



THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 08 2020-02-21

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Worldwide Journalistic Crisis

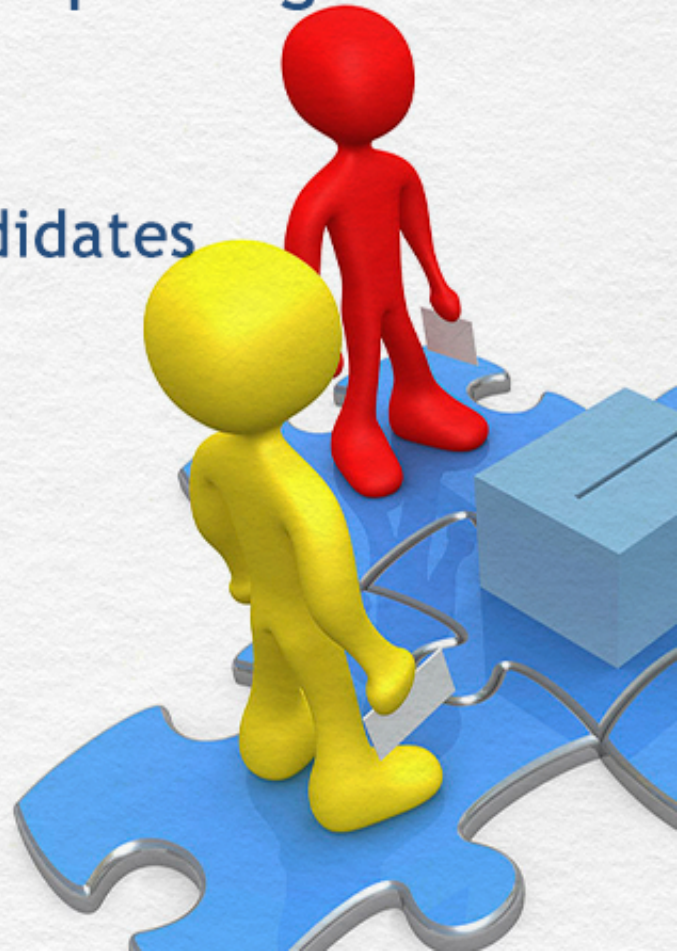
A Spotlight on Dangerous Reporting

Asking the Candidates

Eight Questions for AUSU Candidates

Plus:

*Changes to Your Tax Returns
In Conversation with The Brilliance
and much more!*



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The Voice Magazine

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

Email

voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Jodi Campbell

Managing Editor

Karl Low

Regular Contributors

Francesca Carone, Barb
Godin, Barbara Lehtiniemi,
Angela Pappas, 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
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Volume 28, Issue 08

© 2020 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,
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

In a Rush

Karl Low



I over-estimated my abilities this week. I told the candidates for the AUSU election that they could have until midnight on Thursday, Feb 20th, to get their responses to me. I wanted to make sure they had as long as possible to consider their answers and maybe look into some things that AUSU was currently doing before finalizing their responses and sending them to me. I figured that since I wouldn't actually be editing their answers at all, it would be a cakewalk.

I was wrong.

Nineteen candidates were sent our little questionnaire, and twelve responded. That was about how many I expected, but what I didn't count on was the simple drudge-work of making sure each answer was labelled with their name, and then interspersed into the appropriate place in the rapidly growing article, so that for every question you have all twelve answers laid out one after another. It didn't seem like it would be that difficult a task, but I neglected to think about just how long the full article would be, and ensuring that answers were going under the right questions became difficult when the screen simply wasn't big enough to be able to

show you which question you were pasting a candidate's answer into.

On top of that, some candidates left a question or two blank, some candidates simply deleted the whole question from their response, leading me to have to suddenly realize their answers weren't matching up to the correct question once I was two thirds of the way through the cut and paste. All perfectly reasonable actions for the candidates to take, they just added a lot more extra time to the layout of the article up on the web, and then back down in the PDF.

Fortunately, I've managed to get everything except this editorial up on the website. The PDF will follow in a bit as I struggle with the overall layout having to fit in an article that has run to almost eight pages. I have to admit, I didn't expect that to happen.

In the meantime, however, you can still enjoy both our interview with the candidates, as well as our feature article interviewing student Alek Golijanin. Observant readers will note that Alex is a candidate, but the timing of his student interview in this week's "Minds We Meet" is completely coincidental. Also, be sure to check out Natalia Iwanek's latest article on the dangers and difficulties facing journalists around the world.

And of course we always include our information on scholarships, upcoming events (including the AUSU election), advice—whether personal or on your taxes, thoughtful articles from students examining just what it is to be an AU student, and more. But honestly, to my mind, our most important article this week is our candidate interviews. Remember that these candidates are going to be our face to the Kenney government, to the AU board of governors, and, of course, to us as they work to figure out ways that our money can benefit all of us.

Enjoy the read!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

MINDS WE MEET



Alek Golijanin is currently in his fourth-year of the Bachelor of Commerce program at Athabasca University. Alek shares his humanitarian initiative called AlekGo and his experience with online learning so far. This is his story.

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

My name is Alek Golijanin and I am a first-generation Canadian. My family and I emigrated to Canada when I was three years old, after civil war erupted across Former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina). I live in Ottawa, Ontario.

What program are you in? Are you enjoying your program?

I am in the final year of completing my Bachelor of Commerce. I absolutely love my program.

Could you please 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 Commerce program?

Algonquin College and Athabasca University have a degree pathway/articulation agreement which allows graduates to continue their education, and I obtained

my Advanced Diploma in Business Administration (Human Resources) from Algonquin College. I had intended to enroll shortly after my graduation, but unexpected circumstances came about which delayed my studies. Things do not always go as planned in life, but I am here now, and I mean business.

Any advice for people who are on the fence about going back to school?

For anyone on the fence about continuing their education, be bold. I can assure you that the faculty at Athabasca University are very accommodating and they are with you every step of the way. Athabasca University has been offering distance learning since the 1970's, they have mastered the delivery of online learning, and they are the best in the business. Enroll at Athabasca University, it will be one of the best decisions you have ever made.

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

My main hobbies/interests revolve around giving back and that is what led me to kickstart my humanitarian initiative AlekGo.

Could you describe AlekGo?

AlekGo focuses on marginalized populations, from youth to the elderly, here at home but also abroad. At one point I spent some time at an orphanage in Bogota for adolescent boys that had been removed from some of the most extreme environments. Out of all things, it was my neon green shoes with a shiny silver Jordan logo that acted as an icebreaker and helped me bond with the little fellas, “Amigo, amigo, es Jordan”. They were then showing me their shoes and how they could dribble between the legs with a soccer ball, it was a great experience.

What have you accomplished with AlekGo?

Initiatives for helping people and children that involved lots of advocating, and they led to collaborations with embassies, national police forces, pro sports teams, major organizations, and other difference makers that were acting on change. I meet some of the coolest and most inspiring difference makers, Ottawa is full of movers and shakers, and I am proud to call many of them friends. I am passionate about creating sustainable change across communities and fostering innovation through community building and international development.

If you are interested in learning more about AlekGo, visit the [website](#).

What are your plans for your Bachelor in Commerce degree? What would be your dream job?

I want to take the knowledge and skills that I learn at Athabasca University and apply them in a tangible way, to continue making real-world impacts. My dream job would be a role where I am able to do meaningful and impactful work, from a distance or directly hands-on.

Has anyone influenced your desire to learn?

My parents and grandparents have been the greatest influence, from learning to many other things. I am super grateful that my parents and grandparents were so involved in my life because without them I would not be the person I am today.

Could you describe your experience with online learning?

I love online learning. It gives me the flexibility to schedule my learning around my commitments and responsibilities.

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

ECON 401 (The Changing Global Economy) has been my favorite course so far, and it has nothing to do with the fact that I aced it. When it comes to economics, this course takes a pragmatic approach and does a great job in explaining the true workings of free markets.

Would you recommend the course to others?

Given the fact that there is so much misinformation/activism regarding economics, I would label this course a must.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

Communication with course tutors has been great, they are very responsive. From my experience, I would say course tutors truly want to help you understand the material and to see you do well in the course.

What’s your biggest pet peeve, if you have one?

I get annoyed when things are disorganized, but apart from that I do not really have any peeves. If I was to label my philosophy, I would call it the “Hawaiian laidback way”.

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

I would choose to have lunch with Nikola Tesla. Tesla is a fascinating person; he was light years ahead of his peers when it came to thinking ahead and innovating. We are just beginning to understand the complexities of his theories now. The workings of his mind are enigmatic, and being able to chat with Tesla over lunch would be special.

Could you describe the proudest moment in your life?

My proudest moment was seeing the culmination of my AlekGo humanitarian initiatives. Working with elderly women in Colombia that were abandoned because they had mental/physical disabilities and doing simple things like painting their nails, showing them that there were people who cared about them. It puts things into perspective. Providing sporting equipment to adolescent boys in the Dominican that were playing baseball with sticks/plastic bottles and are often groomed by criminals toward a life of crime, giving them some positive childhood memories to look back on. It puts things into perspective. Organizing a VIP sporting experience for recently landed Syrian youth enrolled at a local elementary school and having them on field inches away from professional athletes, helping ease the memories of war and transitioning them to look forward to a better future. It puts things into perspective.

