”

As for communicating with his tutor, Abhay explains that “The tutor was awesome and marked my assignments really quickly. My tutor also provided valuable feedback which helped me narrow my focus on what to study and how my next assignment needed to be structured.”

When asked if he felt the course content was up to date or if he felt the structure was confusing, Abhay concludes “I felt that the lessons could have been structured like modules and I found it a little frustrating in the beginning trying to navigate the course website. The videos and case studies within the course are outdated but it will not really affect your learning because you still gain understanding of the core concepts.”

Whether COMM 277 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 concepts surrounding the topic of group communication.

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

The Study Dude Reaching A-Potential

Marie Well



Most I can tell you right now, you have an A-student in you. You have even a PhD student in you. Or so says Dr. George Kyei. “Once in college, you have the ability to make all A’s with a bit of hard work and guidance on how to study more effectively” (12%).

Let the past go. Some of us may have bombed our first classes. Some PhD students fail their first undergrad semester. If they succeeded with a fistful of F’s, then, surely, we have the power to go beyond a PhD, too.

“Yes, you can! Perhaps you are thinking ‘I am not as smart as that other student, I did not get to college from the best high school, I am from a poor neighborhood, and my parents are poor’, etc. Well, that was yesterday, this is now. You are now in college Forget about your background and your problems” (12%). After all, a man with a severe psychiatric disease nabbed a PhD. Hey, he even won a Nobel prize (see John Nash).

I know you and I can achieve top drawer grades, too. Perhaps some of us are thinking “But I’m a B student.” If we’re not getting straight “A”s, then I believe we are performing below our potential. “Your potential is your innate ability - what you are capable of achieving. In other words, if you’ve got the ability to get an A in a course and you end up with a B, you have performed below your potential. If you could have graduated with magna cum laude honors and you graduate with cum laude, you have underperformed. The vast majority of students perform way below what they are capable of because of a variety of reasons” (13%).

Here are five reasons Dr. Kyei gives as to why students underperform:

“1) They do not believe in their abilities – they see themselves as incapable of achieving greatness” (13%). Students who scraped by during k-12 can end up in PhD programs. Perhaps we didn’t have good mentors or inspiring teachers. Or perhaps we shared a room with a sibling and had no study privacy. Many things can hold us back from realizing our true intellectual stardom. But let me tell you a well-kept secret, you and I have got more than a PhD within us.

“2) They do not get proper counseling and guidance. Specifically, a lack of direction on how to study for examinations” (13%). Schools tell us what to learn, not how to learn. At the university, I scrambled to gain any study trick I could find. Fortune found me when professors off-handedly shared study techniques. But mostly, I spent many hours learning study habits through trial and error.

“3) They do not get the resources needed to achieve their potential. You may be on a tight budget and so unable to afford some of the books others can afford” (13%). I lucked out with a dad who paid for my undergraduate degree, textbooks, and materials. But when I tried to return to school without his aid, I no longer had the ability to buy my textbooks three weeks in advance. In the past, pre-reading gave me a huge edge in every class. And always having twenty sharpened pencils and endless graphing paper gave me an advantage, too. Without my dad’s help, I struggled just to get Internet access. But the trick is to get resourceful. Buy books off of abebooks.com or other used books services, for instance. Or sell your books online after each semester.

“4) They do not work hard and smart enough. Hard work is important, but it is not about brute force. It requires strategies, skills and productivity hacks that make you work smarter to achieve

your goals” (13%). Tricks can help you ace your exams—tricks such as using cue cards for citing quotes for term papers and imagining funny visuals to help you memorize concepts.

5) They do not read several books on grammar and writing before returning to school. If not for a pre-reading of a grammar book, my high school English upgrading class may have been a letter grade lower. And if I had read Helen Sword's *Stylish Academic Writing* and Joshua Schimel's *Writing for Science*, I may have found myself in the PhD program. Just three books—Sword's, Schimel's, and a grammar book—can boost your grades from novice to PhD.

