



THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 12 2020-03-20

Education Cuts in AB & ON

Distance Ed, OSAP, Teacher Strikes & VSU

Homemade is Better Friday Night Pizza

An Issue of Respect The Terms of Disabilities

Plus:
The Banality of Righteousness
Why We Need You to Write
and much more!



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Even I don't look at it, it's
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

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

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

Editorial

Day Two In The Bunker

Karl Low



It sounds so much more dramatic with that title, doesn't it? In reality, my partner and I have decided we're going to voluntarily self-isolate for a while (not from each other, just from you people). We're trying for a month, and this is the second day. Honestly, I don't expect it's going to be that hard, because we've been online shoppers for quite a while, and know of various grocery stores and others in this city that have had online shopping for years.

Are we being paranoid? Maybe a little. But I read the news about what's happened in Italy and it just seems responsible to do our part to ensure that we don't add to the burden on the health care system at all. "Flattening the curve" as the meme goes. Neither of us is ill (yet), and if we just stay home and don't come into contact with anybody, the odds of it staying that way are much improved.

So today is the second day since we decided we aren't going anywhere for a month. We're decently stocked (albeit without buying any toilet paper—at this point, it's the principle of the thing, we're simply refusing to buy into the buying panic) and the latest Doom video game

has just been released so, irony of the title notwithstanding, we're ready for a long haul. It helps, of course, that we've both been working from home for years.

In fact, most of us as AU students have an advantage in that respect. We understand already what it's like to work from home, the challenges that many people don't understand of maintaining focus, overcoming procrastination and distractions, and, equally as important, being able to set the work down to maintain some sort of life balance. For many other people, this is likely going to be a significant challenge. Maybe take some time to help your friends and family who aren't familiar with it. Give them a call and some tips on how you've managed to do it with your courses over the years.

Then, since you've got the time in your bunker, come on back and check out our feature article about the cuts to education budgets that have been happening in Ontario and Alberta. Natalia Iwanek gives us a great background on all you need to know about what's going on in the intersection of provincial governments and post-secondary funding and actions. Including an update on Ontario's "Student Choice Initiative", which is currently struck down by the court; the Ontario government has appealed the decision, however.

Also, this week a new writer and trained chef has come forward to give us all a bit of help when we can no longer get out to the restaurants. Missing your Friday Night Pizza? Not any more! Read Chef Corey's article "Homemade is Better" so you can get your pizza fix fixed up! And Francesca Carone looks at the issue of how do we speak about people with disabilities these days? It's an issue of respect, and she'll help you with it.

Plus, of course, news, reviews, advice, and other articles to keep you amused while you help flatten the curve yourself! Enjoy the read!

Alberta and Ontario Education Cuts Distance Education, OSAP, Teacher Union Strikes, and Student Unionism

Natalia Iwanek



In recent months, students and teacher associations have continued to decry provincial governmental policies by Alberta's United Conservative Party (UCP) under Jason Kenney and Ontario's Progressive Conservative government under Doug Ford amidst cuts to education.

Early this month, the Alberta provincial government announced its plans to not renew Alberta Distance Learning Centre's (ADLC) service agreement after the 2021-22 year. They will also slowly phase out the program, reducing \$18 CAD million in funding this year, to \$14 million and \$7 million in the upcoming two years, a result of Budget 2020, which introduced various cuts to balance Alberta's budget by 2022 – 23.

ADLC began a century ago as a correspondence school for students in Alberta's rural and remote areas, with materials delivered by post. After

adopting its current name in 1991, ADLC linked with the Pembina Hills School Board in 1996. ADLC currently supports Alberta's school boards by providing Grades 1 – 12 instruction, teacher support, and resources free of charge. Students can access courses online or in print.

Critics, such as Bárbara Silva, Communication Director of Support Our Students Alberta, are not surprised. When contacted for a statement, she revealed, "Support Our Students Alberta is disappointed but not surprised that the contract for the Alberta Distance Learning Centre will be canceled in two years time. The decision is in keeping with this government's persistent focus on divesting itself of its obligation to properly fund public education for all students across Alberta."

Currently, the province offers thirty-two distance education programs and ADLC cuts aim to equitably fund the province's distance education providers. Critics believe that while ADLC may have been the only provider to receive dedicated block funding, the cuts will lead to outsourcing to for-profit online learning. This is because other distance providers, which did not offer specific grades or courses, would often send students to ADLC. Silva stated, "Eliminating funding for ADLC does not eliminate the need to provide educational resources to these students, it only services to create a market for private providers to step in and commodify learning at the expense of our most marginalized students. We anticipate this gap being filled by online third-party providers in light of current underfunding for education at all levels. This is yet another way this government creates an environment that incentivises privatization in education and we are disappointed beyond measure with this decision. We would like to remind this government that purports to support choice in education that the overwhelming majority of Albertans (94%) choose public education in some form, and it behooves this Ministry to respect that decision."

When contacted for a statement, Jason C. Schilling, President of the Alberta Teachers' Association, worried about the fate of teachers, "In regards to the cuts to the funding of ADLC, it is a perplexing decision by government to end the funding of ADLC as they have been in operation for decades. There could be several impacts to education in Alberta. First, there are

around 80 teachers who work with ADLC, the cuts cause uncertainty to these teachers as to whether they will have employment.”

Critics also fear that this will push already marginalized students further out of the educational system, especially those in rural districts that do not have access to resources and materials provided by ADLC. According to Silva, “... ADLC serves as a lifeline for our most marginalized students, rural students, students who were disengaged by the regular system and currently, by an antiquated curriculum that doesn't reflect them in any way.”

Similarly, Schilling believes, “Another impact would be to the students of Alberta. Many schools rely on ADLC to assist students with a successful completion of school. Many rural boards will use ADLC materials to provide students opportunity they may not get in a regular class setting. For instance, my school does not offer Spanish courses, but students can obtain credits through ADLC. It is also noteworthy that during times of crisis such as the floods in Calgary or the fires in Fort McMurray, ADLC provided materials to students, often free of charge, to allow them to continue their studies. There has been no clear reasoning as to why this cut is necessary or what the plans are for Boards to deliver a service similar to the one that ADLC provides.”

Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 budget will remain at \$8.2 billion until 2022 – 23, while abolishing Class Size Funding, Classroom Improvement and School Fee Reduction grants. Critics point out the while funding remains the same, student populations are expected to continue increasing.

In addition, in 2019 – 2020, Alberta's post-secondary education's budget was decreased to \$5.1 billion from \$5.4 billion, with an expected further decrease to \$4.8 billion by 2022 – 23. An end to the 5-year tuition freeze means a 7% tuition increase institutionally, including here at AU, will be affecting out of province and international students as well. The interest rate for student loans will also increase to prime plus 1%, from the current prime.