Could you please tell us something that few people know about you?

I used to watch The Crocodile Hunter growing up, Steve Irwin went around catching (and releasing) some of the most dangerous animals on the planet. One summer during my preteen years, using my bare hands (The Crocodile Hunter inspired) I caught three hummingbirds, one fly, some frogs, and a small viper snake I mistook for a frog. All the animals were released unharmed, and I was lucky not to get bitten by the viper.

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

In life nothing is guaranteed, everything is earned, and hard work pays off. Keep a good attitude and always make an effort to be kind to others.

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

I have been privileged enough to travel quite a bit, for humanitarian projects and on vacation. I think travelling the world and seeing it for what it is, that is very important, and it has definitely opened my eyes.

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

My favorite trip so far has been Hawaii, and I would love to call The Aloha State home one day (sorry Ottawa).

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

I am currently reading *Relentless* by Tim Grover.

Could you describe the book?

Grover is a legendary sports trainer who has trained elite athletes including Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant, and he is also considered the master of mental toughness. This book does a great job of breaking down the science and art of mental/physical dominance to achieve excellence. It is about having a certain mindset; being prepared and doing – cleaner mindset. It is an intense read and his advice doesn't exactly promote a balanced lifestyle, but it does tell you to take responsibility, clean up the mess, and move on.

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



Asking the Candidates!



The AUSU election is coming up, and while distance education makes a lot of things possible, it can make figuring out who to vote for a bit of a challenge. AU does not really have a centre point that students congregate in and that can be used to easily deliver messages to the student body. And while there are some popular Facebook groups for students that some candidates post announcements to, not everybody is aware or uses them. Of course, you can always go to AUSU's site and look at their Candidate Pages to see what the candidates say about themselves, or perhaps take in the AUSU Election Forum where you can ask candidates about the issues that concern you (and if you haven't looked at that yet, you really should, there are some interesting questions and some good answers that have been brought forward already). But that takes some work,

and then you have to keep re-checking to see if they've answered you yet, and honestly, who remembers that sort of thing, right?

But that's okay. That's why you have *The Voice Magazine*. We asked the candidates eight questions to help you get a sense of who they are and what they think is important, and gave them a week to answer. We told them ahead of time that the candidates would be presented in the order we received their answers, and their answers wouldn't be edited except for formatting here on the website. With that in mind, here's what we got back:

What faculty are you in, if any, and how much longer do you expect to be studying at AU?

Stacey Hutchings: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences – Bachelor of Professional Arts – Law, Governance and Management. I have two years left in my undergrad degree and then I hope to go onto my masters or law school.

Katy Lowe: I'm in my third year with AU in the BA Psychology program. I hope to be finished my degree in the next two years.

Darcie Fleming: I am in the Bachelor of Arts – Psychology and I hope to be finished by 2022 and then moving onto a Masters in Psychology.

Fahid Hussain: I am part of the Faculty of Business. I plan to complete my undergraduate degree by August 2020 and continue taking courses part-time to expand my skillset within the next two years.

Devon Romanick: The Faculty of Business as a Bachelor of Commerce program student – two years in, two more to go!

Aleksander Golijanin: I am in the 4th year of my studies, Faculty of Business, and I expect to study for the next two years, while I continue to manage my international humanitarian work and hopefully AUSU council responsibilities too.

Natalia Iwanek: I am in my third year of a Bachelor of Arts in English. I hope to continue on to my Master's degree.

Jennifer Bouley: I am in the Humanities Faculty and I plan to study with AU until at least 2021.

Natasha Donahue: I'm in the Faculty of Science and Technology until this summer 2020 when I graduate, and then I will be switching to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences to pursue AU's University Certificate in French Language Proficiency.

Jasmine Hernandez: I am currently in the Bachelor of Arts program taking a Political Science major and a Political Economy major. I hope to continue studying at Athabasca University for three more years.

Regan Johnson: Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology. I expect to be studying for another 2 years!

Monique Durette: I am an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. I am in my third year of full-time studies, working towards a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Political Science and a minor in Women and Gender Studies. I anticipate my studies to be finished by October 2021.

Aside from tuition, what do you think is the most important issue AUSU needs to address for students?

Stacey Hutchings: Innovation, Community, and Connection. I feel that innovation, using tech more effectively and efficiently, can help facilitate community and connection so the AU experience can be just as immersive, if not more so, then a traditional brick-and-mortar University.

Katy Lowe: Specifically, AUSU needs to focus on increasing student engagement through increased opportunities to connect with students. AU is a unique learning experience and can be increasingly lonely, providing means for students to connect may result in an enhanced student experience. Specifically, I think AUSU and AUGSA can collaborate and bring these student populations together, this will increase networking opportunities for undergraduate students, mentorship opportunities, and a chance to answer questions of those with experience.

Darcie Fleming: AUSU needs to address improving the students educational experience. With the additional tuition, I believe that AU needs to invest that revenue into an improved online learning platform.

Fahid Hussain: Political change on a provincial level has hurt students. In Alberta changing in funding has become apparent. However, there is a concern about out of province students such as those in Ontario who have found a reduction in student loan and grants, which makes it more difficult to pursue a post-secondary education. They also made changes to OSAP from a grants-based system to a loans-based system.

Devon Romanick: Better programs and services to promote social inclusion

Aleksander Golijanin: The most important issue is ensuring the well-being of our student population and that every student is provided the resources necessary to succeed. I want our student population to know that they can count on us to be there for them at any hour. Everyone does better when we look out for one another.

Natalia Iwanek: Although I will advocate on behalf of all students, I feel that in our current political climate, many students, such as those with disabilities, chronic and mental illnesses, new immigrants, the queer community, Indigenous students, mature students, and many others, need

increased support. In addition, I would like to attract more attention to distance learning, as well as improve its reputation.

Jennifer Bouley: I think that knowledge about support services that AU offers students regarding mental health, depression, and stress are important. I also think that it is important for the university to offer students more opportunities for connecting with each other in person is important because with an online university it is important to continue to feel engaged. Also, academic support and awareness of the services offered to students is important.

Natasha Donahue: My belief is that reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is deeply important to the institution, especially considering the mandate of Athabasca University to serve under-represented populations. Reconciliatory work is central to the health of our Canadian society, and as an institution of higher education Athabasca University is in a prime position to work toward reconciliation in order to improve access for Indigenous peoples and role-model for the greater community.

Jasmine Hernandez: Student well-being should be the primary focus for AUSU since Athabasca University is a distance learning program; many students do not have the support they need. Connections within Athabasca University are essential to provide rewarding outcomes.

Regan Johnson: An important issue for me is the lack of peer support, as that plays a big part in my well-being as a student. Distance learning can feel like such an isolating experience so I believe that access to AU community based programs would really help student engagement and propel student success. AUSU does have the student app, and there are a few groups available on Facebook, but it would be great to see AUSU implement more of a mentorship program, student mixers in varying locations, etc.

Monique Durette: I believe that there needs to be designated representation for certain demographics such as students with accessibility needs or Indigenous students. Each represent a segment of the student population with different needs in comparison to the general student body...needs that can affect their studies.

What's the best thing about an average day for you?

Stacey Hutchings: My children, my dogs and finishing a to-do list.

Katy Lowe: First thing in the morning, I get up at 5:30 every day to take advantage of the level of silence. My brain is so much more productive when it has no option but to focus on the task in front of me, and at that time even social media is still asleep!

Darcie Fleming: My first reaction was sleeping, but I will say getting some fresh air taking my dog Penny for a walk.

Fahid Hussain: Being able to schedule between family, groceries, and other errands around distance education.

Devon Romanick: Waking up! ...and crossing off completed tasks, one-by-one, on my good ol' paper and pen to-do list.

Aleksander Golijanin: I am a simple person, the best thing about an average day for me is waking up and starting it with a good attitude. It really sets the tone for how the rest of your day will go. When things go well that's great, when they don't that's okay too, but a good attitude never came across a terrain it could not trek.

Natalia Iwanek: This may sound ridiculous, but as much as I love my program (reading and writing) and my job (more reading and writing), my favourite part of the day is nighttime when I can read solely for myself. I am currently in love with *Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano.

Jennifer Bouley:

Natasha Donahue: Seeing progress on my projects, especially innovative work! I love getting things done and in new ways. This works great for AUSU since we have such a unique environment.

Jasmine Hernandez: During my regular days, I drop off and pick up my little sister from school, hearing about her day when I pick her up is one of the most rewarding moments of my day. I believe that family is an important value in life.

Regan Johnson: COFFEE! – and a really good book.

Monique Durette: The best thing about an average day for me is being able to be home with my family. AU's online flexibility allows me to not need to miss out on my child's special moments while obtaining my degree.

If there was a new service, program, activity, or degree you could convince AU (not AUSU) to offer to students, what would it be?

Stacey Hutchings: A Sustainability Certificate or a degree in Disaster Management – something that would align with the UN Sustainable development goals. It would create opportunities for AU students to be at the forefront of the new economy.

Katy Lowe: Hands down, an honours thesis option to complete alongside an undergraduate designation. This is a requirement for a lot of graduate programs that unfortunately AU cannot provide.

Darcie Fleming: I would like to see an increase in Indigenous degrees offered, as currently, the only degrees offered are in the Bachelor of Management.