6) They did not purchase the appropriate style guide (such as APA or MLA) for their field of study. Or no-one told them what a style guide was during their first university classes. In a class I tutored, one student wrote me the night before papers were due. She asked, “How do I make a citation and what is a bibliography”? She had no idea what a style guide was. I too had a paper due the next day. So, she ended up with little direction from me and wound up with a C. The saddest part was that she was capable of straight A's. Which leads to the last point:

7) They had teachers or mentors who failed them. The best way to prevent this from happening to you is to research the professors' ratings way in advance of signing up for your courses. A good math professor can help you score a final grade of 97% in a course you dropped the prior semester due to a bad teacher. (That happened to me.) Five-star professors means higher GPAs.

And if you end up with a Nobel prize, I wouldn't be shocked. Whether you've got good grades or bad grades, we've all got the power to achieve miracles.

References

Kyei, Dr. George B. (2017). *How to Get an A in Every Examination: Get the Grades You Need, for the Future You Deserve*. E-book.

Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group



Sai asks if ProctorU permits exams to be written in public libraries; an AU rep responds after contacting ProctorU, and private rooms in libraries are the *only* public spaces permitted. Jennifer tosses some advice out to new students, including to contact tutors early in the course, and to reach out to other students in the same courses.

Other posts include risks in switching programs, assignment-marking timelines, learning objectives, and courses ACCT 253, BIOL 325, MATH 244, PSYC 228, and WGST 333.

reddit

An interesting query from a graduate of another uni who wonders if taking AU courses would help boost GPA to masters-acceptance levels; responders propose other options.

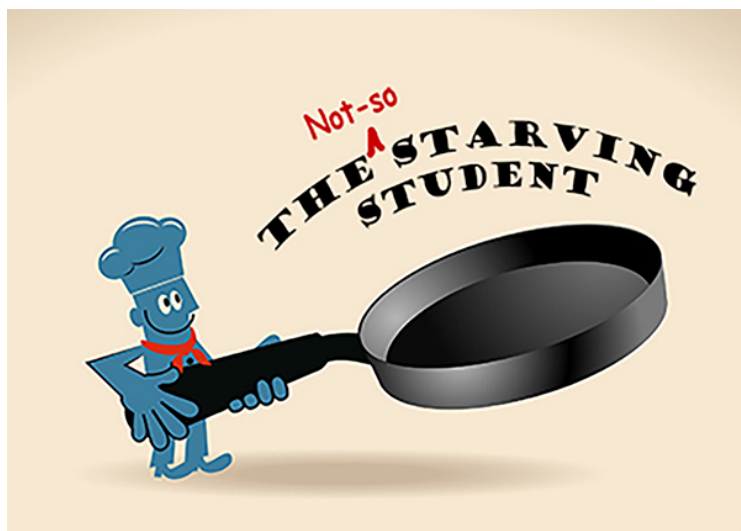
Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "BIG Congratulations to former #AthabascaU Writer-in-Residence @richardvancamp! Richard's 'The Lesser Blessed' has made the @cbcbooks #CanadaReads longlist!"

@austudentsunion tweets: "There are lots of scholarships and awards through #AthabascaU with deadlines approaching! Find out more on the AU website! <https://bit.ly/39TAbL0> #igo2AU #studentfunding."

Top Five Authentic Mexican Foods to Try

Xin Xu



A month ago, I had the chance to spend a weekend in San Diego, home to some of the most authentic Mexican cuisines in the United States. My limited knowledge of Mexican cuisine led me to believe that local Mexican restaurants and fast food chains had grasped the Latin American flavors correctly. However, after snacking and dining in San Diego, I am proud to announce that I was entirely wrong about authentic Mexican food tastes like.

Similar to the street foods I rave about from East Asia, Mexican food is best served from the side of the street rather than an upscale

restaurant. The complex flavors from a innocently-simple burrito blew my mind and my entire idea of Mexican cuisine. Traditional fish tacos prepared with fresh ingredients was incomparable to the ones I had sampled in Edmonton.

Here are my top five favorite items from the trip and deserve a bucket-list spot for most foodies.

Mole:

You've heard of guacamole, but have you heard of mole (pronounced moe-ley)? Guacamole essentially means "avocado sauce" directly translated from Spanish. But mole itself is a Mexican sauce that can be made from beans, avocados, corn and even cactus pears. Mole with rice is a delicious combination that has a distinct creamy texture without being overly rich. For reference, you can take a spoonful of mole without it feeling greasy or overbearing. Moreover, the healthy ingredients used to make mole makes you feel good hours after dinner.