In Ontario, although more than one year has passed since Ontario Premier Doug Ford's January 2019 cutbacks to education, protests continue. Cuts to Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP), Ontario's student loan program, cuts of secondary education, as well as the introduction of voluntary student unionism are some examples of controversy.

In secondary education, the Ford government cut \$25 million from specialized programs in primary and secondary schools. The Education Programs-Other (EPO) Fund provided programs for at risk youth, including after school programs, tutoring, daily physical activity, and leadership. Other cuts included rolling back the sex education curriculum and removing the \$100 million budget for school repairs. Increased class sizes required by the budget may mean the loss of 3,400 teacher's positions in the next few years. In addition, the government shut down the Harmony Movement, an anti-racist group, which promoted inclusive education and workshops for the province's school boards. Topics included racism, Islamophobia, and homophobia.

As a result of these cuts, Ontario's teachers' unions have begun labour actions. These include rotating strikes and walkouts by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF). While Ford has been recently quoted, “The parents are losing their patience, we're losing our patience,” OSSTF president Harvey Bischof countered “Of course

parents are losing patience, but all evidence tells us they're losing patience with the Ford government and its short-sighted pursuit of reckless cuts that will damage students' opportunities and Ontario's future economy."

Amidst these actions, the Ford government, which had previously introduced a controversial plan to make e-learning courses compulsory for high school students, has recently changed its position. On March 3, 2020, Education Minister Stephen Lecce revealed that parents now have the option to opt out of this requirement. They have also offered to decrease the number of proposed students in the classrooms, however, Harvey Bischof, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, revealed that he would like Lecce to "bring proposals to the bargaining table."

In post-secondary education, the Ontario government cut free-tuition for low-income students, with Training, Colleges, and Universities Minister Merrilee Fullerton calling OSAP grants unsustainable. Low-income students, especially those in families earning less than \$50,000 CAD per year, who could have previously had their entire tuition covered, will now receive a portion of their funding as a loan. In addition, the OSAP threshold for students qualifying for partial funding whose families earn \$175,000 CAD has been reduced to \$140,000 CAD.

Ford also announced a 10% tuition cut for 2019 – 2020 and tuition freeze the following year, believing that this will help those students who need it most, but critics disagree. Liberal Mitzie Hunter, former minister of post-secondary education believes that while wealthy students benefit, needy students still suffer. This is expected to cut \$360 million in revenue from universities and \$80 million in revenue for colleges.

Finally, Ford launched the "Student Choice Initiative (SCI)." Approved by the Cabinet on December 12, 2018 and announced on January 17, 2019, SCI allowed students to opt out of paying additional fees, such as those for student unions – which in turn fund campus groups, clubs, and newspapers. In a February 2019 fundraising email, Doug Ford's statements caused controversy as he stated, "Students were forced into unions and forced to pay for those unions" as well as "I think we all know what kind of crazy Marxist nonsense student unions get up to" have led critics to question if these cuts are politically motivated.

NDP colleges and universities critic Chris Glover released a statement stating that Ford's decision is destroying student unions for the simple reason that he does not want students organizing to protest his cuts. Fear existed that opting out's would reduce the transparency of Ontario's post-secondary institutions. Many of these organizations hold school administrators and the Ontario government accountable for their actions, including fee increases and strategic plans. Liberal Mitzie Hunter believes that "This is an attack on the voice of students to advocate for themselves." Other critics, such as Jack Denton, editor in chief for *The Varsity*, believe that student unions are

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

Learning to Learn Online MOOC

Mar 20 to Apr 26

Online

Hosted by AU

news.athabasca.ca/announcements/learning-to-learn-online-mar-2020

Register through above link, or at www.ltlo.ca

Hack the Library:

Using Discover to Access Journal Articles, Books, and E-Books

Thur, Mar 26, 2:00 to 3:30 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Library

library.athabasca.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

making education more accessible and fighting to lower fees. A full-time Ontario student should expect to pay approximately \$300 in fees yearly.

A recent article by Coty Zachariah, National Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, an organization representing 500,000 members of 64 student unions across Canada, in college, undergraduate, and graduate levels, reveals that student unions and associations are key to driving systemic changes in education. Unions have won victories, such as increased funding for Indigenous students, as well as graduate students, standalone sexual assault policies, grants for students with disabilities, and tuition freezes.

University newspapers, such as the University of Toronto's *The Varsity* are funded by mandatory student fees. Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Merrilee Fullerton stated, "Students shouldn't be forced to pay fees for things they don't use or support." However, *The Varsity* provides the main source of news for 90,000 students and has approximately 30 employees. Other benefits of student unionism include organizing and collective action, creating student newspapers, offering funding for student clubs, coordinating orientation weeks, and running food banks, peer support, and equity centres, which focus on disabled, BIPOC, and queer students. Fees that remained mandatory amidst the changes included health and counselling, athletics and recreation, walksafe programs, and academic support.

In November, 2019, the Ontario Divisional Court struck down the SCI based on filing by the Canadian Federation of Students and the York Federation of Students, with a large part dealing with the issue of university autonomous governance. Canadian Federation of Students v. Ontario 2019 ONSC 6658 granted the Federation's application. After the overturn of the Student Choice Initiative (SCI), many schools, such as York University released statements that "students enrolled in the Winter 2020 term courses will be charged all non-essential fees pertaining to those courses." Carleton University will also be charging fees, however, not retroactively. On November 9, 2019, the Ontario provincial government announced their appeal of the decision.

When contacted for a statement, Niveditha Sethumadhavan, Vice-President of External Affairs at Brock University Students' Union stated that "While currently the Student Choice Initiative has been suspended, there were a number of changes that were identified by us that would have and have had a lasting impact within the province of Ontario. First and foremost, student association autonomy is threatened. Students do not realize that several of the essential services that they are reliant on are run by Student Unions. These are the various services, that through a democratic process, was voted on by the student body itself. Here at the Brock University Students' Union, we run food businesses, a food bank, the transit program and multiple other services that have a large impact on student life. Advocacy at its basic level is threatened. It is the most marginalized students who rely on these services who would not continue to have a framework of support. We are very glad that the SCI has been reverted and look forward to going back to operating in the way that we did, serving our students to the highest standard."

Historically, the Ford government's move against unionism has precedence. In 2006, Voluntary student unionism (VSU) officially came into effect in Australia. Australia's Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill 2005 was an amendment to *Higher Education Support Act 2003* "to abolish compulsory student unionism in higher education institutions which receive Commonwealth funding; and reduce grants to an institution that breaches the voluntary student unionism requirements." However, its true beginnings can be traced back to 1994. In 2012, New Zealand's Education (Freedom of

Association) Amendment Act came into effect, where it is known as voluntary student membership (VSM).