Fahid Hussain: A major in FinTech (for Bachelor of Science), which is a combination of finance and technology components due to the increasing use of technology in the financial services industry that is in demand.

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

AUSU General Election

Tues, Feb 25 to Mon, Mar 2

Online

www.ausu.org/events/

Check AUSU's Events page for timelines and details

MBA for Executives Webinar

Tues, Feb 25, 10:00 to 11:00 am MST

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

news.athabasca.ca/events/mba-for-executives-webinar-20200225

Register through above link

2020 Open Forum Supporting Graduate Learners, Research, and Education

Wed, Feb 26, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm MST

AU Edmonton, Room PHT 1222 or via Skype

In person and online

Hosted by Faculty of Graduate Studies

fgs.athabasca.ca/news/events/index.php

Register or access Skype at above link

Google Scholar Webinar

Wed, Feb 26, 1:00 to 2:00 pm MST

Online

Hosted by AU Library

library.athabasca.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

Research Webinar Series: Inside, Outside, the "Jagged" In-between: Implications of Being Non-Indigenous doing Indigenous Research

Fri, Feb 28, 1:00 to 3:00 pm

AU Edmonton North, Room 202 or via Skype

In person or Online

Hosted by AU

news.athabasca.ca/events/research-webinar-series-inside-outside-the-jagged-in-between-implications-of-being-non-indigenous-doing-indigenous-research

More info or access Skype through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

Devon Romanick: Improved mental health services (in-person counselling options by affiliation); Legal Studies as a major/minor option for the Bachelor of Arts (similar to the University of Waterloo)

Aleksander Golijanin: I would like to see access to greater learning opportunities that would ensure students develop professionally, specifically through co-op programs and partnerships. Other universities across Canada have agreements for placements such as nursing programs with hospitals. There are also many grants that are provided by the public/private sector which cover an employers cost to hire students and pay them a living wage. I feel extremely confident that we can have co-op programs up and running by 2022, and that will be one of my big priorities as your AUSU councillor.

Natalia Iwanek: In today's era of globalization, the importance of languages is fundamental. While AU offers a French Major and Certificate and Cree courses, the Spanish program offers six courses, with no option of even a minor. Courses in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Arabic would also be beneficial to students. Increased support and options for study abroad programs would also be something to consider.

Jennifer Bouley: I would say a new service that AU could offer students would be more widespread counselling services to various issues that students face.

Natasha Donahue: I would love to see more options for science majors. I have a passion for the natural sciences and would have loved to take a major in physics/astronomy but because this was not offered, I decided to take a general science pathway.

Jasmine Hernandez: Athabasca University could focus on more student involvement. For many individuals, university is a learning experience, and AU has the opportunity to increase student involvement and allow for student input. Athabasca University can focus on the marketing of AUSU, as it is vital for many students who are unaware of the student council program.

Regan Johnson: I would love for AU to offer an undergrad research program or an honours thesis option!

Monique Durette: I believe that having Academic Strategists available to AU students who use ASD services would be extremely beneficial to a student's success. Though AU currently offers assistance to students to apply for funding to access this type of support, this creates many additional barriers for students who already have many barriers in their daily lives. It would be a much more seamless, much less stressful situation for these students who already have added difficulties that non-ASD students do not have. Also, it would ensure that students utilizing ASD services have a person within AU whom they can refer to regarding the specialized strategies they need for their studies. This service can easily be provided for by phone, email, or video calls, effectively maintaining the same "online" format AU is known for. Removing systemic barriers is important to equality for all students, including students utilizing ASD services.

What's going to be the biggest challenge for you should you get elected?

Stacey Hutchings: I would welcome the challenge of creating more connection within the AU student body. Community is key for completing degrees as it creates the connection needed for students to thrive in hard times. That would be my biggest goal.

Katy Lowe: This one will sound strange but bear with me. The biggest challenge for me is going to be ensuring student concerns are at the forefront of conversation. I feel I am connected to the AU student community and I really want to believe I can represent the unique and passionate perspectives of my peers. However, I would be naïve to assume that my sole opinion is shared

among an entire population and changes with the same pace and direction as others. I want to ensure that I am actively involving students within my role as a councillor and I therefore propose an open forum for students to keep in frequent communication with student councillors. Attendance of monthly meetings may pose a significant obstacle for students to voice their concerns, however, an open communication that can be completed via email may make this significantly easier for students to voice their concerns and AUSU to actively and continuously address them. I know that I am far from alone in prioritizing student advocacy and I think one of the biggest challenges for anyone is being cognizant of the specific and changing concerns of the AU undergraduate student body.

Darcie Fleming: It is not really a challenge, but I would say getting to know the other councillors and building a team that is cohesive and focused.

Fahid Hussain: This is my first time as a nominee for student council in a post-secondary institution, so the challenge is to see how I can work with those who are experienced as AUSU Councillors.

Devon Romanick: If elected, as with any new endeavour, there will be a learning curve. Fortunately, I catch on quickly!

Aleksander Golijanin: The biggest challenge will likely revolve around getting accustomed to the daily councillor routine.

Natalia Iwanek: If elected, my biggest challenge will be making sure not to make promises that I cannot keep. In a perfect world, we would implement changes to benefit absolutely everyone; however, it is important to keep in mind what is realistically possible.

Jennifer Bouley: My biggest challenge would be my full-time job vs studies. I think that also of AU students try to balance this each day.

Natasha Donahue: The biggest challenge for me will be to not take on too much. I really love helping and supporting others when they need it, but sometimes that means I say “yes” to work-related tasks that I don’t have enough time or energy to take on when I should instead help the individual or group find more fulsome support.

Jasmine Hernandez: Focusing on connecting students worldwide is going to be difficult because of the cultural, language and physical barriers. With the help of student involvement and student council, we can connect students globally.

Regan Johnson: Each student is unique, with differing challenges from my own; so, my biggest challenge would be to ensure the accurate representation and advocacy of concerns related to the diverse student population here at AU.

Monique Durette: My biggest challenge will be holding back. When taking on any new opportunity, I tend to go at it at 150%, often at the expense of myself. However, I have been through some difficult mental and physical health issues lately that required some significant work to help me see that I can not “do everything” ...no matter how passionate I am about it all, and that my physical and mental health suffers when I try to do more than I should. Therefore, it will be a challenge for me to continue the student/family/life balance I have created while also pursuing a passion of mine: non-profit work and advocacy.

Is there a program or activity AUSU does now that you think it should expand on?

Stacey Hutchings: AUSU has meet ups in larger centers like Calgary and Edmonton, I would like to see a virtual meet up for those who live in remote communities to participate in, maybe earn some AUSU SWAG in the process.

Katy Lowe: AUSU currently holds socials in several cities which I think are great, however, can be intimidating for students who do not already know other students. I think that AUSU can expand on these in-person social events by providing an increased frequency of events, and perhaps additionally organize casual events, such as in person study groups. In this way, students may connect over shared interests and activities and build upon their student networks.

Darcie Fleming: In light of the tuition increases, I believe that AUSU needs to expand on the scholarship and bursaries offered.

Fahid Hussain: Bursaries should be reevaluated under a new council and expanded to help tackle challenges students will be facing in the coming years such as providing a bursary to cover out of province fees for out of province students in Canada.

Devon Romanick: Social programs – being a distance/online learner can be isolating, as well as student benefits/perks.

Aleksander Golijanin: With significant increases in tuition, I believe that AUSU should explore the idea of offering more financial aid grants. There are many grants that go unawarded due to no applicants. When this happens, I would like to see the grant funds get reallocated as financial aid grants. A little can go a long way for someone that is struggling financially. I do not like seeing people left behind due to circumstances that are out of their control, so the student population can count on me to champion their best interests.

Natalia Iwanek: Although AUSU already offers a phenomenal bursary and award program, the tuition increase may mean the discontinuation of education for students below a certain income level. Perhaps, if offering more awards is not financially possible, AUSU could consider implementing more frequent, smaller awards.

Jennifer Bouley: I think that AUSU should consider bringing back health insurance for students to purchase if needed.

Natasha Donahue: I think the AUSU student social events could be expanded on to include more innovative approaches to student engagement and opportunities for mentorship and relationship-building.

Jasmine Hernandez: Student Wellness is an essential program because, as a distance learning university, not many students are receiving social interaction that may benefit their quality of life. More awareness of the programs and the services offered can be a benefit to many students as they can be more successful with their studies.

Regan Johnson: One area that I would love AUSU to expand on is the career development page featuring access to an easy to read template with prospective career paths, various graduate programs and their requirements for possible admission, email access to available connections in our study of choice, etc. In brick and mortar post secondary schools, this information is frequently shared between like-minded peers, coop programs, and in mentorship programs, so without that available communication, students may not know what avenue to take for continuing studies and career opportunities.

Monique Durette: I think AUSU should expand on the social events that are organized. There have been occasional events organized in the past, but in order to build on the sense of community amongst AU students, I feel the idea of in-person events should be further explored.

Is there a program or activity AUSU does now that you think it should cut support for?

Stacey Hutchings: No, I think the last thing student needs is more cuts. We need to build more for students.

Katy Lowe:

Darcie Fleming: All AUSU programs are valuable, but AUSU should revisit the additional services of the eyewear discounts and pharmacy savings as they should be paying a fee to advertise to our students.

