

# THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 09 2020-02-28

## Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

## The Best University Degrees to Have What Pays and What's in Demand

## Fly on the Wall

Nipped in the Buds

*Plus:*

*Introducing My Kitchen!*

*Five Heavenly Snacks for Gorgeous You*

*and much more!*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**We love to hear from you!**  
**Send your questions and comments to [voicemagazine.org](http://voicemagazine.org),**  
**and please indicate if we may publish your letter!**

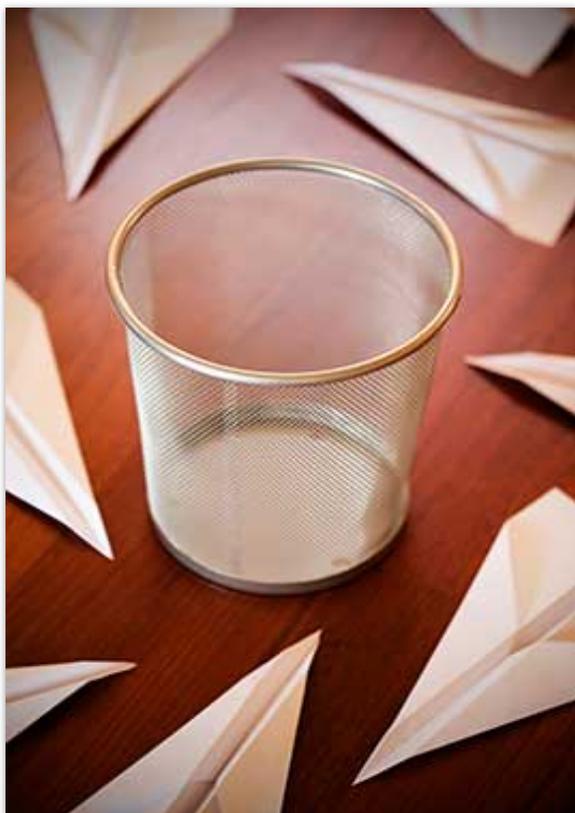
**Hey! Did you know the Voice Magazine has a [Facebook page](#)?**

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

## Editorial

### The Lost and the Missing

Karl Low



Yes, I know. It's been a week and last week's PDF still hasn't been put up. And what's going on with the website, what happened to the Minds we Meet article I wrote about?

The problem is that putting that article up was a bad call on my part. If you don't know what I'm talking about, last week, *The Voice Magazine*, or more specifically, I, decided that even though our feature student interview happened to be a candidate in the coming election, there would be no issues with publishing the piece.

I thought this because after looking at the piece, and thinking about it, I noted that the piece made no mention of AUSU, or issues relating to AUSU or the election or candidacy, it's timing was purely coincidental (these pieces go up on a first-come, first served basis), and that AUSU does not restrict what *The Voice Magazine* chooses to publish. With all that in mind, it seemed obvious to me that there was no conflict of interest in publishing the piece.

But I should have thought further. It's not just actual conflicts of interest that matter, but apparent conflicts of interest. Whether done innocently or not, it could

have been seen as giving one candidate an advantage over the others. And whether AUSU controls what *The Voice Magazine* publishes or not, it's not unreasonable for students to think it's a possibility. With that in mind, I've pulled both the Minds We Meet article in question, and the PDF that article was in, until after the appeals process of the election, just to make sure we're not giving undue influence to any one candidate.

With that said, I should also note that the polls are open now and will be so until Monday. You should have access to a ballot in your email, so make sure you take the opportunity to use it. If you don't see one, check your spam folder, and check any alternate email addresses you may have given Athabasca University. Once again, your vote will determine who are the people who will be responsible to represent you to the government, to the university, and will be responsible for designing and overseeing any services that AUSU offers with your student fees.

Meanwhile, this week, we've got a feature interview with a student who is not a candidate, seeking her Bachelor of Professional Arts through AU to catch up with her life plans of attaining a degree.

I'm also recommending the Fly on the Wall this week, as he opens up with a personal tale about how we reproduce ourselves at AU in more ways than we may think.

And if you're just starting out with AU, or perhaps your part-way through and starting to wonder if your current degree really is where you want to go with your life, Francesca Carone brings some additional information you may want to consider when you're looking toward what your future degree should be.

Plus, we of course have scholarships, events, advice, and more! Enjoy the read!

# MINDS WE MEET



*Kristen Charest is thirty-two years old working as an Educational Assistant. Enrolled in the Bachelor of Professional Arts program at Athabasca University with a major in Human Services, she shared with The Voice Magazine her favorite course and her experience so far with online learning.*

**Could 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 Kristen Charest, I am thirty-two years old, and I am currently working as an Educational Assistant in Battle River School Division. My husband and I live in Camrose County, Alberta on twenty-five acres near the Battle River.

**What program are you in? Do you like your program?**

I am enrolled in the Bachelor of Professional Arts program at Athabasca University with a major in Human Services. I am loving the program I am taking because it is so applicable to my work.

**Could you describe the path that led you to AU? What was it that made you realize you wanted to go back to school,**

**and what pushed you into the Bachelor of Professional Arts in Human Services program?**

I have worked as a nursing assistant and an educational assistant and it has always been a lifelong goal of mine to finish my degree. Life circumstances made it difficult to complete this goal within my ideal time frame. Athabasca University has made it possible for me to complete university courses wherever I was living in the country. I chose Human Services because it is applicable to my working background!