Although these cuts are recent, in Ontario particularly, history is repeating itself, with cuts reminiscent of Mike Harris' "Common Sense Revolution," which included teacher strikes, increased class sizes, increased teaching days, and well as less teacher preparation time. In Alberta, Kenney's government has been compared to the early 1990s Ralph Klein's cuts to education.

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>.

Disabled Person or Person with a Disability? An Issue of Respect

Francesca Carone



"An estimated 3.8 million Canadian adults reported having some type of disability. This represents 13.7% of the Canadian population" ([CHRC,online](#)). A disability is a functional limitation or restriction that interferes with the ability to perform an activity. Many disabled people face discrimination, ridicule, and disadvantages. About 60% of claims made to the Human Rights Commission are on the basis of some form of discrimination due to their disability ([CHRC](#)); sometimes they are denied rights or services, other times they are ridiculed or made to feel unworthy. Last year, a woman was asked to leave a grocery store because she was unable to pack her bags fast enough. According to *CBC*, No Frills in Alberta told her not to come back until she had someone to help her. She claims she said to them, "Are you telling me because I'm disabled, I can't shop here?" And he said, 'Yes.' I said, 'I don't have anyone to help me and I have my

prescriptions here.' He said, 'Well, you're just going to have to go somewhere else.'" ([Marchitelli,online](#)). After she complained to head office, they offered her \$100 to not speak about it anymore—just one example of the type of discrimination faced by disabled people.

When it comes to students who are disabled, 1 in 4 students with a disability were bullied in school because of it. "1 in 10 students with a disability end their education early because of their disability" and 40% of "persons with disabilities report their disability has limited their career options" ([CHRC](#)). The report by the human rights commission uncovered that persons with disabilities still face many barriers while trying to access their education. The four main barriers were: "lack of disability accommodation and support; lack of services and funding; ineffective dispute resolution; and a lack of special education and disability supports on First Nations reserves" In addition, "More than one in four persons with disabilities across Canada report being bullied at school due to their condition. The proportion is highest (33.7%) for men with disabilities living in the territories" ([CHRC,online](#)).

This is disheartening because I believed most Canadians are respectful and would not treat people like this. Most colleges and universities have a pretty good handle on accommodation, and so I do not think most of the numbers represent post-secondary, but I could be wrong.

So how do we speak of them respectfully? According to the Canadian government, using the term “person” first, and then their disability is more respectful. For example, the government guidance is that “The word “disabled” is an adjective, not a noun. People are not conditions. It is therefore preferable not to use the term “the disabled” but rather “people with disabilities.” (HRSDC). They emphasize using respectful terms when writing or speaking of them. Another example is not using the words “brave,” “courageous,” or “inspirational” because we want to emphasize the person with a disability as the same as everyone else in the population and words should emphasize inclusion. They also request that images chosen not reinforce stereotypes about them and that people should not use references such as “suffers from,” “stricken with,” “afflicted by,” “patient,” “disease,” or “sick”, as these words suggest constant pain or suffering, as well as hopelessness. (HRSDC).

The main message is that people with disabilities should be treated the same as everyone else. They should not be discriminated against, refused service, or spoken of in a demeaning way. Treating everyone with the same level of respect despite their age, gender, race, disability, and so on, is what Canadians are usually known for, and we hope that the instances when this has not been the case will disappear.

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Francesca is an AU student living in Nova Scotia, who enjoys animals, kids, and nature.



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: The Irene Adler Prize

Sponsored by: Lucas Aykroyd

Deadline: April 30, 2020

Potential payout: \$1000 USD

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be women, Canadian or U.S. Citizens, and commencing or continuing to pursue a degree in journalism, creative writing, or literature, at a recognized post-secondary institution in Canada or the U.S. in 2020-21.

What's required: An email with a completed entry form, along with a 500-word essay on one of three given topics (see [submission guidelines](#).)

Tips: Check out the [2019 winning essay](#) for inspiration.

Where to get info: www.lucasaykroyd.com/scholarships



Homemade is Better Friday Night Pizza

Corey Wren



For five years my family has eaten pizza on Fridays. We make it because there is something about homemade pizza, it just has a better quality to it. And its cheap! Anyone can make pizza. With a few ingredients, some time, and some patience you will be rewarded with a restaurant experience at home!

If you have a stand mixer or bread machine, put them to work. If you have neither, then good, old elbow grease will also work. Some words of caution: it is better to knead your dough a little longer than not long enough. You want to develop gluten in pizza, that is what makes the dough crusty. Having a pizza stone is also handy, but not a necessity, for this recipe.

A rectangular or round baking pan works perfectly, but, if you want a pizza stone, get one that fits your oven; 14-16 inches is perfect.

The best part of this dough recipe is that you can let it sit for hours and rise or you can use it right away. Resting the dough will allow it time to soften up and develop more flavor, but it does not ruin the experience if you don't. We make our dough Friday morning and let it rise in the refrigerator for the day. The best part is the cold in the fridge still allows the dough to rise, but not at an exponential rate. You still end up with great dough.

We make our sauce just before eating, but you could make it the night before and set it in the fridge overnight. The longer it sits, the better the flavor! Flavor good!

Many TV chef's like to use fresh herb because the flavor can be better. I have a hard time using the amount that grocery stores sell, and we have not noticed much difference, but using fresh can be fun if you want to show off your knife skills! Dry herbs are cost effective and still give you the flavor or a great pizza sauce, and they are generally good for three months or more if stored properly.

Cheese is important. When buying your cheese, you can buy pre-shredded, but make sure you get a mozzarella with an MF (milk fat) percent of 25 to 30. We buy the blocks and shred half of it for two pizzas. Higher milk fat will create that golden brown cheese you are looking for. It is how you know the pizza is done, once the cheese is starting to turn brown and your crust is a golden-brown color, your pizza is done.

The last note to make is about resting. Resting your pizza for five minutes, at minimum, will allow the cheese to cool off and it will not run when you try to cut it. It will also make it cooler to eat, if you have little ones, they will appreciate being able to eat faster, a bit of an oxymoron I realize. Kids do not like to wait, and often do not understand why they cannot do something right away. But, if they can "help" you make the pizza then they will feel like they did something.