Fahid Hussain: I would cut support for course evaluations. We can leave it for students to evaluate how they wish either with AU, through The Voice or through a third party.

Devon Romanick:

Aleksander Golijanin: I think AUSU is doing a great job, and they strive to be even greater. There is nothing immediate that comes to mind which we should cut.

Natalia Iwanek: Honestly, no. The varied programs, from *The Voice*, to pharmacy discounts, to the mobile app are so important to a variety of students. In addition, I cannot make this decision without seeing financial data.

Jennifer Bouley: No, I do not believe, I believe that AUSU offers a lot of the necessary supports for students.

Natasha Donahue: At this time, I believe the vast majority the work of AUSU is valuable and workable. If we experience challenges, then I believe we can adapt to those challenges or use the opportunity to transform things to meet our needs and goals.

Jasmine Hernandez: Many students aren't aware of the services that AUSU has to offer, and unfortunately, the Podcast service is underused. More resources could be allocated towards the Student Wellness program.

Regan Johnson:

Monique Durette: I believe that periodic reviews of any AUSU services are always warranted, to ensure that their use versus costs are justified. However, only upon review should cutting support of a program or activity be suggested or implemented. It is impossible for me to make this recommendation without having seen this type of information.

What are you most hoping to gain personally from this experience if you're elected?

Stacey Hutchings: I would like to expand and develop my leadership and public speaking skills. I am also very interested in politics, so this is a way for me to run and be a part of a team that is furthering a group of my peers – the social justice warrior in me loves that I get to be an advocate for my fellow AU students.

Katy Lowe: Personally, I am hoping to build on my connections with students that can relate to my experience as an online undergraduate student. I hope to bring my passion and ideas to the student council to have a meaningful impact on the student experience for the AU undergraduate students.

Darcie Fleming: I aspire to be a positive and active participant in decisions that not only affect me but all students, as well as increasing the knowledge I gained over the past two years about governance and advocacy.

Fahid Hussain: Connecting with students based on their needs and learning strategies in advocacy.

Devon Romanick: As a law school hopeful, if elected, I am hoping to develop my advocacy skills. With that comes the personal satisfaction of being in a position to help my fellow students in meaningful ways by improving their AU experience.

Aleksander Golijanin: When I look back at this experience, I want to know that I did everything I could to leave AU and AUSU better than I found it.

Natalia Iwanek: I hope to learn more about AU, including all aspects of student government, about the issues affecting our student body, and make some sort of difference.

Jennifer Bouley: I hope to engage with AU students more. Being an alumni and current student, I know what it is like to study and feel alone, and I also find now that with the expansion of technology it is now easier to feel connected with other AU students. So overall what I hope to gain is a better understanding of AU student needs and more build connections and relationships.

Natasha Donahue: I love relationship-building and storytelling, and I think both of these skills will be bolstered by more experience with the student council. I have had the pleasure of working on student council for the past two years, and the relationships I have built between our SU and other student associations, the government, Athabasca University, as well as external stakeholders benefits both myself and our organization. It is so important to me to see AUSU succeed in these endeavours and being able to build these skills up will only help strengthen these relationships. Storytelling is one way in which these relationships are built, especially when it comes to advocacy work. I am passionate about advocating for those who need support, and these skills will continue to serve me as I journey through life.

Jasmine Hernandez: Interpersonal connections with many student council members as well as students that I will have the opportunity to represent.

Regan Johnson: Community! It is so isolating as a distant learning student, so I'm most excited to connect with others that are also passionate about making a difference.

Monique Durette: I am hoping to gain recent, relevant, working experience that can be applied to my post-graduation goals of working within the non-profit sector. However, I also hope to bring to the role my wealth of knowledge and past experience that may be of use to the AUSU council.

And there you have it! Their own words, unedited. We were surprised by the amount of variation in the responses to some of the questions, so hopefully this helps give you some idea of who these twelve candidates are and what they'll be standing for if you choose to cast your vote for any (or all) of them. But if this has only spurred more questions for you, the vote only starts on Tuesday, February 25, and goes for several days, so there's still time to ask directly on the AUSU candidate forums.

Don't be shy, these people will be using your money to represent you to the university and the government. Make sure they're who you want, and then be sure to vote as well!



In Conversation ..with The Brilliance

Wanda Waterman



Give me doubt so I can see my neighbor as myself
Give me doubt so I can lay all my weapons on the ground
When the armour of God grows too heavy for peace
Give me doubt, give me doubt, give me doubt
What be my courage now, my shield from evil?
Love be my courage now--
I shall not fear. -
- "I Shall Not Fear," from *World Keeps Spinning*
by The Brilliance

The Brilliance is hard to pigeonhole. Their music is a unique mix of classical and pop, so you might call it prog rock with no hubris, or classical music without pedantry. The highly original sounds created by the duo John Arndt and David Gungor, close friends who haven't lived in the same city since The Brilliance began, are salve to both the ear and the soul. Their albums have delivered songs in suite form, the latest being *World Keeps Spinning*.

Recently Josh Arndt, now in Paris, took the time to chat with Wanda Waterman about their new album, their collaboration, and what it feels like to be part of something much bigger than a couple of guys making music.

Let's go back to the beginning.

Dave Gungor and I grew up together in a small town in Wisconsin. Our fathers were in a band together in the seventies. We all went to church together, and music was a huge aspect of the life of the church.

We loved everything about church. Every time we would go it would be like a party. There are videos of us as young as one, before we could talk; you could see us in a room banging on things, yelling at each other. And so creative collaboration and making music together has kind of been ingrained in our relationship, and ultimately I would say, an exploration of spirituality and the meaning of life. The meanings of death and doubt have always been a part of our music as well.

We're always trying to explore the big ideas as opposed to making having-a-good-time-at-the-club kind of music.

I left my childhood home, going off into the world, really, with a mission. I had this really clear sense of purpose and truth. I was the type of kid that you could have sat me down with anyone and I could have told them exactly how it is. I could sit down with the Dalai Lama and set him straight. I had all the answers.

A number of experiences led that to shatter. In many ways the music that David and I have made with the Brilliance came about with the shattering of my faith. In many ways I became an atheist. Although I love so much about spirituality and Christianity, I rejected most of this, and yet David has actually been in ministry for the last twelve years. So it's been the atheist perspective hitched to the believer's perspective. In many ways it creates a richer, deeper music.

David played guitar and bass growing up. I was the one who played the piano and became very serious about studying music. I could play pop songs by ear, and people thought I was a genius. And then I heard Bill Evans. It was something completely foreign to me, something I could not understand because he was never playing bass notes the way I understood music, especially in pop music, where there's a bass note and a melody. Basically, if you can understand these two things you can fill in the blanks and make it work. With Evans the bass was moving all over the place, and the piano wasn't even playing any bass notes.

So eventually I began pursuing jazz and jazz improvisation, learning to speak that language of music. A few years after that I got really serious about classical music, classical technique, and respecting the notes on the page. With notes on the page you can get into the minds of some of the most beautiful musical geniuses of history. They're trying to tell you something, and every detail is there for a reason.

How did you get to record your new album with the orchestra at Biola University?

Creativity is not limited to the making of the music. Our last album, *Oh, Dreamer*, was a collaboration with a non-profit, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) Dreamers, that we really believed in, and we had a whole album inspired by the DACA Dreamers. It was like working for a label but instead we were working for a cause. We own the music and so we get to advocate for something we really care about.

So, for *World Keeps Spinning*, we were contacted by Biola University who wanted us to play a concert. So I said why don't we take a week, do a whole collaborative recording? I ended up spending a week with the students of Biola University, recording as much as I possibly could, and, in the end, we had a record. I'm really excited about working with more large ensembles in the future.

What inspires your musical suites?

Many of our ideas are rooted in moments of despair. Both David and I had both had our first true experiences with anxiety. The first song on the record, "Release Me," came from my first experience of physical pain as it related to stress in life. I suddenly had a chest pain for three or four days. I don't know what it was about, but it had something to do with outer circumstances. I was like, *chest pain! If this stops, everything stops!*

In Dave's case he got on some medication and made some life adjustments. Also living in New York City. It's a family of six—he's got four kids, so he's going a million miles per hour at all times. And in addition to pastoring a church, raising a family, and The Brilliance (which could be a full-time job) he just started a job with a new organization called Telos which brings awareness to the Palestinian conflict. *And* he's working toward a master's degree in philosophy.

When you listen to our music you'll hopefully get the sense that it's tapped into something much larger than just these two guys.

Innovative responses to the unexpected

Whenever we perform, we always look for local musicians to work with. When we go to a university, we work with the music department—so we have all kinds of students with us, and what happens as a result is we're playing with a nonprofessional group of musicians, which means that things are going to go wrong. The things that make a live performance special are the ways in which it's not like the album. So instead of breaking our necks trying to recreate the album, we turn it on its head.

There was one concert where the power went out. It just went pitch black. So we gathered at the front of the stage and we found little instruments that we could play, and people gathered around us and we continued to play. People came up to me later in life to say, “Hey, I was at that concert when the lights went out, and it was the best concert I’d ever been to.” The concert where everything went wrong became the most memorable concert.

What, in your opinion, is music?