**What do you do like to do when you're not studying? Do you have any hobbies?**

When I am not studying, I love reading, especially biographies. I am also a runner and compete in road and trail races. I love to spend time catching up with friends by going for walks and drinking tea.

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

My dream job is to work alongside people and help them achieve their goals. I would be working in an area where I can make a visible difference in the lives of people through empowering them to recognize their own potential. I'm not sure what environment that will be in. If it is in a school, outreach center, church or overseas. I am hoping as I continue my education my career path will

become clearer. Some options I have considered is special education, occupational therapy or counseling!

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

Mr. Reid was one of my math teachers in high school. Through his enthusiasm, joy, and kindness he sparked inside me the love of learning!

**Could you describe your experience with online learning?**

I love online learning. The flexibility to study at my own pace and schedule my own exams has really been wonderful. My tutors have also been wonderful to work with. The university has been so helpful every step of my journey. I have been nothing but impressed with Athabasca University.

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

I am currently taking PHIL 231 (Introduction to Philosophy: West and East). It is interesting to read the perspectives of Plato and Confucius, whom I have heard of all my life, and now I am learning why.

**Would you recommend PHIL 231 to other students?**

I would. I found it to be challenging and thought provoking.

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

Communications with my course tutors has been good. I have always received a response within a few days and if I was unable to contact them during their scheduled phone availability, they have gotten back outside of those hours.

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

When listening to music and a song is cut short. Like at the end of a car ride and the radio is turned off in the middle of the song. I love hearing the music until it is finished. Sometimes the ending is the best part!

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

To love others. 1 John 4:17

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

I have been fortunate to travel quite a bit. Most recently, I visited my dear friends in Bulembu, Eswatini. They moved their family there to volunteer in the Orphanage for two years. We were able to see the work that God is doing there.

**What (non-AU) book are you reading now? Could you describe the book? Would you recommend it?**

*From the Ashes* by Jesse Thistle. It's a memoir of overcoming an extremely difficult childhood and early adult years to becoming an indigenous scholar. It's a powerful story of hope and resilience and I would definitely recommend this book!

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



## The Best University Degrees to Have

Francesca Carone



I have heard rumors and read some articles about how having a university degree these days does not guarantee reliable or high-paying employment. Statistics show that, even though more Canadians are better-educated, there is lack of employment for people with degrees, “despite the evident successes in educating more Canadians, recent data indicates that increasingly worrisome employment opportunities for our youth are a growing concern in our country” ([Filon, online](#)). However, data on the same article does show employees aged 25-54, with a university degree, fare much better with their income than those without a degree.

I think the biggest problem is experience. Employers look for it, and new graduates are lacking it. Perhaps volunteering in the same area as where you’d would like to work would help a little. Also, choosing a job that you love doing, but also is in demand.

I don’t believe that university or college degrees are becoming less in-demand, but rather they are faring well alongside of jobs that do not require degrees. The main difference is not the need for these jobs in my opinion,

but the pay.

However, Mark Swartz, a writer for the job site Monster, says, “There’s a mismatch between what students are studying, and what companies are willing to pay more for” ([Swartz, online](#)). This could be due to too many students taking the wrong courses, however it is more likely that they are not utilizing or showcasing their skills and attributes, at least, according to a Universities UK study ([Steed, online](#)). It seems that students need help from schools to define their skills and line them up with what the prospective employer is looking for. According to Monster, getting a bachelor’s degree gains you a premium of about 30% more earnings than those without degrees. There is some evidence out there to back that, such as [payscale.com](#). Nonetheless, it is helpful to know which jobs get higher premiums. If you’re looking at graduate programs, the top seven earning fields of study are:

1. Medicine/Physician
2. Dentistry
3. Accounting
4. Law
5. MBA
6. Public admin
7. Education

Next is the top eight earning undergraduate programs:

1. Engineering
2. Computer sciences
3. Commerce
4. Nursing
5. Architecture

6. Occupational/ Physical Therapist
7. Pharmacist
8. Education

Are these jobs in high demand though? We can compare those top earning degrees with these that are highest in demand in Canada according to Monster which separates jobs by provinces, but on average in Ontario, BC, Quebec, they are:

1. Finance and accounting jobs
2. Human resources
3. Sales
4. Marketing

For all of Canada, Canadian Business author (Brownell, online) shares their top ten:

1. Construction Manager (degree)
2. Public Administration Director (bachelor's degree)
3. Scientific Research Manager (master's or doctoral)
4. Engineering Manager (bachelor's degree)
5. Pipefitting Supervisor (apprentice/certification)
6. Mining & Quarrying Supervisor (advanced positions require degrees)
7. Power Systems Electrician (apprentice)
8. Utilities Manager (bachelor's degree)
9. Dentist (degree)
10. Nurse Practitioner (master's degree)

Seven out of ten of the most in demand jobs predicted by Canadian Business, require a university degree. This tells me that degrees are still in high demand, if anything more than before. While some jobs may get taken over by robots, we need to ensure that we can still find a job when we are done school.

