



THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 14 2020-04-03

The Bill on Conversion Therapy Behind the Nationwide Ban

Getting into Character Make Your Fiction Real

Don't Get Scammed! The Common Scams of Today

*Plus:
Council Connection
Black Bean Burgers
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

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

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

Editorial

The Days Blend Together

Karl Low



While we're self isolating it can be pretty easy for all the days to start to blend together. After all, not only are your own trips curtailed, but those subconscious cues, the noise of the traffic outside, the procession of people walking by the house, those have all been disrupted as well. People are coming to the realization of just how serious this thing is now, and that will continue to grow. As the disease progresses, this will change the nature of politics, especially in the United States, and that will have reverberations around the globe.

It's been noted in some studies that watching certain news channels, specifically Fox News, can leave people less informed than if they watched no news at all. For many years, places like Fox News, Breitbart, Infowars, and others, have been pushing the notions that neither government nor the other media are to be trusted, and that, because of that, neither should scientists, especially when they say things about the world that suggest government action might be required to solve global problems.

This message has resonated especially well with conservatives and republicans, and among them, even better with those who are older.

But now we have COVID-19. A disease that is more fatal to those who are older, a disease that will require significant government action to bring it under control, and a disease that is moving so fast, the primary source of information about it is the media and press releases from various governmental and medical personnel. This is a perfect storm brewing, where those who are most likely to be badly affected by the disease are the exact same people who will take the fewest precautions to prevent getting it.

In short, this will change everything.

It's too early, too difficult to say how that change will fall out. It could lead to a kinder, gentler society that is more concerned with helping those of us who fall behind. Or it could lead to an over-reaction, spurred by those who have been fighting against Mr. Trump's laissez-faire attitude toward all things that don't have Obama in the name, and lead to a society where government starts restricting too many freedoms in the name of protecting the vulnerable. Or it could go entirely opposite and bring society closer to an anarcho-libertarian type state, or anywhere in between. The point is, even as we retreat from the virus, we cannot allow ourselves to retreat from the world. We need to be aware and agitating for what we think will make the world a better place, despite, or perhaps because of, the hardships that will come from COVID, and we must be aware that we're thinking of more than just tomorrow, because the changes we make may well be lasting ones.

In the meantime, however, The Voice Magazine continues. And this week, we bring a look at the latest federal bill to end conversion therapy. We also have the results from the latest AUSU Council Meeting—the first meeting of the combined old and new councils, and we have articles as diverse as a recipe for black bean burgers, advice for COVID-inspired working from home, warnings about popular scams and how to avoid them, plus other advice, news, events, scholarships, and more! Enjoy the read!

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



Nationwide Bill to Ban Conversion Therapy Introduced

Natalia Iwanek

On March 9, 2020, the Canadian government introduced a Bill S-202 to ban conversion therapy, a discredited practice that attempts to change the sexual orientation and gender identity of the LGBTQ2 community through various means, including therapy and medication. This bill is premised on the fact that conversion therapy undermines the dignity of the queer community and challenges the fact that one's sexual orientation and gender identity can or should be changed.

The Department of Justice Canada's official news release states that conversion therapy “reflects myths and stereotypes about LGBTQ2 persons, in particular that sexual orientations other than heterosexual, and gender identities other than cisgender, can and should be changed.” In addition, it states that, “Criminal law reform is an important step toward protecting LGBTQ2 persons and promoting their rights, but more remains to be done. The Government of Canada is committed to working with provinces, territories, municipalities and stakeholders to ensure that Canada is a country where everyone – regardless of their gender expression, gender identity, or sexual orientation – can live in equality and freedom.”

Initiated by Justice Minister David Lametti, the bill would introduce five new offences to the Canadian Criminal Code, including causing a minor to undergo conversion therapy, taking a minor out of Canada to undergo conversion therapy abroad, forcing someone to undergo conversion therapy against their will, profiting from providing conversion therapy, and advertising to provide conversion therapy. The bill would allow law enforcement to seize advertisements for conversion therapy, as well as remove them from the internet. However, the bill will not cover private conversations about sexual identity.