Music is my connection to the magic of being alive, the magical world, the spiritual world. Ever since I was young I’ve always resonated with music. I’d get on the piano to feel that resonance and respond to it. Today I organize that resonance and push it into the world, and the world responds to me. I have thus beautiful situation where I can trade those resonances for food and shelter.

The combinations of sounds I make are resonating in the world. One of the things that brings me the most satisfaction is imagining the world vibrating just a little bit with the music I’ve been a part of. I feel honoured and humbled to vibrate in the world in this way.



Worldwide Journalistic Crisis Spotlight on Canada, Mexico, and Russia

Natalia Iwanek



Recent reports reveal that, despite violence, 2019 was statistically much safer for journalists than previous years. Reporters Without Borders (RSF), a Paris-based NGO, reported the deaths of forty-nine journalists worldwide, the lowest death toll in sixteen years. Founded in 1985 in Montpellier, France, RSF defends and promotes freedom of information in the journalism industry. 2020’s tally is currently five deaths.

Despite these statistics, in many countries, journalists continue to experience extreme violence. Two countries in particular face crises, Mexico and Russia.

RSF and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) consider Mexico one of the most dangerous countries for journalism. By August, 2019, violence had claimed the lives of twelve Mexican journalists. The Mexican National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) reveals that 153 journalists have been killed since 2000.

Many of these journalists, like Javier Valdez Cárdenas, continued reporting despite the danger, believing that the public deserves to know the truth. In March, 2017, responding to the death of a colleague, Valdez tweeted, “Let them kill us all, if that is the death sentence for reporting this hell” and “No to silence.” On May 15, Javier Valdez Cárdenas, the correspondent for Sinaloa state’s *La Jornada*, was shot dead.

Russia is facing a similar crisis, with December 11 historically commemorating fallen journalists throughout the country. Established in 1991 by the Russian Union of Journalists to commemorate

TV correspondent Viktor Nogin and operator Gennady Kurennoi's deaths in the former Yugoslavia, Journalists' Remembrance Day currently falls on December 15.

Founded in 1926, the Belgium-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) represents 600,000 media professionals from 187 trade unions and more than 140 countries. In 2009, the IFJ published an investigation into Russian journalists' deaths. During this time, they also launched an online database that lists over 300 deaths and disappearances of journalists since 1993. The database is structured by incident type, motive, geographical location, and actions taken by the government. 2009's "Partial Justice: An Inquiry in the Deaths of Journalists in Russia, 1993–2009," overseen by the IFJ, the Glasnost Defence Foundation, the Centre for Journalism in Extreme Situations, and the Russian Union of Journalists, summarizes these 300 disappearances and deaths and also provides six case studies of murdered journalists.

Despite the danger, several fearless journalists have made a significant impact, at times paying with their lives, including Mexican-American Alma Guillermoprieto and Russian Anna Politkovskaya.

Alma Guillermoprieto, former South America bureau chief for *Newsweek*, regular writer for *The New York Review*, and *New Yorker* contributor, is also author of several books. Along with Raymond Bonner, and photojournalist Susan Meiselas (Danner, 97), Guillermoprieto was one of the first journalists to cover the 1981 massacre at El Mozote in northern El Salvador. After being smuggled into the area by the leftist *Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)* (Danner, 98), Guillermoprieto's story originally broke on January 27, 1982, in the *Washington Post*, while Bonner's was seen in the *New York Times*. In December, 1981, the Salvadoran army's US-trained Atlacatl Battalion (Danner, 49) massacred hundreds of villagers, including women and children in northern El Salvador (Danner, 158), while searching for the FMLN. Three survivors recounted their stories, including Rufina Amaya, seen in Guillermoprieto's article. Deemed propaganda by the Reagan administration, both journalists faced reprimand by the US government and press at the time of publication. However, 1993's Secretary of State Panel on El Salvador revealed the truth (Danner, 160).

Similarly fearless, Anna Politkovskaya, special correspondent for *Novaya Gazeta*, an independent Moscow newspaper, wrote numerous books, and covered 2004's school hostage crisis in Belsan, North Ossetia. In 2006, the Moscow-based investigative journalist, and long-time critic of Russia's government, was murdered. A lifelong critic of President Vladimir Putin and the human rights abuses during the Chechen wars, many consider it miraculous that she survived as long as she did. Throughout her career, she had survived threats, jail time, poisonings, and exile. Politkovskaya's assassination in the stairwell of her Moscow apartment on October 7, 2006, remains unclear. In 2014, the court sentenced five men to prison.

Reading the histories of these incredible writers is inspiring, especially when applied to the journalistic situation currently unfolding in our own country. For Alma Guillermoprieto, recommended readings include 1994's *The Heart that Bleeds: Latin America Now*, which covers a four-year period (Guillermoprieto, ix) from the end of 1989 to 1993 in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and Panama and 2001's *Looking for History: Dispatches from Latin America* which contains seventeen essays on Latin American history and conflict (Guillermoprieto, ix). Her varied articles include Peru's Communist organization *Sendero Luminoso* or "Shining Path" and post-Sandinista Nicaragua.

Anna Politkovskaya's history has recommended readings that include 2003's *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya*, which covers events from the 1991 Chechen Revolution (Politkovskaya, 17), including stories about neighbouring Ingushetia (Politkovskaya, 188). 2004's

Putin's Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy details life in Russia under President Putin, including the situation in Chechnya (Politkovskaya, 25), while 2007's *A Russian Diary*, covering periods of 2003–2005, was written shortly before her death (Politkovskaya, vii).

Back in our country, on January 13, 2020, the RCMP set up an exclusion zone on Morice West Forest Service Road near Houston, B.C. CBC and APTN reported that the RCMP refused journalists entry into this zone. While media that was already there were allowed to stay, new journalists were not allowed in. The Committee to Protect Journalists has responded stating, "Authorities in Canada should immediately end the arbitrary restrictions on journalists covering the police breakup of the pipeline protest."

On January 14, the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) filed legal complaints against the RCMP's zone, which prohibited "Wet'suwet'en people, the public, and media from accessing Wet'suwet'en territories." The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) Grand Chief Stewart Phillip has stated that "We expect the provincial government and BC RCMP to honour the Supreme Court of Canada's precedent-setting *Delgamuukw/Gisday'way* case and the *United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP]* in all their decisions and actions. This refers to January 7, 2019's BC's Supreme Court injunction against members of the Wet'suwet'en Nation blocking access to Coastal GasLink's natural gas pipeline in their territory, believing that the Supreme Court decision should take precedence. In addition, he refers to the Supreme Court of Canada's 1997 Delgamuukw decision, which upheld the Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan communities right to land as Indigenous people that were never ceded. However, it did not clarify the title claims of the communities.

Phillip also refers to UNDRIP, adopted in by the UN General Assembly in 2007, with four initial abstaining votes, including Canada's, which reversed its position in 2010. In particular, UNDRIP's Article 10 states "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories." Article 18 "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous ... to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them." Article 26 states "Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired." Finally, Article 29 states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources." Unlike treaties or covenants, declarations are not legally binding.

In addition, many hereditary chiefs from Wet'suwet'en's five clans deny the historical cessation of the land to the Canadian or B.C. governments.

Many Canadians are also concerned about the content of what little media coverage currently being released. In Canada, the concentration of media ownership is apparent. As early as 2012, critics began discussing Canada's media sector's concentration, which is greater than any other G8, (now G7), country. Currently, large media conglomerates own most Canadian media.

No solution appears to be in sight, but perhaps as a way to remind ourselves of the importance of independent journalism, we can turn once more to the tragedy of the massacre at El Mozote. During the attacks, Radio Venceremos, whose underground studio consisted of a small transmitter, microphones, tape recorders, and generators, continued reporting despite the odds. When director Santiago heard of an upcoming Army operation on December 1, 1981, he ran four miles through the hills and forests in darkness to broadcast the news (Danner, 28).

Students AU considering the communications or the journalism fields may be interested in CMNS 201 - Introduction to Mass Media, CMNS 202 - Media and Power in Canadian Society, CMNS 455 – Media Ethics, and SOCI 435 – Theories of Social Change.

For students interested in learning about the histories of Mexico, Russia, and Canada's Indigenous communities, AU offers GLST 308 – An Introduction to Latin America and the Caribbean, HIST 327 – Imperial Russia, INST 203 – Indigenous Studies I, INST 205 – Indigenous Studies II, and INST 420 – Indigenous Resistance.

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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

Jason Sullivan

The Cold Curtain of Winter: Imagine Behind the Veil



Bleak, stark, lifeless, pallid: winter landscapes aren't the most inviting climes for a study break. A few paces from our door reveal only colourless dead space populated by shadows and chills. Oh sure, snowmen are always a possibility. But a corncob pipe and a button nose are no replacement for the magical appearance of an uncanny visage on the grave face of a resting stone. No friendly faces appear here. There is only snow, the earth buried and gone. Rockhounds of the world unite in boredom during winter; snow prevents the discovery of geologic treasures, of fantastic finds that brighten a day. And yet,

just knowing that there's noble rocks buried under a snowy veil can impart mystery all its own. Creative minds feed fearlessly on an apparent lack.