It seems also, that there are areas that would increase your earnings, but then again, you should be at least interested in that sector and love what you do, otherwise it may not be worth it.

For those jobs that do not require a degree but rather certifications, training programs, and licences, some of the highest paid in Canada include land surveyors, air traffic controllers, and firefighters. These jobs can also be high paying and fulfilling, so make sure you decide what is right for you.

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## Fly on the Wall Nipped in the Buds; What We Don't Lose by Attending AU

Jason Sullivan



Can you recall where you were five years ago on this day, at this minute, down to this second? There'd have to have been some special circumstances on hand to remember more than foggy, grainy, flecks of reality five years hence or to recall details mired in the penumbral twilight of time gone down the tubes. We have each grown and evolved since 2015 and the passage of time has borne us into the present version of ourselves that we embody.

So why do I ask where you were five years ago? I thought you'd never ask! At the precise moment you are reading these

words a jovial Blue Jays fan was wielding a scalpel whilst standing over my exposed nether-regions. Ok, to clarify, when I say 'at the precise moment' I mean so in cosmic terms. For the universe a million years is a blink of the eye, right, so we can readily give or take a week or a month without batting our own miniscule lashes. Accuracy is relative to context and approximations work well in human realms, if not in astrophysics. Likewise, though we are each akin to mere grains of sand on a beach or flagellating flagella in a petri dish, our essence is also simultaneously the largest possible version of any universe imaginable to our human minds. Some say we each contain the whole universe in microcosm.

One need not be a neurotic solipsist, a Hindu mystic, or an advocate of Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* to know that, at root, all we know for sure is that in each moment we are here as ourselves being the knowing beings that we are. As we grow and learn we reproduce new versions of ourselves and these we cast aloft into our surroundings like so many paper airplanes or origami doves. When we meet someone whose brain sizzles our fancy, a wonderful syzygy emerges; by social alchemy, a new element is born in our life.

### Reproductive Faculties and Learning Facilities

Whilst discussing the Blue Jays spring training operations, the doctor nipped and knicked and tucked and snipped my vas deferens and left me feeling not vastly different. Well a bit chilled. Frozen bag of peas in hand I proceeded to head off camping and enjoyed a winter sunset with nary a concern about my new inability to defer my genes onto future generations. A question arose as I pondered life as a process of continued education: if our reality is each our own and we impart parts of our past selves onto each mental landscape we encounter in our AU studies, how do we separate who we are from the new versions of ourselves that arise along the path of our educational life?

Learning and growing—giving birth to new versions of ourselves along the way, as we cast off past core beliefs and personal identities—may be the essence of life itself. Even the humblest paramecium responds to its environment and, through stimulus and response, becomes a new version of its miniscule self. As complex organisms, our past selves become our future selves in a dialectical process of unfolding; this flow is eminently social and dependent upon symbolic communication: that is, language. We grow by interacting with others and with texts. To learn is to read, absorb, speak, comprehend, and become something new.

## Growing a New You at AU

Jacques Derrida utilized Hegel's German term *Aufhebung* to describe life's process where living is a verb in which we "surpass while maintaining" (Derrida, 275). Every aspect of ourself is thus growing and renewing, whereby we become something we weren't before while continuing to be ourselves. As social beings, our becoming happens through discourse and thus the concept of reproduction is itself a matter of social construction wrapped around biological reality. Artists and poets know this and we, too, even when conducting the staid aspects of our studies, know that each instance of learning alters us in some way. We are progenitors of the sacred procreative act of expression that embodies the mixture of learning, whereby we take in new material, and critical reasoning, adding to the mix our own invaluable and personal essence.

Derrida summarizes the reproductive faculty of our intellect: "The Hegelian *Aufhebung* is produced entirely from within discourse, from within the system or the work of signification. A determination is negated and conserved in another determination which reveals the truth of the former. From infinite indetermination one passes to infinite determination, and this transition, produced by the anxiety of the infinite, continuously links meaning up to itself" (Derrida, 275). The meaning of our life, then, is inextricably linked to reproduction in the symbolic sense that we are always growing in and against the infinity of the universe that we face as finite creatures.

Like a splash of food colouring in a brimming bathtub we naturally disperse and spread ourselves out into everyone and everything we touch. This is what it means to engage in discourse, both in active conversation and introspective thought. To think and speak is to promulgate new selves, new realities, and new meanings. Life becomes not only art but abundance, whereby the limited strives toward the unlimited and the subliminal toward the liminal. To learn is to know how to know and thus to grow. Formal learning is only one way to achieve this growth but at AU it becomes truly rewarding; few raptures in life surpass the joy of a course completed successfully or an essay written that utilizes the best of our minds.

## Snips of Liberation, Balloons to the Breeze

All this is to say that five years ago I faced my vasectomy not as a symbolic castration or clinical vivisection but as an opening, a gateway, out of which I would further my Athabasca studies as a convenient sidebar to the rest of my life. Time well spent is often time saved and the one thing we learn as distance students (and my hat is forever doffed to those in our noble AU cohort who do their studies while doing the parent thing) is that time is valuable in ways we'd not hitherto thought possible. We need time to study and grow or else wham-o, we are three weeks late in our coursework and nailed to the Procrustean bed of procrastination.