Burrito

If you thought that frozen microwavable burrito is characteristic of Mexican cuisine, think again! Burrito prepared by a Mexican chef was hearty, without a hint of fast-food flavor. This carnita (braised pork) burrito melted in your mouth effortlessly and gave the impression it was slow cooked to perfection. There was flavor both inside the burrito and outside which is unlike any burrito I've ordered from Taco Bell. Once you've tried an authentic, homemade burrito you will never settle for the dry, artificially flavored fast-food burritos again.

Tamales

This traditional Mesoamerican dish is made of a starch-based corn flour that is steamed in a banana leaf or corn husk. The exterior layer is removed, and the inside is a mash-potato like filling that is consumed alongside rice and mole, whether with a meal or on its own as a snack. This street food has its origins in Aztec and pre-Columbian Mayan civilizations. Tamales can be customized to have various fillings including vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. My favorite tamales are served with guacamole and green chili sauce.



Taquitos

Another Mexican cuisine that has become Westernized and appropriated by fast-food chains that have (in my opinion) undermined its identity as a delicious snack. Freshly prepared taquitos are vastly different than the common rendition of frozen microwavable lunch. Taquitos or “mini tacos” are fried to a crisp with tortilla shells and filled with ground beef or other proteins and vegetarian varieties. The toppings are generous and consist of guacamole, cheese, and your preferred authentic hot sauce.

Fish Tacos

Despite being a favorite at local Mexican pubs in North America, only the really authentic Mexican restaurants create the best combination of toppings for the fish taco. Typically, an entire white fish is lightly battered and fried. Unlike the small cutlets from upscale restaurants, I found a street food joint offered fish tacos that are topped with pickles tomatoes and chopped vegetables that give the taco a delicious tangy bite.

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



The Fit Student

Scoring Top Grades is Like Dating Your Soulmate

Marie Well



Getting high grades is like dating your soulmate. Dating your soulmate takes love and patience and fills you with purpose. But to woo your soulmate, you'll move mountains if you rely on a positive psychology. Whether you wish to win over a love-struck lifelong companion or to wow with high grades, put your best spirit forward.

But how do you put your best spirit forward when faced with failure? Well, there are several ways you can lessen the blow of a bad grade or a bad date.

Author Laura van den Berg

Sekac, suggests that when you study, like when you date, forgive mistakes. Faults and failures feel forgivable when the rest of the performance is at its peak. Forgive yourself, too. "It's okay to fail. When what you did isn't perfect, forgive yourself" (48%). You're unlikely to find a faultless friend or a fail proof performance, but a not-so-perfect GPA or date can offer its own rewards: "Aiming for 80% often gives a better result, because you are more relaxed than when you strive for perfection, so you make fewer mistakes" (48%).

So try not to criticize yourself or your soulmate for mistakes. And never criticize yourself for academic slips. Grow from the struggles instead. "If you tend to criticize yourself, you criticize, in reality, consciously or not, your visions, hopes, goals, and dreams. Criticizing yourself will put everything in your life down. If someone blamed you twenty-four hours a day, would you feel motivated to do things for them? Would you feel motivated in life at all? Could you have faith in yourself?" (87%). This may sound like a paradox, but you gain inner gifts by humbly owning and learning from your mistakes—and by saying no to self-criticism or blame. You're meant to find ways to flourish, not to shrink, during struggles.

For another, to lessen the blow of a bad date or bad grade, "each time you struggle, imagine everything going smoothly. This will soothe both your body and mind, and the struggle you initially felt should have eased. It's not important whether it's possible. Make a movie (the best is a comedy) of it, if necessary. The objective is to get the feeling of clarity and ease (or whatever feeling you choose)" (57%). When you imagine your studies going smoothly, clues appear that help you sharpen your GPA. Jump on them. When you imagine a date going smoothly, you get a sense of the traits a soulmate might possess and what you have to offer. Act wisely.