Few things trigger greater imagination than that which remains unrevealed. Where first are only suggestive bumps along that snowy carpet, ripples and curves the eye can barely see, the living essence of disguised rocks begins to appear. There's countless stones under the snow and what tales of glaciers and landslides and volcanoes might they tell. Instead of running for a snowblower and getting a bit carried away in unearthing these treasures, now can be the time to cherish the mere *idea* of rocks, which is really the magic of enjoying them to begin with. Unlike our academic selves who march ever farther toward our goals, rocks immured beneath snow have nowhere to go and nothing to be. Like our own lives, we make of them what they are. So let's go snowshoe amidst buried rocks as we recharge our mind's batteries. In the deep of winter, and at the nadir of nature's visible growth, we may discover the apex of our creative potential. Out of the appearance of nothing all things become possible.

While pondering, the interpretive framework of the mind falls away like desiccated leaves. In such moments of silence reality emerges silky as a breeze carrying snowflakes to alight on our cheek. "There are no facts, only interpretations" famously said Friedrich Nietzsche and how true this is when we set aside the need to look up the name of a rock or the species of a plant or the breed lineage of a pet. Fidelity to the name of something is rational but such sentiments fall short of the creative human spirit. As the sociologist George Ritzer wrote, "irrationality means that rational systems are unreasonable systems. By that I mean that they deny the basic humanity, the human reason, of the people who work within or are served by them" (<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1352923>). Our essence is creative and yet we harbour and tame ourselves with certainties and knowledge, all of which cover over and reduce to mere suggestive form the reality of life's flow. Winter snow is the great epistemological equalizer; appearances morph into ambiguities and this means that anything's possible.

Sitting Like a Rock, Sitting With a Rock

If you're like me you've a ready supply of rocks on a shelf in the house from years gone by. Occasionally these migrate to the garden as they are replaced and rearranged. Just to sit a moment with a rock you've gathered can be as great a break as a walk through fresh foliage. Just be there with them and discover the 'it' that you both share. Mystical though this feeling appears, it's key to our human reserve of expressive energy to allow abundance to overwhelm the bounds of our knowledge. If any rock could talk it would describe glaciers coming and going, being buried and unearthed, forged and formed, over timeless times like some reincarnated avatar of divinity.

Minerals have been invoked and adored in Asian cultures for eons. One reporter states that "the tradition of rock reverence has a lot to teach us; that wisdom can hang off bits of the natural world just as well as issuing from books; that we need to surround ourselves with objects that embody certain values we're in danger of losing sight of day today"

A rock's life story belies its humble appearance. Likewise, to be truly present in time is to cease to give a name and meaning to ourselves or anything else. It's no wonder the 1970s fad 'Pet Rock' occurred; there's something ridiculous in how busy we become when caring for and managing what we have decided to care about. To take a break means to take a break from not only our activities but also our methods of thinking. Thus, a part of being interested in rocks is to simply accept their outdoor inaccessibility during winter. But, if we have a rock collection, now is a great time to spend some quality time with it.

Dusty old Rocks, Dusty Shelves of Books

Rocks and books have much in common when they sit on shelves. Both give inspiration if only we spend some time with them. Revisiting old textbooks is a great way to gauge how our ideas have evolved in tandem with our learning and growing. Books reflect who we were when we read them in the way Asian cultures saw moral attributes in rocks: "Mi Fu writes a treatise on rocks that enumerates their four main aesthetic qualities: *shou*, an elegant and upright stature; *zhou*, a wrinkled and furrowed texture; *lou* or cracks that are like channels or paths through the rock; and *tou*, the holes in the rock that allow air and light to pass through"

Rocks, like books, may provide comfort or solace on those lonely winter days of scholarly study. Another character from ancient China illustrates this:

"Turning my head around, I ask the pair of rocks:

'Can you keep company with an old man like myself?'

Although the rocks cannot speak,

They promise that we will be three friends.

Through rocks we can learn to respect the dignity of what has been marked by ageing and time"

To Think is to Inspire, Anything the Inspires Breathes Back

We're not bags of hammers or sacks of rocks here at AU; thinking isn't neutral for us because our learning fundamentally alters our actions. As our learning breathes life into our minds, so too do outdoor study breaks rekindle our fires for knowledge. The key thing is to remember that we impart meaning to our surroundings in ways that transcend the trivialities of rote memorization. What seemed as nature is no longer natural to a scholar.

The philosopher of science, Daniel Botkin, wrote that the space between humans and nature is itself a mere illusion; we are what we experience, describe and share within our surroundings. We animate the inanimate and in turn become more alive by this interaction. Botkin notes that "we need to think within nature, not against it" and that means appreciating our surroundings without expecting technology to classify the world and do the hermeneutic labour for us. For we at AU the outside world is our canvas of creativity on which there are no blank pages, only moments waiting to reveal our capacities.

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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.



Brittany Daigle

Course Exam

AU courses, up close

Course Exam

Brittany Daigle

LGST 489 (Alternative Dispute Resolution) is a three-credit, senior-level legal studies course that provides students with a theoretical and practical understanding of alternative dispute resolutions (ADR). The course focuses on the two main dispute resolution methods: negotiation and mediation. It also introduces the basic principles and techniques of various dispute resolution methods. Different areas of the law and law enforcement in which such methods are or could be used are explored in the course, including mediating family law disputes, negotiating contracts, and resolving disputes online. There are no prerequisites for this course and is not available for challenge for credit.

Students should note that credit for LGST 489 may not be taken for credit by students if credit was obtained for CRJS 489 or HSRV 487. Also, this course qualifies for a learning resource fee reduction to \$130 which covers the cost of mandatory, Athabasca University-produced learning resources, library services, learning management system support, and learning design and development.

Alternative Dispute Resolution is made up of twelve units, five assignments worth ten percent each (two written responses, two oral responses, and an oral presentation), and examination worth fifty percent. The twelve units within this course cover several topics including negotiation, hybrid processes, online dispute resolution, principles of mediation, conflicts, disputes, and claims. To receive credit for LGST489, students must complete all course assignments, achieve a grade of at least a “D” or fifty percent on the final exam, and achieve an overall course grade of at least fifty percent. The final examination for this course must be taken online with an AU-approved exam invigilator at an approved invigilation centre. It is your responsibility to ensure your chosen invigilation centre can accommodate online exams.

Aunveer Sooch Sooch is twenty-three years old and works full-time as a support worker. She enrolled at Athabasca University in November 2019 and has seven courses left until she obtains her degree. Aunveer is also currently enrolled in LGST 489. She introduces herself, “I’m from Calgary, Alberta and I’m in the Bachelor of Arts program with a major in Criminal Justice at Athabasca University. During my spare time, I catch up on school work which is usually over the weekend and after work and I go to the gym if I am not exhausted.”

When asked to explain this course to students, Aunveer states “This course is very informative, and it puts you into real life scenarios when it comes to mediation. I learned a lot of negotiating skills, as well as different skills when it comes to mediations and what works best with what situation. I feel like this course is an important class to take because it helps you learn the difference between negotiation and mediation. This information is relevant and it helps a lot in real life situations.”

As for the structure of this course, she states “This course has five assignments and a final exam. The first two assignments are written response and the rest are oral response, so it’s a different way to show your knowledge and I personally loved completing the oral assignments. The readings are required, and it helps you to complete the assignments. The difficulty level was average, it was a challenge at some points, but overall it was pretty straight forward.”

Aunveer would recommend LGST 489, stating “The challenges were for the oral assignments but made the course interesting.”

As for any tips or tricks to completing this course, she states “Read all of the course work and you’ll be fine. Make sure that you finish the self study quizzes, and practice questions.”

Whether LGST 489 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 content surrounding the topic of alternative dispute resolution. If students have any further questions about this course, the course professor, Archie Zariski, encourages you to contact him at archiezariski@athabascau.ca.

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



Changes to your 2020 CRA Tax Returns

What you should know

Francesca Carone



Tax season is coming up, not too soon but soon enough to start thinking about it. We all should know that April 30 is the deadline to get your taxes in. There are important changes to the CRA tax year, what you can claim, and eligibility. Here is one important new update you should know, Athabasca University is now required to collect SIN's for official income tax receipts, so make sure you update your information. Besides for that, not much changed for students. There are changes that may affect students personally though and changes that you at least should be aware of. Here are some changes to your 2020 taxes that were announced in early December.

Federal Basic Personal amounts:

The basic personal has increased from \$12,069 last year, to \$13,229 this year. What is the basic personal amount? It is the amount one can earn before having to pay any federal income tax. This is part of the Government's proposal to increase the amount to \$15,000 by 2023. According to a [news release](#), this is done to help to lower taxes for the middle class and people working to join it. In addition, they claim that "When fully implemented in 2023, single individuals would save close to \$300 in taxes every year, and families, including those led by a single parent, would save nearly \$600 every year. It would mean that nearly 1.1 million more Canadians would no longer pay federal income tax at all." ([Dept. of Finance](#)).

Home Buyers' Plan:

The Home Buyers' Plan (HBP) helped first-time home buyers save for a down payment by allowing them to withdraw from a RRSP to buy or build a home without having to pay tax on it. This year, the program has been extended to those individuals who did not meet the requirements of a first-time home buyer. In addition, the maximum amount that can be withdrawn increased from \$25,000 to \$35,000 for withdrawals made after March 19, 2019. ([Dept. of Finance](#)).