In each moment, and with each breath and word and moan caught in our throat as we ponder life's joyful ecstasy, we are surpassing all that we were before, and yet we carry aloft that sacred essence that is ourselves outside of time and space. Material bounds may reign us in, and time may be our master, but what matters most is what grows and abounds in the realm of our personal world and the glorious climes of our stimulated minds. In each moment we are thus born anew. In this sense, AU is the ultimate aid to scholarly reproduction of the intellectual realms that make us uniquely human, uniquely *Homo sapiens*—the 'man who thinks'. And so, while my biological reproductive faculties are closed for the season, I have boundless gratitude to AU for opening vistas of personal and social reproduction thanks to the miracle that is distance education.

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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.*



**Course Exam**

Brittany Daigle

HLST 200 (Introduction to Human Health I) is a three-credit introductory science course that emphasizes the major aspects of health and health-related areas that are of concern to Canadians. The course explores the nature and causes of health problems and discusses how diseases can be treated and prevented. HLST 200 has no prerequisites and has a challenge for credit option, if students are interested in taking that route. Students should note that HLST 200 cannot be taken for credit if credit has already been obtained for HLTH 200.

Introduction to Human Health I is made up of twelve units, two assignments weighing twenty percent each, a midterm examination weighing thirty percent, and a final examination worth thirty percent. The twelve units within this course cover several health-related topics, such as nutrition, weight, sexuality, pregnancy, heart health, heart disease, aging, and the effects of tobacco and alcohol use. To receive credit for HLST 200, students must achieve a minimum grade of at least a “D+” or fifty-five percent on each of the assignments and the examinations and an overall grade of at least a “C-,” or sixty percent or better for the entire course. The midterm and final examinations for this course must be taken online with an AU-approved exam invigilator at an approved invigilation centre. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure that your chosen invigilation centre can accommodate online exams. Registration for this course includes an online electronic textbook.

I recently interviewed a student who took HLST 200. She is currently enrolled into the four-year Bachelor of Arts program at Athabasca University with a major in Psychology and History. She would like to remain anonymous, however, does provide a bit of an introduction, stating “I’m twenty-two years old and I have worked in the oilfield for six years. I have a 5-year-old boy who’s growing big and he’s very healthy; he is going into to grade 1 in September! Interests include hiking, being a program admin for student get togethers, snowshoeing, canoeing, yoga, meditation, and relatively anything to do outside essentially. In my spare time I proceed to read books in the “self help” genre, explore new music, meet new people, and I like to be outdoors as much as I can. Visiting botanic gardens is on the top of my list for my favourite thing to do, this also includes taking care of my plant babies (7 of them)!”

When asked to explain the course to other students, she states “The course HLST200 (I) is a good introductory course on human health and I find it is an important course for all students, regardless of your major. I strongly feel like there is not enough health education available. The information I learned was based on the Canadian Guidelines (including The Canadian Food Guide). Even though I disagree with a lot of the food indications listed in the “invitation to health,” all of the other course content was relevant and I do recommend more students to take it.”

As for the structure of the course, she explains that “The course structure consisted of a mid term (the first 6 chapters), two assignments, and a final (on the other 6 chapters). Assignment 1 is a critiquing essay that is heavily marked by the course coordinator. Assignment 2 is a personal assessment, though I found that the instructions were poor to what the course coordinator expected. There is an expected word count for both of the assignments, and they are expected to be APA formatted essays.”

She found this course to be frustrating, stating “I find online textbooks to be very hard to understand. I also found that it did not matter how much I studied the textbook. If you do not have long-term memory, you will most likely struggle in this course. The information in the textbook is good, but there’s just so much to memorize. I also found that the assignments do not have much to do with the course content. I think quizzes or even more in-depth assignments would make this course a lot better. “

She continues, “The exam itself wasn’t too hard. The exam consists of multiple-choice questions, true or false questions, and short answer questions.”

As for any tips or tricks to completing this course, she explains that “All you can do is repeatedly read the textbook as close to your exam writing date as possible. Someone’s common sense will not cut it and apparently you can be wrong about why you take medication and what your medication is called!”

When asked how communication with her tutor was, she states “My assignments and examinations were marked fast. I was expecting a couple days, but my marks came back within 24 hours, though don’t expect any feedback back from your exam. Students could benefit from asking peers or family members, or even consider asking your family doctor for a second option, if that is an option for you.”

She concludes, stating “I recommend every student to take this course, but I do think the Canada Food Guide along with the course coordinator need to be reconsidered.”

Whether HLST 200 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 material surrounding the topic of human health.

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

## Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** IBABC Post-Secondary Scholarships

**Sponsored by:** Insurance Brokers Association of BC

**Deadline:** March 31, 2020

**Potential payout:** up to \$5000

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be residents of BC and their sponsor must be a full-time insurance industry practitioner in BC; further eligibility varies by scholarship; see [scholarship application](#) for full requirements.

**What's required:** A completed application form, along with an official transcript of grades, post-secondary acceptance letter, sponsor information, details on community service, extra-curricular activities, post-secondary goals, and a one-page essay on a specified topic.