The bill can be traced back to a 2019 petition by Devon Hargreaves of Lethbridge. Petition E-1833, which received 18,200 signatures. Although the petition was initially rejected in March 2019, on the basis that conversion therapy was a provincial or territorial issue, a June 2019 letter by Justice Minister David Lametti, Health Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor and Edmonton Centre MP Randy Boissonnault, restarted the process.

A 2019 University of British Columbia study revealed that 20,000 Canadians have been subjected to conversion therapy. In addition, 2019-2020 Community-Based Research Centre Sex Now Survey revealed that 1 in 5 gay, bisexual, trans, Two-Spirit and queer, or “GBT2Q” individuals have “experienced sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression change efforts ... and

of them, nearly 40 per cent (or as many as 47,000 GBT2Q men in Canada) have experienced conversion therapy.”

In the medical field, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) opposes conversion therapy. In a released policy statement, they stated, “Conversion or reparative therapy can result in negative outcomes such as distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, a feeling of personal failure, difficulty sustaining relationships, and sexual dysfunction.” In October 2019, the College of Alberta Psychologists officially banned conversion therapy, with “updated standards of practice prohibited members from providing any treatment aimed at changing or modifying a client's sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.” According to Dr. Richard Spelliscy, chief executive officer of the college, explained that this is because “same-sex attraction is not a mental health disorder, in fact hasn't been considered one for at least 40 years.” No official positions on conversion therapy are available from the Alberta Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Association.

Canada wide, conversion therapy restrictions have slowly been implemented over the years. Nova Scotia, PEI, Manitoba, and Ontario have adopted restrictions on conversion therapy from their respective health care systems. In addition, various Canadian cities, such as Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, St. Albert, Strathcona County, Lethbridge, Wood Buffalo, and Spruce Grove have begun restricting the practice and promotion of conversion therapy as well. Vancouver was the first Canadian city to ban conversion therapy in June 2018, while in July 2019 St. Albert began to draft amendments to ban conversion therapy with Edmonton following in August 2019 and with Fort MacMurray following in October 2019. On February 4, 2020, Calgary began to take steps to ban conversion therapy as well. Worldwide, conversion therapy has been banned in Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, Germany, Taiwan, and Samoa.

Despite this progress, critics state the bans have limited scope, and many grey areas exist. For example, in Vancouver, while the ban prohibits business from providing services in conversion therapy, including changing sexual orientation or gender identity, it becomes grey in terms of faith groups, which claim that they offer social support or identity exploration.

In June 2019, The UCP disbanded the NDP's working group to deal with this issue, originally established by former NDP Health Minister Sarah Hoffman in February. According to Health Minister Tyler Shandro's press secretary, Steve Buick stated this was because “It's not practised in Alberta and it cannot be, because no health professional regulator would permit it.” However, co-chair of the working group NDP MLA Nicole Goehring retorted, “It's not advertised, the language is vague, but it's still occurring.”

When contacted for a statement, Dr. Travis Salway Assistant Professor at Simon Fraser University's Faculty of Health Sciences stated, “A federal conversion therapy ban is a critical step toward eradicating conversion practices from Canada. It sends a clear message to parents, practitioners, and LGBTQ2 people themselves, that their identities are valued, and that any attempts to repress or deny their identities are tantamount to abuse. I would add that while no bill is perfect, we should look carefully at the bill and share feedback with our MPs about ways the bill can more effectively get at all forms of conversion therapy, especially those targeting gender identity and expression.”