Friday Night Pizza – Corey Wren

Prep time: 30 minutes

Resting time: 30 minutes to 8 hours

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 16-24

Calories:

Dough: 135

sauce: 3

Ingredients:

Dough:

8g Active dry yeast (jar or envelope, 2.25 tsp)

2 tsp Kosher salt

1 tsp honey

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups warm water (110 to 120F)

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp olive oil

3 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 4 Cups all purpose flour

Sauce:

1 5.5oz can of tomato paste (I like the yellow labeled without a name brand)

5 oz water

2 tsp garlic powder

2 tsp onion powder

1 tsp dried Oregano

1 tsp dried Basil

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried parsley

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried thyme

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried rosemary

$\frac{1}{4}$ kosher salt

**Directions:****Dough:**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer (or a 5qrt bowl) mix the yeast, salt, honey, and warm water. Stir with the handle of a spoon to mix. Let it bloom for ten minutes.
2. Add the dough hook attachment and turn the speed to mix (or one). Add the olive oil and start adding the flour one cup at a time until you've reached three cups, then add the flour by the half cup as needed. Depending on the humidity of where you live you may not need all the flour. Let it mix until it forms a ball and pulls away from the sides. If it is still sticking to the sides then add in half a cup of flour.
3. Once you've added enough flour for the dough to form a ball and not stick to the edges turn the speed to two or three, but not higher than medium. Mix for ten minutes at this speed.
4. Once you've finished mixing turn the dough out on a clean surface and form a dough ball.
5. Spray or lightly oil the inside of the mixing bowl. Add the dough ball to it and ensure it gets lightly covered in the oil.

6. Cover with plastic wrap and rest in in a warm place for 30 minutes up to two hours or place in a refrigerator up to 8 hours.

Sauce:

1. Empty the entire can of tomato paste into a small mixing bowl. Add the spices and herbs and start to whisk in the water until you've added $\frac{1}{4}$ of the water. If the sauce is too thick, add more water, 2 teaspoons at a time, until you've reached the desired consistency.
2. Let the sauce rest for ten minutes.

Pizza:

1. Turn on your oven to 450F.
2. After resting your dough turn it out on to a floured surface and split it in half. Roll each half into dough balls as close to the same size as possible.
3. Flatten one ball at a time and cover with flour. Roll out the dough to the size and shape you want.
4. Spread cornmeal onto your baking pan, about a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup is good. Place your dough on it.
5. Spread half the sauce over the dough, making sure you leave room around the edge.
6. Spread on desired toppings and cheese and bake for up to 20 minutes. You will know it's done when the peaks of the cheese are starting to brown.
7. Remove and let rest for five minutes before slicing.



The Fit Student Broke and Time Crunched?

Marie Well



Seek Doorways to Your Dreams

Don't ever stop dreaming, even if you don't have the cash or time to achieve your biggest aspirations. You can still tread forward until the time is right. And then—*bam!*—you're on track to claim the prize.

If your dream is to become a doctor, nurse, or certified accountant, then (to state the obvious) you'll need a formal education. But if you're broke and can't carve out years to dedicate to studies, you still may have all you need to realize your dream, but through a modified path at first.

Instead of a doctor or nurse, you could become a health coach. Instead of a certified accountant, you could prepare taxes. Instead of a computer programmer, well, you could still become a computer programmer, but one without a degree.

But it doesn't stop there.

Once you gain momentum, that's when you can veer back on track for the grand prize. By momentum, I mean more knowledge, more experience, more credentials, more incentive, possibly more pay, maybe more time, but definitely more confidence. That means more doors open.

So, what dreams will you realize ten years from today?

"Imagine your life as a video. Now fast-forward ten years. If you could have a fairy godmother waving her magic wand, what would your life be like? What would you be doing, with whom and where? How would you be feeling?" (33%).

Even if you're thrilled with your life today, and don't want anything to change, try to stretch yourself so that you step into an uncomfortable path. Yes, you need to grow, just like a rose. You need to learn life lessons. You need to seek new ways to share your gifts. That's why you're here.

But don't just blindly pick a dream. Make sure it aligns with your personality, values, and strengths. That way, you'll muster the heartaches that spring up with *every* dream come true.

But assess your dream first.

Sort out what might help or hinder your goal-getting.

"Journal ... 'What might help and hinder me'. Make a subheading, 'Things that could help me', and then list the things that might help you to achieve your goal. Make another subheading, 'Things that could hinder me', and list the things that might get in the way of your goal" (49%).

You might be cash-strapped like me. That's okay. There are workarounds. No matter what hinders you, someone in this world has overcome it. That means you've got it in you, too, tiger.

The closer you get to your goal, the more opportunities that arise. Even hardships can turn into opportunities; for instance, students who've grown up in the slums have become millionaires. And a sweet little girl with cancer and a YouTube makeup channel became an overnight celebrity. I don't remember her name, but I sure remember her smile.

So, what are workarounds when you're broke?

If money hinders your goal, seek free learning opportunities.

The Open University says, if strapped for cash, “rather than acquiring knowledge and skills through taking formal academic courses, you could find other open educational resource[s] ... or you might acquire them through voluntary work, by visiting the library on a regular basis, or by learning from others or by trial-and-error learning” (51%). You could also try “joining different social groups or community organisations [and] try out new roles or activities within organisations to which you currently belong—for example, becoming treasurer of a club you belong to” (55%).

And books—oh, gloriously affordable books—speed up most any dream. (But if you're not a reader, then no worries: creating and experiencing things are part of lifelong learning, too.)

So, seek books that help you achieve your dream.

“Many ... different sorts of books ... provide new insights and ideas [and] help us learn techniques that will save us time. All types of writing can have these effects, including novels and poetry, as well as non-fiction, including self-help manuals, documentaries and biographies” (61%).

Books can bring you money, success, happiness—even peace. What books you choose to read usher you toward your surprise. One book can change a life!

While books can forge you closer to your dreams, so can the people in your life.

Spend time with people who can help you.

“So, it is really useful to have other people who: have the knowledge and skills that we need ... ; have the equipment we need – or know somebody else who does ... ; are prepared to arrange a loan or to make a mutually acceptable swap of resources; ... act as our role models; cheer us up ... ; have the networks and the know-how; ... give us constructive criticism; ... and bolster our sense of self-worth” (52%).

If you don't have any such people in your life, seek them out. When I naively dreamed of making a film on my life story, I picked up a phone book and called every production company in the city, pitching my story. I ended up with an offer of internship, and later worked on a documentary film with The National Film Board—a film about three life stories, one of which was mine.

If you have a dream, don't let anything stop you. Not the worst of doubts, the most troubling of naysayers, a lack of cash, a disability, or a broken spirit. In a flash, things could change; plus, the closer you get to the dream, the more the doorways to success unlock.

Remember: an AU certificate and a self-taught skill are two keys. So, go ahead: dream about all the doors you have yet to unlock. And, at long last, claim your prize.

Your dreams are worth the struggle.

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Course Exam

Brittany Daigle

PSYC 388 (Introduction to Counselling) is a three-credit, senior-level psychology survey course that is designed to increase students' awareness of the field of counselling, including its evolution, processes, theories, and specialties. This course offers a broad survey of the field of counselling, including an introduction to the foundational skills and processes involved in counselling relationships. Students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of counselling skills and processes through quizzes and written assignments; students in this course are not expected to apply these counselling skills in a placement or field experience. Students must have successfully completed PSYC 289 (Psychology as a Natural Science) and PSYC 290 (General Psychology) in order to enroll into PSYC 388.