**Tips:** Applications accepted by regular mail or courier only.

**Where to get info:** [www.ibabc.org/index.php/members-area/scholarships-a-awards.html](http://www.ibabc.org/index.php/members-area/scholarships-a-awards.html)



## The Fit Student Five Heavenly Snacks for Gorgeous You

Marie Well



I have a confession. The pantry's bare, and I can't stop thinking about food. Not potato chips, candy bars, or a loaded extra-large pizzas. They make me feel guilty, bloated, and blah. I'm talking the healthy scrumptious snacks that fill your body with purity, joy—and, yes, ecstasy. You want to look as gorgeous as ever, don't you?

Recently, I was at the cash register getting my groceries scanned. I'm on a tight budget, so I had twenty cans of beans: kidney, chickpeas, black beans, and lentils. I also had five bags of frozen blueberries, four bags of avocados, and four bags of apples. I didn't have any vegetables; I buy them at a different store.

Behind me in line was a young but obese couple.

“What's with all the blueberries?” snarled the

husband.

“She likes her blueberries,” laughed the wife.

I looked over at their groceries, which consisted of six giant bags of potato chips and other junk foods.

The wife said, “She buys all the cheap stuff.” She then whispered to her husband, “Maybe we should eat like that.”

And that's when I said, “I got sick four years ago, so I started eating healthy. You crave healthy foods the more you eat them.”

I hoped they'd remember this moment if one of them ever grew ill. And the odds of that looked alarmingly high.

But they'd have been better served if I listed delicious but healthy snacks. You know, the kind of snacks that make potato chips look passé. Oh, yes, the snacks that make you feel great, not guilty. The snacks you can't stop dreaming about when the pantry's bare.

If you don't know the joy of healthy snacking, you're missing out on life's finest dining.

Here are some of my dreamiest sweet and healthy snacks:

### **Frozen blueberries in a cup of milk with a tablespoon flaxseed: a healthy milkshake.**

The milk freezes, too, giving it an icy texture. Just eat it with a spoon and you've got a brain boosting breakfast. Did someone say payday?

### **Banana smothered with almond butter and a pinch of cinnamon.**

Pure ecstasy! Or, if you're not nuts about bananas, then dip a dark chocolate bar in almond butter and top with dried cherries. Pinch me!

### **Strawberries topped with unsweetened whipped coconut cream, hemp seeds, and dark chocolate nibs.**

They serve this in heaven, right? Just whip a can of unsweetened coconut cream or unsweetened full fat coconut milk. Drop a dollop on your strawberries and top with hemp and dark chocolate delights. Eyes crossing yet?

My theatrics will now die down as I just ate a surprise feed of raw almonds. Or maybe I'll grow more ecstatic with what comes next: my dreamiest savory and healthy snacks:

**Salmon or tuna mixed with whipped avocado, wrapped in a blanket of fresh kale.**

Well, who needs oils or mayo anyway? A whipped ripe avocado excites with ten times the taste and a hundred times the health. And your heart will beat steadier, despite swelling with love.

**Trail mix blend of mixed nuts, pumpkin seeds, dark chocolate nibs, shredded unsweetened coconut, and—do not forget—Medjool dates.**

The first time I ate a Medjool date, I knew what a wickedly wholesome candy could taste like. It happened to be stuffed with cream cheese, if you want a savory twist for your taste buds.

If you never look at a potato chip again, hey, I don't blame you. After tasting healthy snacks, your stomach will no longer growl or moan; it'll purr. Bon appetite in heaven, gorgeous you!



## Porkpie Hat

### Some Thoughts from a Wayward Traveler

## Darjeeling Jones



I used to feel a little bit guilty and inadequate, as I was backpacking around strange cities, seeing all of the other tourists who were dutifully lining up for admission to the Eiffel Tower or the Uffizi. It was my private shame that I was so frequently within a stone's throw of the Vatican, the Queen, and the Mona Lisa, yet had no desire to get any closer to have a look. While my friends were engaging with the local culture and history, I was wandering about taking pictures of graffiti in dodgy alleys, hanging out in greasy spoon coffee shops or dive bars, smoking cigarettes in parks and hashish in red light district cafes, or blowing what little extra cash I had in pool halls and pinball arcades.

While the impulse was obviously not strong enough for me to amend my ways, this sense that I was somehow "missing out" on something sort of fed into a chronic insecurity - perhaps even a low-level form of self-loathing - that had long been present in my life. I had been told by adults - relatives, teachers - that I was lazy and undisciplined, arrogant, a dreamer, irresponsible, a user, a betrayer, a loser. It was a leitmotif reinforced by a series of toxic relationships over the

years. So, naturally, I became what other people saw. I became, from time-to-time, all the labels that had been pinned on me.

It's like ripples in a pond; understanding moves outward in concentric circles. In order to begin to understand the world, you must know yourself first. And, if you don't manage to know

yourself well, other people will be more than happy to let you know who you are. The problem of course, is that they don't know you, not really. And what they decide you are will most likely not sit well with who you *actually* are. At best, their vision of you will be distorted. Then, every mirror you look into will be a sinister funhouse mirror. You will be contorted, stretched out of shape, simplified in your grotesquerie and inadequacy, or (just as bad) in your flawlessness and beauty.