Dr. Kristopher Wells, current Canada Research Chair (Tier II) for the Public Understanding of Sexual and Gender Minority Youth at MacEwan University provided *The Voice* with a statement as well, replying that “Yes, we would expect there to be wide all party support for this legislation. All federal parties, except for the Conservatives, had prohibiting conversion therapy as part of their election platforms. Recently, several prominent conservatives have come out in support of

the new government legislation. Although, a good start, the proposed Bill could be strengthened to also include protections on the grounds of gender expression, a more comprehensive definition of what conversion therapy is and what actions are permissible, and the prohibitions should be extended not just to minors but all adults. Since conversion therapy is a fraudulent and dangerous practice, no adult can truly “consent” to something that is known to be harmful and poses a well-documented threat to public health and safety.” Wells continued, “We hope that amendments will be brought forward through the consultation process that will help Canada enact the strongest and most comprehensive conversion therapy prohibition legislation in the world.”

While conversion therapy is no longer advertised, it still exists underground. In an interview with CBC News, Wells stated, “It might be happening after business hours. It might be happening in a basement, or unfortunately, it's still happening in some faith communities and cultural communities, under the guise of praying away the gay. Or that homosexuality doesn't exist in that community, and anyone who shows same-sex tendencies or who's gender diverse needs to be fixed or cured in order to gain acceptance in their community.” In an interview with The Calgary Star, Salway stated, “They’re borrowing largely outdated theories and notions around psychology and development. But what’s changed is who’s practising them, and how they’re being advertised or promoted. And ... that does create a lot of challenges in banning the practice.”

As a final note, as positive changes are occurring for the queer community nationwide, Alberta has also found itself in the midst of discriminatory policies. As a reminder of how far the community has come, Albertans, as well as all Canadians, can turn to Edmonton’s Vriend case, which altered the lives of queer citizens countrywide. In 1994, Delwin Vriend was fired from his job at Edmonton’s The King’s College, now The King’s University, a private Christian school, for being gay. Receiving no help from the Alberta Human Rights Commission, which, at that time, offered no protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, Vriend took the case to court. Although he initially won, the case was lost on appeal in 1996. However, in 1998, the Canadian Supreme Court found Alberta’s legislation to be unconstitutional and sexual orientation was read in into Alberta law, with the Klein government choosing not to invoke the notwithstanding clause to override the decision. This unanimous Supreme Court ruling was a one of Canada’s monumental moments in the struggle for queer rights. In later years, this precedent led to eventual law changes to marriage, inheritance rights, pension rights, and adoption rights for the queer community Canada-wide.

For students who would like to learn more about Alberta’s queer history, *Queer Youth in the Province of the ‘Severely Normal’* by Gloria Filax, an AU assistant professor in the Master of Arts, Integrated Studies is a start. The book title refers to a statement by then-premier Ralph Klein who said that most Albertans, who he described as “severely normal,” did not support homosexuality being protected under Alberta’s human rights code. The book presents voices of the province’s queer youth, with the juxtaposition of expert voices. AU students who wish to learn more about the community in general are encouraged to consider (WGST) 301 Women's and Gender Studies, which “aims to provide students with a deeper understanding of the ways in which gender, identity and sexuality operate in contemporary North American society.” Topics include femininity, masculinity, disability, as well as queer and transgender politics.

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Don't Get Scammed

Francesca Carone



The Top Five Scams You Should Be Aware Of

There are many types of scams going on and many people have become victims. These scams come in various forms such as telephone calls, e-mails, instant messages, mail, or even door to door visits. The people running the scams can be sophisticated, and while most people believe they would not fall victim, it seems more and more Canadians are losing a lot of money to them. I, myself, have received scam calls and emails. Sometimes I play around with them a little. Some of them get angry and start to threaten me if I am too slow in responding or if I ask too many questions. The thought of these people stealing money from Canadians, usually the most vulnerable Canadians, makes me upset, so here are the top 10 scams going around this year and what you should know:

1. **Debt Collection:** Someone calls and asks the victim to repay a made-up debt. They demand collection of those debts and can be harassing or threatening to their victims. They may say they are calling from a bank and claim they are owed fees that the victim may not have been aware of. Debt collectors usually work legitimately to collect debts owed to them but sometimes, "debt collection agencies and debt collectors...perpetrate scams on honest people who owe nothing" while others violate the law in collecting debts ([CFR, online](#)). If someone contacts you claiming you owe a debt, you should ask for the person's name and tell them you will call the main number and speak to someone later. Also get the exact claim they say you owe and confirm this information with the business they are collecting for.
2. **Fake Government Officials:** Many people are receiving phone calls, and sometimes e-mails or letters, from someone posing as an agent of the CRA, IRS, or FBI, telling victims that there is an arrest warrant out for them for falsifying information on their taxes, or for tax evasion, or something similar, and to avoid the arrest the victim must pay them through gift cards, Western Union, or follow a link and enter information ([CRA, online](#)). This is a scary one for a lot of people because even if they believe that there has been a mistake, they do not want to go to jail and may pay the money requested to avoid being arrested while they sort the problem out. The scammer tells them they cannot hang up the call or tell anyone, otherwise they will be arrested. The real government would not ask for pay with any type of those methods. Just hang up. The CRA will never ask for information about your passport, health card, or driver's license, so don't be fooled.
3. **Identity Theft, Phishing, and Phone Scams:** In this scam, the victim gets an email from what appears to be a real bank or credit card company. They are informed that they must update their information, secure their account, or told their account

will be closed if they don't log in and they are given a link to click on. The person clicks the link and ends up entering their information on a fake website and the scammer can then gain access to their accounts. This is also an example of phishing, "Phishing is a method thieves and con men used to get personal information from you to steal your identity and then your money or benefits." (CFR, online). If you receive anything like this, do not click the links provided or enter any information in. Go directly on a new tab and go to the legitimate website.

The phone scams in this list also include a "Your Microsoft license key has expired" scam call which involves a pop up that tells victims that their license for windows has expired, or their computer has been infected with a virus and to remove it, they must call a number (usually a fake Microsoft rep) or they may receive a phone call stating they are from Microsoft with the same line (CFR, online). You can safely delete any e-mail asking for information like this because most companies wouldn't ask you to click on a link.

4. **Loans Scams / Credit Fixers:** Here, the victim receives an e-mail or letter, usually offering them a debt consolidation loan, student loan, mortgage, small business loan, with or without any credit, or even with bad credit. "The offer and their websites may look real, except they will quickly ask you for personal financial information, social security number, bank account numbers" (CFR, online). This scam is designed to steal your personal information for further scams. You can just hang up.

5. **Fake Prizes, Sweepstakes, Free Gifts, Lottery Scams:** The victim receives an e-mail or phone call stating that they have won the lottery, a prize, or a gift, but to redeem it the victim is told they need to pay a "small fee" to claim it or to cover "handling costs". They may also claim they can only get the prize if they pay "transfer fees, taxes or provide proof of their identity and/or details of their bank accounts or credit cards in order to receive the "winnings"" (CFR, online). Sometimes the scammers will use the name of a real lottery and they will attempt to get money from the victim. The main thing to remember is that you cannot win a lottery or sweepstake if you did not enter and you won't have to pay anything to collect a prize. Also, "Legitimate lotteries do NOT use e-mail to notify their winners" (CFR, online).

What we need to remember is to never provide personal information, bank information, or credit cards numbers through by email. Keep your access codes, passwords, and other information like this safe. Also keep your SIN card numbers safe and don't use it as I.D unless you know for 100%

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

Wikipedia and Academic Research Webinar

Tue, Apr 7, 3:00 to 4:00 pm MDT
Online

Hosted by AU Library

library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

Research Webinar Series: Organizational change experienced by Canadian universities moving to online learning

Thur, Apr 9, 10:00 to 11:00 am MDT
Online via Skype

Hosted by AU

news.athabascau.ca/events/research-webinar-series-organizational-change-experienced-by-canadian-universities-moving-to-online-learning

Access Skype through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

that person is legally allowed to obtain that information (such as the real CRA). According to CTV news, Canadians lost about 130 million dollars last year in scams ([Foran, online](#)). Don't feel too bad if you have been scammed because it has happened to many. There are many other scams out there, but what we need to remember is the age old saying of "if it's too good to be true, it probably is".