RRSP & CPP contributions:

"The 2020 RRSP deduction limit (contribution room) has increased to \$27,230. This is up from the 2019 limit of \$26,500" ([Kasper, online](#)). If you are putting money away already, you can maximize your contributions more starting this year because the CPP contribution rate for employees and employers went up to 5.25% this year ([Golombek, online](#)).

Some other new changes that are noteworthy are the Personal Income Tax Credit for Digital Subscriptions, the Journalism -Qualified Donee Status, and new Additional Types

of Annuities Under Registered Plans permitted, all of which you can find out about [here](#). For students, tax time is just another distraction from studies, but at least we still have the federal tuition tax credit that allows up to 15% of the amount of eligible tuition paid by students to be recovered.

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Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: AEBC/T-Base Scholarship Program

Sponsored by: Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC)

Deadline: March 27, 2020

Potential payout: up to \$1000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be blind, deafblind, or partially sighted (as defined in Applicant Qualifications section), be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, and be attending or planning to attend a post-secondary institution during the period between September 2020 and April 2021. See full eligibility criteria in [Applicant Qualifications](#) section.

What's required: An email with a completed application form, along with a recent academic transcript, a letter of reference, and a maximum 2000-word essay that covers three specified topics.

Tips: Read the submission instructions carefully.

Where to get info: www.blindcanadians.ca/programs/scholarship



The Study Dude

PowerPoints to Make Even Disney Hire You

Marie Well



How supervising professor that the students embedded a great video and displayed a beautiful presentation. She gritted her teeth and said, “No bells and whistles.” When I asked her what that meant, she said content was everything. Niceties like video, sounds, images and color didn't count, unless they were relevant. I finally asked, “Just a white background?” “Just a white background will do,” she replied, “But make sure they have a clear thesis statement.”

So my students learned to make PowerPoints consisting of bullets on a white background—and with a thesis statement.

I've since learned the proper style for making PowerPoints from authors Kai Xin, Eugene Cheng and Imran Esmail. And I wish to share their tips with you as follows:

Let visuals drive your PowerPoints. According to the authors, “While blog posts generally contain 80% text and 20% visuals, it should be in the opposite ratio for SlideShare [i.e., PowerPoint]” (37%).

I once made a narrated movie out of my PowerPoint slides. An instructor at a college helped me record the video and narration. Prior to that, I hired an artist to make visual slides after each page of bullet points. Sadly, when it came time to record the movie, I timed the visuals for less than three seconds per slide, which meant the visuals disappeared before they could be fully viewed. And the visuals were beautiful. What a waste. My movie looked like a swamp of bulleted text. The lion's share of my movie should have been spent on visuals, not text. (And I clearly cited the artist and college instructor, of course.)

Kai Xin, Eugene Cheng and Imran Esmail say, “As a visual medium, the best SlideShares are brief in words and expansive in visuals. A good rule of thumb is to keep your text in the slides at most to 2 sentences, as to maximize punchiness and allow them to skim through your content. If you're repurposing content from a blog post, split lengthy sentences into catchy statements that work in succession” (37%).

The authors recommend using a white background for your PowerPoint along with images with white backgrounds. As a TA, I at least got the white background part right.

Rely on lots of slides to tell your story. Kai Xin, Eugene Cheng and Imran Esmail say, “The briefer your copy, the more slides you'll have—we recommend having loads of slides with brief text, as it doesn't overwhelm the viewer” (48%). I've read two other books on PowerPoints that confirm this view. Less text per slide means you should use more slides to tell your story. Once I made a PowerPoint presentation that lasted for thirty minutes. I stuffed each slide with wordy bullet points and side images. Red glassy eyes peered at me from the audience by the five-minute point. I could've kept my peers bright eyed if I had used just three to seven words per slide coupled with a big image.

Tell a story. All the books on PowerPoint presentations say the same thing: turn your presentation into a story. Yes, three acts. “Ever watched a Disney movie? Notice that the underlying structure for all the movies are the same. It starts with a protagonist who decides that the status quo is no-go, goes on a journey to battle a foe, triumphs in the end and echoes the ‘moral of the story’” (42%). You'll shine if you copy Disney and craft your PowerPoint into a three-act story structure.

The first act of your story should introduce the conflict. The second act should solve the problem. The final act should either present a call-to action or an answer to the “so what?” question. A call-to action works well for a practical presentation. For instance, a marketer's call-to-action might be to sign up for a service or buy a product.

Authors Kai Xin, Eugene Cheng and Imran Esmail describe this as “Introduce Problem -> Solution -> Call-to-Action We tell the [viewers] about the problem briefly and deliver massive actionable value by listing the solutions, followed by a summary and call-to-action” (43%).

Buy your images or scour free ones. When I did design work, I preferred to pay for a subscription to a stock image service, such as Adobe Stock. I found that searching for high-quality free images took too long. But “if you’re bootstrapping and don’t wish to take the buyer’s route, you can source for commercially- free images on these sites: www.unsplash.com www.gratisography.com www.compfight.com www.freepik.com www.flaticon.com www.flickr.com While most of these photos are free to use, do check against their usage rights and credit the authors accordingly as they are usually under a creative commons license” (65%).

You now have the know-how to make spectacular presentations. So, delight your audience with your Disney-worthy PowerPoint tales.

References

Xin, Kai, Cheng, Eugene, & Esmail, Imran. (2016). *SLIDESHARE DOMINATION How to Get 2,000,000+ Views and 400+ Monthly Leads with SlideShare*. E-book.



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group



Faithé wonders how other students manage five courses—one at a time, or work on all five simultaneously; responses show that each student finds their own method after exploring the options. Mhairi asks if textbooks need to be returned when dropping a course within the 30-day window; responders say yes.

Other posts include an APA style video, easy humanities electives, early access to courses, submitting SINs through myAU, and courses LGST 489, NUTR 331, and SOCI 301.

reddit

A student wonders if there's any way to pass a course with a fail on the mid-term (and a pass is a requirement); responses suggest it's unlikely but worth asking the tutor or course coordinator.

Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets: "This free, 4-week course is open to teachers and other educational professionals considering implementing blended learning practice into their own classrooms or programs. Free MOOC for Blended Learning Practice begins March 1 <https://bit.ly/3bv2m3R>."

[@austudentsunion](#) tweets: "Hey [#AthabascaU](#) students - there are LOTS of places you can get student discounts across Canada! Check out this guide online for details! <https://bit.ly/2SKEmBf> (and get your Student ID card from AU! <https://bit.ly/2gcqtfI>) [#igo2AU](#)."

The Fit Student Visualize Success

Marie Well



Do If you ever had a bad start at anything, it may have killed your confidence. But don't let it. You can use visualization to get your gusto back in high gear. But visualization can do so much more—like help you give back to others. What greater purpose than giving exists?

Author Katie Stone writes, “Visualizing your success may seem a little silly. It's like daydreaming, not real. However, it has been proven again and again how imagining yourself succeeding actually helps you get there” (26%). So, train yourself in the art of success visualization. Once you flourish, your success will surely benefit others. For instance, my loved one takes me out for a restaurant meal twice a month, as he knows times are tight. When we build resources, we are better able to help others.

But why does visualization work? “If you fully believe you are going to be successful, your brain will do everything to ‘fix’ your current situation, since you are supposed to be successful” (26%). That means students who've performed badly in the past can “reset” through visualization. And the more details you visualize, such as you mastering your homework, the more you'll likely score higher grades.

Drum up a list of exciting dreams you wish for your future. And, for maximum joy, tie it all into helping others. I visualise how I'd cook healthy crockpot stews for a loved one, treat my dad to holiday meals, and lavish gifts on my family. I'd travel to the hot springs on Valentine's Day. I'd take courses to gain designations to make my education more marketable. “Make these ‘daydreams’ as vivid as possible. Imagine as many details as you can think of. This alone will probably get you super hyped for your future, providing you with enough motivation to be incredibly productive today.... But if you imagine your future so vividly, you ‘trick’ your brain into doing everything it can to make this life a reality and base all decisions on getting there” (27%).

Here's a simple way to visualize your future success: “Add a vision board, where you put photos up on a cardboard or something similar (or simply a Word document on your computer)” (34%). I found photos of organic groceries, a chef with a crockpot, a businesswoman, a gift basket of fruit, and Jesus arm wrestling the devil. I then uploaded the images to a video editing app. Thus, I now have a visualization movie to help inspire me. I strongly recommend you make a success flick, too. It'll keep you hungry for your goal.

But how do you narrow down your visualizations? “Simply think about three to five points that define your future life and find images that represent them. That could be something like ‘Freedom, happiness, traveling’, represented by pictures of a yacht on the ocean, a picture of Tokyo, a picture of a nice, empty beach, a campfire with friends...” (36%). My four themes include “spirituality, relationships, business success, and health.” What three to five elements of life hold

the most value for you? Write them down and scour images that best express your happiest vision.

Add to your movie until you can taste the success on screen. "It will take a bit of time until you start feeling the difference, but once your brain starts to think differently, the results are undeniable" (36%).

So, if you've been struggling at anything in life, instead visualize success. With a vision board, you'll prime your brain to grow and to share your wealth with others.

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Stone, Katie. (n.d.). *Morning Rituals: Increase Your Productivity, Success, and Happiness with Just 30 Minutes Per Morning*. E-book.