It took me a long time, far too long, to understand that the fact I chose to do things differently from my relatives, lovers, and peers, was not indication that there was something wrong with or lacking in me. It was simply an indication that I was me, for better or for worse. There was nothing essentially "right" with me because I had different methods, dreams, pleasures, and values from others. But there was nothing essentially "wrong" with me, either. Like everybody else, I am a flawed, beautiful, reckless, and ultimately passable human machine.

Traveling, to my mind, is one of the great metaphors for the process of living. In travel, as in life, some people are planners. They take care. They think things through. They chart, categorize, and organize. Others of us take a very different approach. We don't like to plan, we just like to improvise, to show up and make shit happen. We are not perfectionists; we don't consider things too carefully. We are emotional, inconsistent, sometimes secretive, sometimes flamboyant, one minute hiding behind carnival masks, the next minute wearing our hearts pinned to the outsides of our skins. It doesn't always make for the safest or most comfortable passage. We are the sorts of tourists who frequently get mugged. We often wake up face down in puddles, or in Tijuana jail cells, with skull-and-roses tattoos on our hip bones. Sometimes, though, we stumble across breathtaking sights, that more organized travelers may have missed.

## The Not-So Starving Student Introducing my Kitchen!

Xin Xu



Over the years, I've grown quite attached to my kitchen. It's where I've spent hours baking for the holidays or learning a new recipe. The more that I have come to work in this space, the more I have been efficient in improving the workflow of the area. I wanted to introduce this sacred space to my fellow AU students. For AU students living in smaller quarters or trying to maximize the space within their kitchen, there's many tips that can help reduce clutter and help create an illusion of space.

### Spice Cupboard

My spice cupboard contains all the necessary ingredient combinations for a delicious meal. One of the challenges many beginner chefs have is organizing this space. For myself as a budget-sensitive student, I wanted the luxury of matching spice jars without having to overwhelm my wallet. A full spice rack with 30 compartments can run you from \$40-\$60 which was outside of my budget range. Instead, I improvised with using older jam and mason jars. This has

cleared away the clutter coming from individual spice packaging that doesn't already come in glass jars.

## The Fridge

While I have witnessed the growth of “smart fridges” that automatically track the freshness of produce in your fridge, I have yet to own one myself. Smart fridges look something of the future with its touch screens and advanced sensor systems. Instead, my humble fridge boasts a master calendar which tracks when my fresh produce is coming due. Having a smaller fridge also helps me be accountable for the groceries I purchase. It is also easier to find items at the back of the fridge or give the insides a wipe-down when needed.



## The Island

This make-shift kitchen island has been widely useful for additional items that don't fit on the kitchen counter. Given that not every AU student has the luxury of a broad kitchen island, a make-shift island is perfect because of its functionality and price tag. This bar table with four stools runs you around \$250 at Ikea and has been extremely hardy over the years.





## The Stove

I often get asked whether I prefer electric or natural gas ranges, and my answer has never quite changed. I definitely prefer having a natural gas range for the speed of cooking and even heating. However, electric ranges definitely have its advantages in other ways. For example, while this stove is rather outdated compared to newer models, you can never get carbon monoxide poisoning cooking over an electric stove. A natural gas range will inevitably produce carbon monoxide as a by-product of combustion which can be harmful if enough of it accumulates.

## Tea Counter

Part of my counter is dedicated solely to coffee, tea and hot water kettle. While the area takes up a corner of the counter, it does help speed the process up in the morning when I prepare my coffee or tea.

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



## The Study Dude

### How to Read Critically and Get Published



What better way to learn creative writing than to eavesdrop on a bunch of grad students. Seriously! But who's so privileged as to have a key to the Fine Arts grad student lounge? Not me. So, novice me stumbled and stagnated. Befuddled, I asked around, "How do you study the classics?" "Read the classics" or "Take an English class" were common responses. Surely, there must be an easier way, I thought.

And there is.

The Open University offers a free course called *Creative Writing and Critical Reading* that sheds light on how to critically read creative writing. The university offers other free courses, such as [how to write essays](#). But if you're like me, creative writing marks your weakness. So, I downloaded the E-book excerpt of the *Creative Writing and Critical Reading* course. In that book I stumbled on a gem: grad students chatting about reading critically for creative writing.

## Marie Well

And now I've got some insight into how you and I can analyze creative writing—to get published or at least boost our grades.

Here are my top six favorite tips from the grad students:

**Take shorthand notes while reading creative writing.** Ben Masters says, “I scribble in all of my books .... So I'm kind of always annotating and underlining.... Sometimes, it can seem like gibberish. It's just exclamation marks and 'wow' and sometimes things that are less kind of repeatable .... I essentially just put letters inside of circles-- so 's' for 'simile,' 'm' for 'metaphor'” (73%).

I love this idea! I plan to gather a list of literary devices and buy a literary dictionary to help me create a shorthand system. (I once had a literary dictionary, but it's been swallowed by piles of books). With a shorthand system and a basic understanding of the literary devices, both you and I can begin to analyze creative writing with a keener eye.

**Let poetry inform your prose.** Sally O'Reilly says, “I think poetry can really inform prose. And the way that language is used by poets is often something which prose writers can really gain from” (65%).