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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: Canadian Hearing Services Scholarship Program

Sponsored by: Canadian Hearing Services

Deadline: May 20, 2020, 4pm EST

Potential payout: up to \$3000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada, 17 years of age or older, attending an accredited post-secondary institution in Fall 2020, and have documented hearing loss as described in the [eligibility criteria](#).

What's required: A completed application form, proof of Canadian citizenship or residency, documentation of hearing loss, proof of acceptance for Fall 2020 at an accredited post-secondary institution, two supporting referrals, and a 250-word essay or 6-minute video describing your life experience and participation barriers you've encountered.

Tips: Read the FAQs for further info.

Where to get info: www.chs.ca/scholarships



The Study Dude

Marie Well

Twelve Ways to Make Your PhD Thesis Awesome



You could be the star of any graduate program. Not just because you have infinite potential, but also because you're about to get my insider's edge. The Open University and I will show you what it takes to write an awesome thesis. And I'll dumb down academic speak so even I understand it. Now, that's a sign of genius.

But first, you should have an idea of what models and theories are. Your thesis may depend on them. So, consider the differences: "A model provides us with a simplified understanding of a phenomenon A theory explains a phenomenon."

For instance, a model can be a simple picture that shows how the parts of a theory fit together. There are mathematical models, scientific models, communications models, psychology models, and so many more models. For every discipline, you bet there is a model.

A theory is often the book, books, or chapter of a book that explains the phenomenon. There are a ton of books on Feminist theory, for

instance. I read long ago that a theory should fit a book—any shorter and its merit might be questionable.

Now that we've got definitions covered, let's look at the heart of your thesis: its contribution to knowledge. The Open University shares 12 ways your thesis can shine on the shelves:

Tip 1: Apply a model, theory, or trick in a new way.

That's the simplified version. Now for the academic version: "Re-contextualization of an existing technique, theory, or model (applying a technique in a new context, testing a theory in a new setting, showing the applicability of a model to a new situation) – showing it works – or that it doesn't – and why" (16%). Yikes! That's a mouthful.

As an example, say there exists code that forecasts the death rate of viruses in New Zealand. You could run Canadian variables through the code. Your thesis question might be, Does the code accurately forecast death rates due to viruses in Canada?

You could also test whether a 1950s model of bird migration habits applies today. If not, then answer, why not?

Tip 2: Show how a model works well.

The Open University explains it as "corroboration and elaboration of an existing model (e.g. evaluating the effects of a change of condition; experimental assessment of one aspect of a model)" (16%).

Tip 3: Show how a model sucks.

This is done through the "falsification or contradiction of an existing model, or part of one" (16%).

Consider this: IQ tests written in English used to be administered to foreign language speakers. These foreign language speakers often did poorly on the IQ tests because, well, they didn't speak English. Worse, they were at risk of being committed to institutions due to test-determined low IQs.

Since then, new models of intelligence have emerged. Thank goodness! One model is Gardner's model of multiple intelligence. Shakespeare lovers are no longer the kings of smarts. According to Gardner's model, you can be smart at scuba diving and mountain climbing: kinesthetic intelligence. Or you could be smart at growing plants and raising animals: naturalist intelligence. And the list goes on.

If you find a model unethical, please don't hesitate to question it in your research. Or make its lack of ethics the focus of your research.

Tip 4: Combine ideas to make a new recipe.

The Open University refers to this as “drawing together two or more existing ideas and showing that the combination reveals something new and useful” (16%).

Cross-disciplinary studies come in handy here. That's where you study a double major or electives from multiple departments. (Reading outside your field of study helps, too.) The more diverse your knowledge, the easier it is to merge two seemingly unrelated ideas into something spectacular.