If you are interested in learning more about Psychology as a Natural Science or General Psychology, read my PSYC 289 and PSYC 290 course exam articles. Students should note that PSYC 388 may not be taken for credit if credit has already been obtained for PSYC 488.

Introduction to Counselling is made up of four parts divided into sixteen units, with four online quizzes worth a total of twenty percent, a case study worth fifteen percent, a research paper weighing thirty percent, and a final examination worth a total of thirty-five percent. The sixteen units within this course cover a lot of topics such as psychoanalytic theories, psychodynamic theories, behavioural theories, cognitive theories, humanistic theories, marriage counselling, couple counselling, family counselling, and a lot more. To receive credit for PSYC 388, students must satisfactorily complete the four online quizzes, two written assignments and the final examination. Students must achieve a minimum grade of at least a "D" or fifty percent on the final examination and a minimum course composite grade of a "D" or fifty percent, or better.

Alyssa Deutscher is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Professional Arts program at Athabasca University with a major in Human Services. She provides an introduction, stating "I was born and raised in the beautiful town of Athabasca and upon graduating from high school, I thought I wanted to become a High School English Teacher. I quickly realized upon entering work in the disability sector that I loved supporting, advocating for and empowering others, especially those that are marginalized. I currently work full time in Edmonton, Alberta, while living in Portland, Oregon, working with complex needs youth and adults in case management and behavioural support planning. I have been working in this sector for the past decade. In my spare time, I love to be outside in nature hiking, singing, and socializing with friends."

When asked if she could explain this course to other students, she states "PSYC 388 is a great introduction course for those that are wondering if there are interested in counselling, along with learning various theories and the basics of how to build a healthy counselling relationships with people of various life experiences and backgrounds. I found the textbook extremely helpful and the layout in how they described each counselling theory was methodical and easy to follow. The information was relevant, and it gave some great descriptions of various techniques to use depending on the counselling theory. If someone is wondering if counselling is the direction they want to go, this is a great stepping stone!"

As for the structure of the course, Alyssa states that "The structure of this course included quite a bit of reading to study and prepare for the quizzes (4 total), case study, research paper, and final exam. If you get below an 80% on the quizzes, they also allow one re-write per quiz which I felt had helped in decreasing some of the stress. The case study assignment allows the student to pick one of five different cases to write on and provide a 5-to-8-page narrative paper which accounts

for 15% of the grade. The research paper provides the student with three different options from which they choose and students can submit their own essay topic idea to the tutor for approval, or use a predetermined essay topic to write on. The Research Paper is to be 10-12 pages in length and accounts for 30% of the grade. The reading of the textbook for this course was absolutely necessary. I did find this course to be a heavier workload in not only reading the textbook and completing the case study and research paper, but also in preparing for the final exam, which also accounts for 30% of the final grade. I found this exam difficult only as there were a lot of small and specific details, however, I had used Study Blue quizzing and flash cards to help me prepare for the course and I found it very beneficial in feeling adequately prepared for the final exam."

Alyssa would recommend this course "to those that are interested in counselling or curious in wondering if counselling is something that they would like to further pursue. I did find certain concepts of this course easy, while others I found took a lot more effort in really dissecting and applying the theories and knowledge to what it would look like in everyday practice. I think having videos of various counselling styles would have been helpful! "

As for tips and tricks to completing this course, she explains to "Definitely focus a lot on APA formatting for this course, along with really being able to apply the theory to the assignments, along with critical thinking. Set a specific schedule in studying and stick to it. I found Study Blue to be extremely helpful in studying for the final exam. Also really know the theories!"

When asked how communication with her tutor was for PSYC 388, she states "When I had to send an email to my tutor, I found that she had replied quite promptly, however, I did find that I was waiting for quite a while to get assignments back. There were comments added to the paper (often using an outline and number to refer to where there was feedback on). There is feedback due to this grading system; however, I at times struggled with the feedback as one assignments feedback did contradict the other assignment feedback I got."

Whether PSYC 388 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 material about counselling.

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



Fly on the Wall The Banality of Righteousness

Jason Sullivan



Learning and the Roots of Evil

"It is dangerous to read newspapers" wrote Margaret Atwood in the late 60s. What she meant was clear: the establishment couldn't be trusted to tell the truth or even to veer away from doing the wrong thing.

During the Vietnam war the contradictions of the world were inescapable for a generation whose access to this same world was limited to ubiquitous institutions like Time magazine and the evening news. So today we're free of such limits, right? Not quite, our culturally constructed assumptions about the world and ourselves

still lead us to believe that we successfully arbitrate right from wrong and can tease out truth from propaganda. The fact that a single monopolistic corporation has successfully had their name, Google, become synonymous with the action phrase ‘to look up truth as one would rifle through an encyclopedia’ kind of says it all about our cultural blindness to nefarious tendencies sleeping in our midst and minds. We recoil at the scent of evil but is life really that simple?

Horrific evil, the darkest and most conscious acts of sadism known to our species, occurs in the tangible physical world. By actions, conscious reality realizes itself. Dahmer killed and ate his victims. Picton treated oppressed women of the Downtown Eastside like meat for his pig farm slaughterhouse. And Hitler blamed ethnic groups like Jews, and social movements like communism, on the imagined loss of an original German nation. NAZI ideology is baloney in the eyes of history and yet our present century flows with an undercurrent of fear that preposterous falsifications of reality could return to the halls of power and the ivory towers of higher learning. We fear the acts that our minds imagine. But are we living what we fear and bringing it to fruition unconsciously? Let’s consider how we’d appear to those we perceive as our enemies; after all, we’re all human and our emotional sentiments precede their manifestation in actual practice.

Facts of the Acts: Minds Matter

While our darker sides do not degenerate into evil actions, we do live out the world our mind inhabits. “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you” wrote Friedrich Nietzsche.

Let’s face the fact that we each may desire some of the things we fear the most—not at the literal, conscious, level—but in an unconscious language of entitlement. And nothing says entitlement like the demand to be free of ideas that harm our imagined consensual utopia. Our human egos tend to think that they ought to inhabit a hassle-free existence. And yet, whenever we banish a thought or an idea or a dream without looking it in the eye, we risk allowing it to flourish under the radar of our common assumptions. Obama, misunderstood by many who don’t read his actual words, stated that “I don’t agree that you, when you become students at colleges, have to be coddled and protected from different points of view.” So, really, why do we feel that we have a right to be rid of what we find repulsive?

Selfish Disguised as Self-Less?