My brother wrote poems that rhymed with strict meter. I adored them, and not just because I adored him. His poems sounded like Edgar Allen Poe in what could've been Poe's high school days. And one of my brother's poems made me cry—the one about the court jester who had a tear in his eyes. Another of my brother's poems got published in the local newspaper. Oh, I wished I could do that. Perhaps it's time you and I studied contemporary poetry magazines—but with an eye for thievery. It's not okay to steal lines from poems, but it's a wise to let poems inspire our prose.

**Read contemporary poetry with the aim to publish.** Siobhan Campbell says, “If you're not reading contemporary poetry, you will not be tuned in to what's actually going on. So I always find a good thing to do is to ferret out one or two or three magazines where some of the poems speak directly to you and you think, yeah, I'd actually quite like to write like that. That might be a magazine I eventually might submit to. And if you keep up with those ... you get a sense of what people are doing” (93%).

## AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

### Blended Learning Practice MOOC

Mar 1 to Mar 28

Online

Hosted by AU and the Commonwealth of Learning

[news.athabascau.ca/events/blended-learning-practice-mooc](https://news.athabascau.ca/events/blended-learning-practice-mooc)

Register through above link

### MBA for Executives Webinar

Tues, Mar 3, 10:00 to 11:00 am MST

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[news.athabascau.ca/events/mba-for-executives-webinar-20200303](https://news.athabascau.ca/events/mba-for-executives-webinar-20200303)

Register through above link

### "AU has a Library?"

#### An Introduction to Library Resources and Services

Wed, Mar 4, 9:00 to 10:00 am MST

Online

Hosted by AU Library

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

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

### Live Chat—Online MBA for Executives

Wed, Mar 4, 1:00 to 3:00 pm MST

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[news.athabascau.ca/events/online-mba-for-executives-live-chat-20200304](https://news.athabascau.ca/events/online-mba-for-executives-live-chat-20200304)

Access through above link

*All events are free unless otherwise noted.*

Similarly, you can seek out a publisher for the genre of novel you wish to publish. Once you locate a publisher (who accepts submissions without an agent), read the submission guidelines. The guidelines now become your blueprint. Hang those guidelines on your bathroom wall. Follow-up by reading as many books as you can in your genre made by that publisher. Take shorthand notes on the writers' styles, and sprinkle the most striking techniques into your own writing. You'll go pro in short time.

**Let nonfiction inspire your poetry.** Siobhan Campbell says, "I find non-fiction feeds well for me into poetry, so I'm addicted to things like New Scientist, National Geographic... I'm writing poems at the moment involving ... mainly cows. And I was fascinated to find recently that cows' gall bladders sell for thousands and thousands of pounds. So that's the kind of detail I might be finding in the non-fiction, and it might wind its way into a poem" (84%).

I used to love reading encyclopaedias before I went to sleep. I did it for several months before giving up. I also read one third or more of a pocket dictionary by reading two pages a night. And I read the entire Christian Bible by reading two pages every night before bed. It took me over two years! So, if you want to research U.S. military for a series of poems, pick up historical encyclopaedias on weaponry or world wars. Savor how nonfiction can inform your creative process.

**Watch Theatre if you want to write for Theatre.** Jo Reardon says, "So I think when you're writing for Theatre ... you've got to go to Theatre a lot. If you write for the Theatre, you absolutely have to go and go to different types of Theatre, so not just somewhere like the National Theatre in London, but also the smaller fringe theatres" (91%).

I stay clear of Theatre, but you may like it. I used to go to dinner theatres just for the dinner. I can barely stay awake for a full-length cinematic film. In fact, I'd rather read the script. But, oh, do I love documentaries. But to be truly gifted at playwriting or scriptwriting, you should go to the shows. The script is one thing, but the visuals, audio, acting, and special effects—combined—also drive the story. Knowing your media is key to your success in writing scripts.

**Do more than watch Theatre; read the scripts.** Jo Reardon says, "One thing that actually is really important is to read scripts, because, particularly if you're writing for stage, you need to understand how it looks on the page because it's part of the presentation, and that will convey itself to the way the actors will interpret it" (82%).

Playwriting has a very specific structure: scenes, acts—and shorthand. Playwriting also tends to allow for creative interpretation by directors and actors. This allowance is done by not going into too much minutiae: by not writing in every smile, sigh, or smirk. After you read lots of scripts, you'll master playwriting's special structure.

**Let documentaries guide your writing of dialogue.** Jo Reardon says, "And I'm always alert to watching documentaries I like because you can get to hear how people speak, how people really do speak in real life. Because dialogue in drama is not conversation in the way we would normally think of it, but it can help you to hear how real people speak, if you like-- interrupting each other, pausing, not finishing a sentence off, not really saying what they mean to say, or sometimes being very honest about what they're saying. So I think also those non-fiction elements on screen can help as well" (87%).

I've heard of people going into Starbucks to eavesdrop on conversations. But why not record those chitchats and type them up at home? That's a new twist on an old idea. Not sure it's legal, though. If you don't want to take the risk, then watch documentary films with subtitles. If you're a grad student, bonus points: you can interview people for your thesis. Typing up the transcripts

will give you an edge in studying dialogue. And if you're a communications grad student, you can dissect conversational language through a number of methodologies, including discourse analysis.

So, where do you begin? I know where I want to start: a publisher, publisher guidelines, and a whole new reading list. I'll top it off with a subscription to contemporary poetry and a shorthand for critically marking up books.