For instance, one instructor of mine was finalizing his PhD thesis. He created a communications model of student participation in classroom discussions—and he merged his model with a mathematical formula. He told me he got “firsts” for his PhD thesis. That could be your destiny, too.

Tip 5: Show that an idea works and is useful, or that it sucks.

In other words, it's the “demonstration of a concept: showing that something is feasible and has utility (or showing that something is infeasible and explaining why it fails)” (16%).

Lately, there is a buzz around poop transplants (pardon the pun). Poop transplants take poop from a healthy person and stick it in the bowel of an unhealthy person. Apparently, the unhealthy person will grow healthier (e.g., leaner).

But what if your neighbor had a poop transplant and her hair fell out? (Not that that's ever happened.) But for argument's sake, you may have a case to discredit the poop hype.

Tip 6: Prove how awesome a theory is.

This involves the “implementation of theoretical principal: showing how it can be applied in practice; making concrete someone else's idea, and hence showing how it works in practice and what its limitations are” (16%).

Tip 7: Lay out what everyone knows—and maybe, just maybe, prove it wrong.

Do this through “codification of the ‘obvious’: providing evidence about what ‘everyone knows’ (possibly providing evidence that received wisdom is incorrect)” (16%).

Galileo comes to mind here. He argued that the earth revolves around the sun. And he was jailed for his view. But he ultimately proved common knowledge wrong.

Vaccines come to mind, too. What if mandatory vaccines aren't so helpful after all? What if they are harmful? But I wouldn't recommend you research the ills of vaccines. You might find yourself threatened with a bad grade. Defying common knowledge can come at a cost.

But if you're gutsy—and rank high on social skills—you might come up with a thesis that changes the world.

Tip 8: Describe and analyze something new and exciting.

And what's more exciting than an “empirically based characterization of a phenomenon of interest (e.g. detailed, critical, analytic account of the evolution of an idea; detailed analytic characterization of a crucial case study or a novel chemical compound, or a new planet)” (16%).

A professor I knew stumbled on a scientific reaction that defied common knowledge in physics. At dinner (he was the brother of my friend), he chattered about his finding, wondering how to explain it.

One way to explain his discovery might have been to describe what occurred in detail—and perhaps analyze how it doesn't fit with scientific knowledge and what the implications might be.

If there's a will, there's a thesis.

Tip 9: Organize what you see into labeled drawers.

In other words, “provid[e] a taxonomy of observed phenomena” (16%).

Tip 10: Use other people's studies to tear apart a theory.

That means, do a “well-founded critique of existing theory or evidence, e.g. correlating the results of a number of existing studies to show patterns, omissions, or biases, etc.” (16%).

Tip 11: Solve or explain a problem in a new, useful way.

This involves “providing a new solution to a known problem (and demonstrating its efficacy) – even an obscure one; conceiving and justifying a new explanation for a problematic phenomenon” (16%).

Tip 12: Tweak a theory, method, or trick—or build a new one.

Do this by “filling a small technical gap, e.g. by showing that a ‘tweak’ to an algorithm or technique is more effective, or by developing novel methodology” (16%).

At university, I created a method that streamlined email questions intended for multiple waves of respondents. I produced an orderly method for making it happen. But I didn't do anything further with it. I wish I had.

As for theories, if you want to create a theory, then try out Classical Grounded Theory. Hey, some of us just like to build things. And you might build something spectacular.

I want you to claim more than a PhD. I want you to have tenure. And who knows, maybe celebrity status. Dr. Oz did it. David Suzuki did it. So can we.

So, that sums up twelve ways to make your PhD awesome. You now have the insider view of what grad studies profs often don't disclose. So, get a head start on your thesis: peer at models and theories in your discipline—and craft a thesis idea worthy of “firsts.”