The truth is, as my Grade 7 teacher loved to remind us, that children are born selfish. Not by choice but by necessity, to be sure. As adults we tend to roar with righteousness, like chimps being fed in an un-egalitarian manner at a zoo, whenever something irks our impulses. Like toddlers, the world can appear to us as a litany of extremes and extreme prejudice. But there’s a reason why Ronald Reagan famously upbraided professors at Berkeley for encouraging students to attack the system. He said: “some of you are old enough to know better!”

AU, being essentially a return to the core of our schooldays of yore, leads us to ask whether we are really the adulting adults in the room. This is one reason why AU studies can be such a humbling experience: we are left with no one to blame but ourselves as we re-learn some timeless truths about motivation and prioritization.

We realize that we can be our own worst enemy, procrastination-wise. As with lists of gratitude discarded at the first signs of adversity, distance education tests our mettle and our ability to keep promises to ourselves when nobody’s watching. The truths we make of our lives are ours alone; for them to be realized we cannot censor unpleasant content such as that perhaps we aren’t quite the academic savants we thought we were!

Boredom And Other Evils. Oh, Wait.

The question in 2020 is not whose story to believe, for in the end all interpretation revolves around our individual assessments of our lives, but how to assess information rather than dismissing contrary details out of hand.

Here lies a key sociological premise of truth: reality is an ongoing construct of our active, even over-active, imaginations. We don't even realize how much time we spend filling in the blanks of our perception with beliefs we've picked up, virus-like, in our lived experience. We are thinking beings who learn not to keep the world the same in our minds forever like apes who are taught how to use a stick to retrieve tasty termites and then pass on this exact traditional knowledge down through the generations. No, we humans learn to advance or, more realistically, to prestidigitate the world and our role within it. The magic's in the making, as the phrase goes. Creative thinking within the confines of our expectations is only the baseline of learning; if we stay in those starting blocks, we're prone to believing that school is actually as boring as we remember it to be. Taking boredom as an evil to be avoided leads us to fall into the same selfish trap as leads us to censor truths inconvenient for our worldview. The truth is, we cannot expect a life without struggle or a world without unpleasantness.

We participate in the good and the evils of the world but they are presented in palatable ways such that the real evil appears somehow distant from our daily existence. A recent book by Israeli sociologist, Iva Illouz, suggests that we become cogs in a machine of social oppression without even knowing it: we all have a little fascist within us, so to speak, one that's prone to "an undiagnosed but latent disease of regular, ordinary human beings." However, this darker side to our nature in no way pronounces us innocent of participating in social crimes both large and small.

From slut-shaming to social media time-wasting, we at AU are especially prone to finding ourselves drawn into the vulgar nether world of simplified morality. We're swimming in college-kid waters, after all, but we can keep our brains afloat if we remember that, if a sentiment feels natural, that doesn't make it right. And remember, we're not like the rest of the university population in this country. We've taken on a task that, in many ways, is far more difficult than what faces the average student. Returning to school as an adult is about attacking something that others only talk about. If we believe in the powers of education, then our course work becomes morality in practice.

Boredom Isn't the Same as Oppression

History is replete with people doing boring jobs that upheld an awful regime. Adolph Eichman, (whose role in the system of holocaust terror was a more horrific version of an accountant deciding how many jobs to be cut based on lost profits attributed to novel coronavirus or a Wall Street decline) appeared to some as a mere cog in a machine of evil.

And yet, Hannah Arendt in an explanation of her powerful book about the holocaust titled *The Banality of Evil*, wrote: "when, many years ago, I described the totalitarian system and analyzed the totalitarian mentality, it was always a 'type,' rather than individuals, I had to deal with, and if you look at the system as a whole, every individual person becomes indeed 'a cog small or big,' in the machinery of terror. It is the great advantage of court procedure that it inevitably confronts you with the person and personal guilt I wanted to know: Who was Eichmann? What were his deeds insofar as he was a free agent? ... And it is for this reason that the whole small cog theory is quite irrelevant in this context."

Our individual roles are framed not by what we do within the systems in which we abide, but how we interpret the whole system. Education is about finding perspective and thinking

critically. Common sense gives way to the subtle dense weave of textbooks and the ambiguous reality of truth. Whereas we may once have thought that intuition gives us the truth we're seeking, we come to realize that intuition, like our taste in fashion, was forged prior to the emergence of our consciousness and thus has a built-in framework of limitations. The only evil we have to fear is the fear to face the close-mindedness within ourselves that has been naturalized by an education we weren't aware we were receiving.

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Porkpie Hat My Time in Isolation

Darjeeling Jones



A Journal of the Plague Year

Well, now, it appears that Mr. Crow, that wily old shapeshifting trickster, is at it again—this time in the guise of the plague. Novel coronavirus? I never imagined, thirty-plus years ago, just how timely my developing propensity for escapism and social distancing would one day become. In all modesty, though, I've long been a Houdini-level escapist. Spirituality and religion have never really been my opiates of choice; but you can't do everything. Art, poetry, opera, drugs, novels, travel, alcohol, bad relationships, long distance running (both literally and figuratively), assorted debaucheries: I've never suffered from a shortage of means to slip the surly bonds of ordinary life. A head filled with useless knowledge, and a pocket filled with painkillers. Of all of these, I suppose literature and art have been the healthiest getaway vehicles. Sadly, though, these days the theatres, concert halls, and art galleries are shut down, while the peddlers of alcohol and drugs (sanctioned and illicit) are still raking in a fortune. So, what are we to do?

To get myself through, I've been dreaming up these little themed diversions each weekend (well, Wednesday to Sunday). This week's theme is "Lowbrow Pop Sugar," during which I'm eating many pink frosted donuts and reading Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*. Up next, on back-to-back weekends, are "Burning Down the Bauhaus," (listening to old post punk vinyl and reading

vintage design magazines), and “Altered Steaks of Awareness,” (filet mignons, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and a double booking at the flotation tank spa).

I have no problem wallowing in these little luxuries and pleasures all by myself, or with a very small number of like-minded sky larkers. After all, for an introvert, social isolation is like a tiki party for the soul.

There’s a part of me, though, that wonders if I’m not being a tad too insouciant about this whole thing. I mean, are shrugs and bad puns really the best response to what some people, against all common sense and available data, seem to see as the end of the world? Should I not be panicking? Instead of writing this wretchedly irresponsible column, for instance, should I not be doing something more constructive, like volunteering my time at a hospital, or driving to Costco and snatching the last package of toilet paper out of some elderly lady’s hands? In truth, I have considered doing one of those things, but was stalled by general inertia, an expired membership card, and a low level of gas in the tank.