Perhaps you and I just learned how to critically read creative writing. Now let's go on to write our bestsellers—and give those grad students lots to chatter about.

#### References

Open learn: Free Learning from the Open University. (2019). *Creative Writing and Critical Reading*. U.K.: The Open University. E-book course excerpt.



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

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

#### AthaU Facebook Group

Heather wonders if purchasing the APA manual is worth it; most responders say yes, while others found using online info or a borrowed copy is sufficient. Regan seeks a hard-copy PSYC 315 textbook and quickly finds one on offer.

Other posts include AUSU Student Council election (voting continues until March 2), job hunting, financial advisor woes, and courses CMNS 423 and ENGL 255.

#### reddit

A quartet of queries relating to courses ACCT 454, COMM 277, MATH 215, and MGSC 312.

#### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Attention #AU graduate students and MAIS alumni! The Journal of Integrated Studies is holding a fiction-writing contest to celebrate their 10th anniversary. Want more information? <https://bit.ly/39StNDf>."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Did you know that all #AthabascaU students get Microsoft Office for FREE? Includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and OneNote along with your AU student email account. Check the AU website for details. <http://office365.athabascau.ca/faqs.php>."





## Temper Troubles

*Dear Barb:*

*My boyfriend and I have been together for 3 years, we moved in together last year. We love each other, but he is so short tempered that we are never able to work through any problems. As soon as I bring something up that's bothering me, he shuts me down and refuses to discuss it. He says I am always criticizing him. I'm not criticizing him, but rather just trying to explain how I feel and how he makes me feel. Most of the time when we get in an argument he walks out and I am left alone to try to deal with an unresolved issue. When he comes back, he doesn't speak to me for a couple of days then everything goes back to the way it. Of course since the problem was never solved it quickly resurfaces. We have tried counseling but it didn't do much, only helped for a short time. He has never been violent physically, but the verbal aggression is hard for me to tolerate. I am not ready to end this because when things are good they are really good. Do you have any suggestions that might help us?*

*Thanks, Erica.*

Hi Erica:

Thanks for your letter. It is very difficult to communicate with someone who won't listen. You are right nothing gets resolved; it carries forward to be brought up again and again. The ability to communicate is the cornerstone for any

relationship to survive, and for both people to be happy. Arguments are a normal part of any relationship and, in many cases, they are the only way to bring things to the forefront that need to be worked out. If one person doesn't listen, the other person will become frustrated and that doesn't make for a compatible union.

You said you tried counselling and it didn't work, maybe you need to go to another counselor. Like everything in life, there are good and bad counselors. The best way to find a counselor is to ask your family doctor for a recommendation. Also it sounds like your boyfriend might need to go for a few anger management classes, to help him learn how to react in a healthier manner. If you find the right counselor and you are both open to change, there is no reason why this relationship cannot work. However, you may both need to change, perhaps your approach triggers something in your boyfriend that causes him to overreact. It's important that you go to counseling together to learn healthy ways of interacting with each other.

Best of luck, Erica.

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



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## 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!

It's time to VOTE for your AUSU Student Council! There are 16 candidates and 13 open council seats. Ballots have been emailed to all AUSU members, so check your inbox!

Voting runs from Feb 25 to Mar 2, 2020 at 11:59pm MT.

### Why Should You Vote?

**Your vote matters - no matter where you live or what you study!** AUSU impacts your experience as a distance education student at Athabasca University. AUSU council guides and directs your students' union in its mandate to provide services, support, and advocacy for AU students and is part of creating an online AU student community. The council represents AU students at the institutional, provincial, and federal levels, and provides a voice to students when important decisions regarding your education are being made.

The more students that vote, the more relevant and impactful AUSU is. [Listen here to find out why!](#)

### How to find out more about the candidates:

- Check out their biographies & posters online [here](#).
- Learn about candidate views in the [Election Forum](#).
- Check out [candidate interviews](#) in The Voice.

### How to Vote:

- Check your inbox for your ballot (emailed Feb 25).
- Choose up to 13 candidates
- Fill out your ballot by March 2 at 11:59pm MT.

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



## AUSU Open Mic Podcast – Vote!

[Episode 21](#) of the AUSU Open Mic Podcast is now live!

Current AUSU student councillor Brandon Simmons and AUSU staff give an overview of how easy it is to vote in the AUSU student council election. The group also discusses how important your vote is to AUSU, making your students' union more effective and more responsive to student needs. Listen in [here!](#)



## After the Election

We will all be on pins and needles for the next week waiting to find out WHO gets elected to Student Council - and of course we will be announcing the results to everyone!

The election results will be announced at a [teleconference meeting on March 5 at 5:30pm Mountain Time](#). All members welcome!

If you can't attend the meeting, don't worry! The results will be made available to all members on the AUSU website, in an e-newsletter, and on social media!

Following the election, there is an appeals period from **March 5 until March 12, 2020**. If you have any questions, please contact the Chief Returning Officer at [cro@ausu.org](mailto:cro@ausu.org).

The newly-elected council will also internally elect the [executive positions](#) from among themselves, following the appeals period, between March 26 – April 2, 2020. The elected council will officially take office on April 16, 2020 at our [Council Changeover Meeting](#).



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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

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## THE VOICE

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