Porkpie Hat The True Nature of Luxury and Wealth

Darjeeling Jones



I feel that many of us have been conned, or have tricked ourselves, into believing that money is the only form of wealth. But to think that money is the only form of wealth is a false premise, far from true, that leads to a world of anxiety and frustration.

Monetarily, I've been poor and I've been (relatively) rich. Having had the opportunity to compare and contrast, I would have to say that rich is much, much better. I did not enjoy my years growing up in poverty, or living off of welfare, or spending nights curled up and shivering in a sleeping bag in the back seat of my rusted-out car. I don't like Kraft dinner and Wonder bread. I like lobster, caviar, foie gras, Belgian chocolate truffles, French perfume, and single malt scotch whisky. I like giving and receiving gifts, and being able to pick up bar tabs, buy tickets to the ballet, and take my friends and loved ones out to dinner. My income tends to be pretty "boom or bust," so I don't get to enjoy such rarified pleasures very often, which makes

them all the more enjoyable when the chances arise, sort of like warming myself in front of a cheerful fire after coming in from the cold.

No question, then, that having access to money is something I put a high value on, and I never, ever take it for granted (even though I can be quite reckless with it). I work very hard, and am lucky enough to be doing a variety of work that I find challenging, and that stretches me in many ways, demanding consistent creativity, patience, improvisation, and persistence. I have never seen any sort of romantic nobility or spiritual transcendence in being poor. Bottom line: making cash is not something I take lightly. Although I try not to become a wage slave, and to accept the fact that I will sometimes go for long stretches of time without very much material wealth at all, I am reconciled to lying down in this devil's bed of capitalism. It may not be the system I would ideally choose, but I ain't gonna change it in my lifetime.

Making wise decisions about how we spend our time, valuing and immersing ourselves in the pleasure of human relationships, reveling in the small wonders of the world: all of these are forms of currency far more sustainable, profound, and readily-available than Bitcoins, dollars, and bonds. What pleasure there is in gazing up at the moon, seeing the reflection of neon lights in a rain puddle, sharing a bowl of popcorn while watching an old kung fu film, or walking arm-in-arm with your best friend, window shopping in the village. What decadence there is in taking a hot bath, cradling a cup of green tea, feeling the warmth of the sunlight upon your face. What a revelation it is to just pay attention to the staggering luxuries that surround us, so many of which are free.

In my life, money comes, and money goes, but joy is forever there for the taking.



The Not-So Starving Student

Top 10 Underrated Snacks

Xin Xu



Recently during midterm season, I've discovered some new snacks that have kept my energy and motivation levels high. While not all my recent snacking habits have been healthy, they have introduced me to new ethnic snacks that are refreshing and delicious.

1. Coconut water

Coconut water is not only a healthy, hydrating drink but it is also a great substitute for sugary soft drinks. It gives a naturally sweet flavor without artificial flavors. Coconut water is high in electrolytes like potassium which is used ubiquitously in your body. One tip to purchasing authentic coconut water drinks is to read the ingredients which may tell you if additional sugars or flavor enhancers were added.

2. Roasted seaweed

Another healthy snack option is the roasted seaweed snacks. These small, portioned packages allow you to get your daily dose of minerals such as iodine and iron. The seaweed lavers make a light snack without being overly greasy or sugary.



3. Pork Rinds

One of my personal favorite alternatives to chips is pork rinds. Pork rinds have been a snacking favorite for those on keto, low carbohydrate or paleo diets for a long time.

Philippine Soda crackers

I recently discovered this brand of soda crackers that are quite unique. They are produced in the Philippines and, after a colleague's recent trip to Manila, Philippines, I had a chance to try these delicious, ethnic snacks. They come in different flavors from condensed milk to cheese. Each pack carries its own unique flavor profiles and are fantastic with afternoon tea.



4. Coconut clusters

By now, you might have realized my obsession with coconuts. They're delicious in both liquid (coconut water) and solid form! These coconut cluster snacks I found from Costco have toasted sunflower seeds, flax seeds and oat all bundled with dried coconut flakes.



5. Granola clusters

Granola clusters are one of the most versatile snacks I've yet to encounter. They taste delicious on its own but can also be added to baked goods, breakfast cereal and yogurt.



6. Soymilk drink

This brand of Hong Kongese soymilk creates perfect portion sizes that allow me to drink them on the go. If you're lactose intolerant, like me, soy snacks and products are a great substitute for dairy goods. Because of their non-dairy nature, they can also be stored at room temperature for much longer and are less likely to spoil.

7. Portuguese Egg Rolls

For those who haven't tried these delicate pastries from a former colony of Portugal (Macao, China), Portuguese egg rolls are a snack fit for royals. It is lightly crispy and mildly sweet. When paired with a glass or milk or soy, the egg rolls melt away in your mouth.



8. Milkis

This Korean soda drink is quite unlike any other sodas you've had. As the name suggests, the soda has a creamier flavor than soft drinks.

9. Nachos

A classic addition to any Netflix binges, Nachos are a timeless snack. Today's nachos come in different flavors or can be paired with salsa. To elevate your nachos, try creating your own toppings from canned chili, shredded cheese, sour cream and green onions.



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



DNA Dillema



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Dear Barb:

I am in a bad situation and I need some advice. My sister and I did our DNA testing to, hopefully, trace our ancestors. Well, we got a big surprise. It turns out we are only half siblings! We don't know what to do with this information. My parents have been together since they were teenagers and I always thought they were happy. My sister and I do not look alike, she is dark and I am fair, both my parents are fair as well. I just thought my sister may have inherited her looks from someone back in the family. Now we are both stuck with this information and don't know what to do. I would assume my mom must have been fooling around on my dad, or maybe my dad got someone pregnant and my parents raised the child. My sister and I are both confused as to what is the best way to handle this, or maybe we should just let sleeping dogs lie, as the saying goes. Although now we are both curious about the circumstances and who our real parents are. We desperately need some help!! Thanks, Rebecca.

Hi Rebecca:

Thanks for your letter. There could be a lot of different scenarios at play here. You need to take time to consider all the possibilities for this to have occurred. Don't automatically assume someone was fooling around. It could be that your parents used a sperm donor for one, or both of you and they decided together that it would be better not to

tell you girls. Since your parents got together so young, they may have had a breakup and been with other people, then found themselves back together even though a pregnancy occurred. You didn't mention whether your parents are aware that you girls have done the DNA test, and, if they are, what was their reaction. It comes down to respecting your parent's privacy, as if you hadn't done this test, this information would not have come out at this time.

Perhaps you should mention taking the test to your parents and see how they react, that may provide an opening for them to tell you how this came to be. Also, I would suggest you and your sister make an appointment with a genetic counsellor for some guidance on how to handle this situation. A genetic counselor may be able to provide more information as to whether this DNA is from your father or your mother's side. Basically, it is up to you how you want to deal with this, but keep in mind that you seem to have grown up in a happy loving family and you may not want to rock the boat.

Good luck to both you and your sister.

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
Translating Seduction

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 with any questions about this article.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Feb 12 – Mar 2:** [AUSU Election Campaign Period](#)
- **Feb 25-Mar 2** – [AUSU General Election](#)
- **Feb 29:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Apr](#)
- **Mar 5:** [AUSU Election Candidates Announced](#)
- **Mar 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Apr 1](#)
- **Mar 15:** [Apr degree requirements deadline](#)

Student Council Election!

AUSU has an impact on your experience as a distance education student at AU, no matter where you study from, what program you are in, or how involved you are with the Students' Union.

AUSU council guides and directs your students' union in its mandate to provide services, support, and advocacy for AU students, and is a part of creating an online AU student community. They represent AU students at the institutional, provincial, and federal levels and provide a voice to AU undergraduate students.

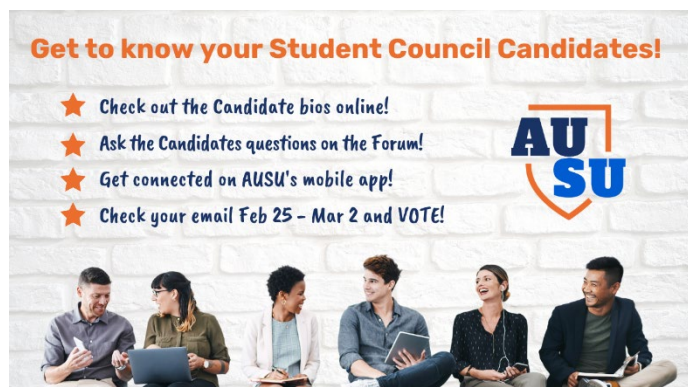
There are 13 council seats available, and 19 candidates. Following the general election, the elected council will also internally elect the 3 executive positions (*President, VP External and Student Affairs, and VP Finance and Administration.*)

Get to Know your Candidates:

- Check out their biographies & posters online [here](#).
- Ask questions in the [Election Forum](#).
- Get connected on the [Mobile App](#).

Your voice matters, and your vote has an impact on YOUR student experience. Check your email on Feb 25 and VOTE for your student council!

Find out more about the election [here](#)!



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

Publisher	Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief	Jodi Campbell
Managing Editor	Karl Low

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

www.voicemagazine.org

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

Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org.

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ISSN 2561-3634