Am I too lazy, shallow, and apathetic? It’s a question you may well be asking yourself about me, and frankly it’s one that I simply can’t be bothered to answer. For now, I’m just hunkered down in my living room, drinking prosecco, listening to Bach, studying paint chips and wallpaper swatches with a view to an upcoming reno, and mind mapping Japanese retro horror, frangipani, butterfly prawns, cool jazz, good sativa, beeswax candles, and homemade bread. Oh, the delights ahead! The times may bode ill, but I intend to frivolously multitask-away the anxiety. Come what may, I will recklessly enjoy my time in isolation before the world comes back to its senses again.



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group

A cascade of posts from students dealing with the rapidly-evolving situation of COVID-19, particularly the diminishing availability of in-person exam invigilation, and the need for course extensions for students coping with extra concerns at home. AU is supporting students through this; the best place for updated info from AU is their news page: news.athabascau.ca/.

Other posts include ProctorU, the AU library, dealing with stress and/or self-isolation, and courses LGST 390, PHIL 231, and PSYC 315.

reddit

A pair of students with questions about courses BIOL 480 and GOVN 301.

Twitter

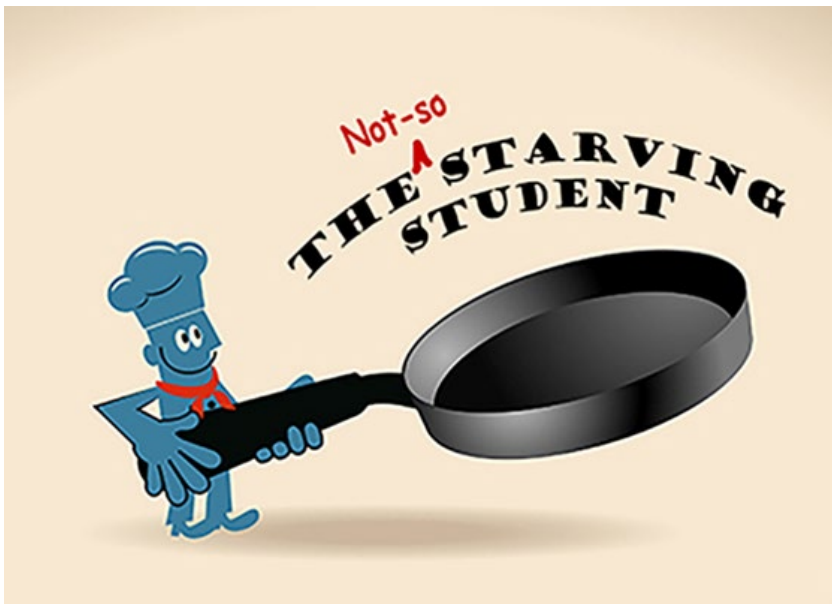
[@AthabascaU](https://twitter.com/AthabascaU) tweets: "STARTS FRIDAY: In response to recent requirements for learners and teachers in several regions of the world to move to online learning, [#AthabascaU](https://twitter.com/AthabascaU) is launching a special offering of our FREE Learning to Learn Online course <http://bit.ly/2xN4lkF> [#workfromhome](https://twitter.com/workfromhome) [#onlinedelivery](https://twitter.com/onlinedelivery)."

[@austudentsunion](https://twitter.com/austudentsunion) tweets: "AUSU is doing our part to help minimize the spread of the COVID-19, so our team members will work from home until further notice. We can still be reached by email at admin@ausu.org. For more information visit our website. <https://bit.ly/2xGPKHp>."



The Not-So Starving Student COVID-19 Quarantine Food

Xin Xu



There Recently with the public health precautions taking place worldwide with the outbreak of COVID-19, I've been living a life not unlike that of a hermit. Some of you may have already shopped for a month's worth of food items and non-perishables, but others may have not. For the latter half of the audience, I've compiled a list of my favorite items during the world wide self-isolation measures taking place. While the following items might not give the full range of nutritional benefits, it provides a good combination of non-perishability and the amount required for daily energy intake.

Soda crackers: soda crackers are an excellent snacking item and like instant noodles are non-perishables.

Instant Noodles: even though instant noodles are the no-brainer for many students, it is an excellent option to stockpile this during a pandemic. Especially when there's perishable food may only last you for days to weeks, instant noodles last for years. It may not be the healthiest option, however it will be an alternative to the Uncle Ben's or dried pasta you have in your pantry.

Canned tomatoes: tomatoes are so versatile that you can easily turn them into a bowl of tomato soup or stir up some sauce for your spaghetti dinner. They are also relatively healthier when heated, compared to other fruits and vegetables.

Canned beans: Beans can also easily be turned into a healthy dinner or lunch with very little additives





Frozen foods: if you have a large spacious freezer, stocking up on frozen foods is a great option during the pandemic. For myself, I picked up a large bag of sweet corn, frozen veggies and berries which will provide the vitamins required during self-isolation.

Deli Meats: if you're looking for protein products that can last during this viral outbreak, then sausages and other deli meat might do the trick. They are not only versatile in a variety of cuisines but they also can last much longer than your fresh perishables.

Dried pasta: there's no surprise that pasta is often one of the most-requested items for the Edmonton Food Bank. Pasta gives adequate calories while fulfilling our carbohydrate needs. Stocking up on your favorite pastas and canned tomatoes will help reduce the amount of work for meal prep

and tastes delicious too.

Soy milk: if you're a big fan of milk then the pandemic might cause some frustration, since the expiry date for milk is often only two weeks. For myself, I switched to an alternative product of soy milk which provides adequate and similar benefits as your dairy requirement and is also a healthier plant-based alternative. At first, I wasn't used to the unique taste of soy milk, however over time using soy milk for my morning cereal became a daily staple that I could not live

without.

Potatoes: There are so many ways to cook with potatoes that this should be at the top of many people's shopping lists. Whether it's using it to cook up a nice meal or even as a snack with fries or wedges, potatoes can be customized to meet your needs during crisis times.

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



The Creative Spark! Why We Need You to Write

Marie Well



You are a writer! Don't believe me? Have you ever written anything? Well, then?

But more than that, you are a soul. And the beauty of your soul is like a piece of a mosaic. Put the pieces of every soul together, and you have a stunning view of what makes us all tick. That mosaic is where the purest of empathy, compassion, and understanding live.

And that's why we need your story.

The Open University's e-book *Start Writing Fiction: Characters and Stories* reveals ways you can put yourself into your stories. Let's explore four ways:

First, know that you are what makes your stories original.

The Open University says, "Observing precisely how something appears to you, or how it might appear in the eyes of one of your characters, will often result in you writing something original.

How? Because every person observes or perceives things – the world, themselves – in a different way" (17%).

How I wish I could see the world from your eyes—if only for a day! How different would your thoughts be from mine if you, like me at this moment, were lying on the floor, in the dark, writing an article on your cellphone keypad, thoughts fluttering to family who have disowned you, you sending them forgiveness and unconditional love, while you feel happy and at peace with the world? We need the book only you can write—to feel your world through our soul.