Another way to mend the bitterness of a bad date or bad grade involves loving kindness. I find comfort in dreaming up all the things I love or appreciate about a topic of study, even if I'm bombing the course. For instance, if I'm baffled by a geometric shape, I might dream of a beautiful art piece that could be created with the shape. Or if I'm puzzled by Plato's Myth of Err, I might imagine the beauty of my dearest friend's afterlife. If I'm lost in biology, I might dream of a human life the science might help me save. By finding the magic that exists in everyone and

everything, any subject grows enchanting. And we then grow motivated to gain a higher GPA. Similarly, focus on all the sunshine-and-sparkles traits of your soulmate date, even during rough patches. Seeing what you love in a subject or in a companion can motivate you to give your best.

A way to vet a bad date or turn around a bad grade “is to imagine the opposite of what happened. ... Imagine that you return to the old situation and correct everything you want in a positive way.... Change everything you want to change, even if it seems impossible and you can hardly imagine it. Assume that you’ve gotten all of the recognition, love, attention, and whatever else” (78%). By imagining the opposite while assuming the best, you can see the traits you truly want in a soulmate. Similarly, you visualize scenarios that could help boost a grade in a difficult subject.

The best part? When you treat your studies or relationships with an upbeat attitude, you deepen your sense of purpose. “The purpose of life, as I experience it, is to flow toward an increasing expansion of positive feelings such as joy, love or freedom, a greater understanding of who we are, who others are, and what life itself is” (33%). Your journey at AU can offer heightened purpose. If you see the best and feel the love, then scoring top grades is like wooing a soulmate.

References

van den Berg Sekac, Laura. (2016). *Get Unstuck Now: How Smart People Gain Clarity and Solve a Problem Fast, and How You Can Too*. E-book.



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Terry Fox Humanitarian Awards

Sponsored by: The Terry Fox Humanitarian Award Program

Deadline: February 1, 2020

Potential payout: up to \$28,000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants, graduating or have completed high school (or completed first year of CÉGEP,) and planning to or are already studying toward their first university degree or diploma at a Canadian post-secondary institution (or entering their second year of CÉGEP.) See full [eligibility criteria](#).

What's required: A completed online application form, including contact info for three referees, an unofficial academic transcript, and an essay related to the applicant's humanitarian activities.

Tips: Review the [FAQ](#) page for additional information about the application process.

Where to get info: terryfoxawards.ca/





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

New Year's Reception

Dear Barb:

Happy New Year Barb! I have a dilemma, a family member I rarely see is getting married this summer and I received an invitation to the wedding. I was surprised to receive this since we rarely see each other or communicate. My wife and I don't want to attend, but on the other hand we don't want to cause problems or offend anyone. What is the right thing to do? Thanks, Brian.

Hey Brian:

There is no right or wrong in this situation. Do what feels right for you. If you decide not to attend, it would be nice to include a note with the RSVP, perhaps wishing them the best. On the other hand, maybe the intention of the invite is to break the ice and initiate some communication. So, ultimately, it is up to you. Happy New Year to you as well.

Dear Barb:

It's the New Year and I can't believe I did it again. I got drunk on New Year's Eve and made a fool of myself. I literally was dancing on a table, or so I was told! My date was a guy I have been dating for only a few weeks. We haven't spoke to each other since New Years. I think he was embarrassed, as his parents were at the party and this was the first time I met them. I don't know why I do these stupid things. Last year I did the same thing. I have good intentions, but I get partying

and having a good time and just lose it. Do you think I have a problem that I need help with, or is it just a matter of controlling myself? Help! Christina.

Hey Christina:

Happy New Year! You said you did this last year too, do you only do this on New Years, or does it occur at other celebrations. If it only happens at New Years, I think it is a matter of controlling your intake of alcohol. For example alternate your alcoholic beverages with pop or juice, or best of all water. This way you can reduce your alcohol intake while still having something to drink for toasting or whatever. If you don't feel you can do this, it might be a good idea to choose not to partake in New Year's Eve celebrations.

There are some questions you can ask yourself: Are you drinking alone or in secrecy? Do you create excuses to justify drinking, such as to relax or manage stressful situations? Do you feel hungover even when you haven't been drinking? Have you experienced blackouts or memory loss?

If you agree with any of these questions you could have a drinking problem and may want to seek professional help. Hope this information is helpful.

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



Poet Maeve
The Virtual Me.

Wanda Waterman



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

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