Second, write your stories with what makes you tick.

The Open University writes, "Reflecting on who you are and what sort of material you want to write about is an important and ongoing part of the writing process, not least because you will be more motivated by characters and storylines which embody topics that are important to you" (35%).

So, "note down a 'menu' of what you consider to be your overall 'concerns'. This exercise aims ... to help you to become clearer about the kinds of things that matter to you, that are likely to be your overall subject matter ... when you write" (34%).

My biggest concerns would include:

- The Lord.
- The beauty of every spiritual belief system and every living soul.
- Unconditional love and loving kindness meditation.
- Forgiveness and accountability.
- Selfless serving.

- Ambition in face of failure.
- A desire to help others shine most brightly.
- A need to build skills and to share gifts.

But all that may not mean one iota to you. Or it may matter deeply to you. Whatever makes you tick, it's your calling to write about it. Share your gifts, right?

Third, ask "What if?" questions, and answer in your unique way.

The Open University says, "Asking 'What if?' can help you to get from having an idea about a character you want to write about to developing a plot. For example, you might ask: What if at one time the straight-laced schoolteacher worked in the circus?" (33%).

'What if?' questions can turn a stereotypical character into an unexpected one. And you are an original and unexpected character. Even your job title sets you apart. But what part of your past makes you more fascinating than any title? Now apply that something spectacular to your character. You're wonderful for a reason!

Fourth, craft a plot from most any scenario, blending it with your own experiences and interests.

According to The Open University, "What causes your character to do things or to be the way they are – will give you plot. But how do you develop that plot? [Look at] this example: 'A woman on the bus today carried her Pekinese dog inside her handbag. It had a red bow on its head that matched her sweater.' Now consider: Why was she on the bus? Why did she have the dog and where was she taking it? Why did she look the way she did? Why did the dog have a red bow?" (32%).

One possible answer is that "perhaps she is taking the dog to be put down at the vet's, and is so upset about having to do so that she decides not to drive, and is taking the bus for the first time in ten years" (32%).

Find a twist that draws what's important to you personally into your plot.

I'd write the story with this view: The Pekinese dog was a rescue dog, dying of mange in India. The dog's heart-crushing story made the Internet, which the woman watched. So she adopted the dog from overseas. The woman, with a small inheritance to her name, aims to make the animal, Missy, a top show dog.

On the bus, she and Missy are returning home from a stint at the dog groomers. Soon she'll feed Missy her daily raw meat and veggies diet. No dog food for this pup.

That's a story I'd like to write. More than that, that's what I'd do if I'd adopted a dog. I watch YouTube clips on rescued dogs from [Animal Aid Unlimited](#), and I watch [Gohan the Husky](#) get fed a raw food diet—lamb, chicken feet, beef, carrots, blueberries—hence my inspirations.

What we consume in media truly shapes who we are. And that's where great plots lie.

Yes, your soul reveals a stunning piece of the mosaic. So, let us slip away into your unique story. In other words, it's time to write!

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Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Finding A Friend

Dear Barb:

Hi, I am an introvert, but this hasn't been much of a problem in my life until recently. I graduated from university and ended up getting a job in a new city where I don't know anyone. I have joined a few organizations in an attempt to meet new people, but the problem is I don't know what to say or how to begin a conversation with anyone.

I had always lived in the same town growing up and went through school with the same group of friends, so I have never been faced with this situation. I do enjoy my own company and can easily spend time alone, but it would be nice to have a few friends to talk to or go out with. When people approach me, I usually just answer their questions and that's where the conversation ends. I don't know how to carry it on. Do you have any suggestions for a guy like me? I'm in my mid twenties, fairly good looking, and just landed an awesome job.

Thanks, Tyler.

Hi Tyler:

What a great question! Congrats on all you have accomplished at such a young age. Individuals who are introverts share common characteristics such as that they are good listeners, focused, observant, committed to their goals, trustworthy and like spending time alone. As you say being an introvert hasn't really been an issue throughout your life, until now. As you are realizing you will have to step out of

your comfort zone and will need to discover ways to engage others in conversation. The easiest way an introvert can do this is by asking questions.

An introvert does not like to be in the spotlight, so they will find it helpful to deflect the attention onto the other person. Ask about their job, where they are from, or where they went to school. These are easy openers to get the other person talking, and everyone likes to talk about themselves. Being an introvert, you probably enjoy listening to other's stories. Another topic that will get people talking is what books they have read recently, or what movies they like. This will give you an opportunity to possibly share some common ground, or learn about a new book or movie you may be interested in. You could ask about restaurants or clubs in the area. Share a bit about yourself and where you are from and possibly something unique about your hometown. Initially this will be awkward to do, but once you realize that most people are receptive to opening up, you may find yourself with a few good friends, as introverts usually only need a few friends.

Thanks for your letter, Tyler.

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



Poet Maeve
The Skunk Quarantine

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

- **Mar 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Apr 1](#)
- **Mar 15:** [Apr degree requirements deadline](#)
- **March 18:** AUSU Public Council Meeting
- **Mar 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for May](#)
- **Apr 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting May 1](#)
- **Apr 16:** AUSU Council Changeover Meeting

One Year of AUSU Open Mic - A Look Back

AUSU celebrated one year of our AUSU Open Mic Podcast by meeting up and sharing what their favourite episodes were and what they are looking forward to in our podcast's future. They also talk about what AUSU Open Mic has brought to the student community, and how giving an actual voice to AUSU has made the organization better.

This latest podcast episode is also a great way to find out what else AUSU has been up to in the last year and some upcoming goals as they touch on advocacy wins, services, and the work done by the council and executive!

[Listen to the latest episode here!](#)

Starring: President Brandon Simmons, VP Finance & Administration Brittany Daigle, VP External & Student Affairs Natasha Donahue, and Executive Director Jodi Campbell, recorded during the AUSU 2020 Executive Retreat.

Find out more on the AUSU website [here](#).



What is AUSU Open Mic?

AUSU Open Mic is a free podcast for Athabasca University students, with episodes on a range of topics such as interviews, services, resources, advocacy, tips for students, and more.

Available for free on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), and [Pocket Casts](#) (search "AUSU Podcast"), as well as featured on [VoicEd](#).



Some of our most popular episodes:

- [Episode 19:](#) Breaking Down Barriers for Indigenous Students
- [Episode 17:](#) How Students are Making Mental Health a Priority
- [Episode 16:](#) The Alberta Budget and Why It Matters to AU Students
- [Episode 11:](#) A Great Chat with Two AU Students
- [Episode 1:](#) Podcast Launch (*see how far we've come!*)



CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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