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Homemade is Better

Black Bean Burgers

Corey Wren



Hello, all you self isolationist fellow students,

Chef Corey here again with another weekly recipe. My past recipes have been relatively carb-heavy; this week, I've decided on vegetarian options. I've been tweaking a few recipes I've seen for a black bean burger. Last summer I was finally able to make it and have it taste pretty good! The best part is that you can add different seasonings to it and bring out different tastes. I've seen a Tex Mex version, a plain, sweeter, or even bbq flavoured!! So here you go.

Black bean burger

Servings: 4-6

Prep time: 30 minutes

Cook time: 10-15 minutes

Ingredients

2 cans of black beans, rinsed and drained. (You can use dehydrated beans, but cook then until very mushy)

½ red onion, minced

3 cloves of garlic minced, or 3 teaspoon if you have pre-minced garlic

1 green pepper, minced

½ - ¾ cups of all-purpose flour

2 shredded carrots (optional)

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce (you can substitute soy sauce if you want a more Asian flavour)

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon ground black pepper

Directions:

1. Empty the cans of black beans into a colander and rinse them.
2. Heat a skillet on med-high heat with a tablespoon of oil in it.
3. Add the red onion, green pepper, garlic, and carrots. Heat until the onions start to turn translucent.
4. Add the Worcestershire sauce.
5. Taste the mix to get an idea of where you are for salt level. In culinary school, this step is drilled into our heads.
6. If you happen with the salt content the just add the pepper, if not add as much salt as you think it needs until you can taste a difference, then add a pinch more. You'll likely use the teaspoon, but add more if you feel it needs it. Same with the pepper, but be careful, you can overpower the flavours.
7. Let the onion pepper mix cool slightly and mash as much of the beans as you can with a fork or a potato masher if you have one.
8. Add the mixture to the beans and mix it all. Be sure to taste it. Add more seasonings if you think it needs it.
9. Add in the flour about ¼ cup at a time until the mixture holds together firmly.
10. Form the mixture into 4-6 patties and heat in the same skillet. They don't need to cook like meat; you're just looking to heat it through.
11. Add a burger bun, some lettuce, tomato, avocado, and enjoy!

Council Connection

March 19, 2020 Meeting

Natalia Iwanek



The most recent AUSU Council Meeting took place on Thursday, March 19, 2020 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm MT.

All Councillors were in attendance, with the exception of Councillor Melinda Goertz and Member Services Coordinator Donette Kingyens, with the addition of the incoming council observing. Also in attendance was *The Voice's* Council Meeting Reporter Natalia Iwanek.

President Brandon Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm MT. Key items included Policy Revisions, AUSU Election Debrief, Council Reports and the 2020 AUSU Annual Report.

Agenda and Minutes

Brandon began the meeting with the Call for Attendance, followed by the Welcome and Member

at Large Input. Councillor Monique Durette questioned why Council meetings are recorded, with the reply that it helps staff do minutes and to verify that nothing is missed. Governance and Advocacy Coordinator Duncan Wojtaszek stated the recordings are not made public. The proposed motion of the *2020-03-19 Council Agenda DRAFT* was carried unanimously, with a move by Josh and second by Sarah, and the *2020-02-27 Council Meeting Minutes DRAFT* was carried unanimously as well, with a move by Lisa and a second by Natasha.

Action Items

Brandon continued with a Review of Action Items, of which none were outstanding.

New Business

VPFA Brittany Daigle mentioned minor working changes to *Policy 2.04 Discipline* with respect to point 2.04.02 section "o" in the "Discipline Process." The portion stating, "however, council will not discuss the motion in any way prior to the motion being duly put forward at a council meeting;" was removed.

Councillor Mark Teeninga was concerned about making the process fair and ethical and ensuring that councillors were not coming into the meeting with preconceived thoughts until the accused could present a rebuttal. Executive Director Jodi Campbell stated that this would be difficult to monitor, as people may naturally come in with bias. Mark acknowledged this, but simply wanted to voice his concern.

Councillor Alice Namu stated that bias is a fact of life; everyone is biased and has preconceived notions. However, she believes that Executive needs to ensure that there is no bias at their initial level before the issue trickles down to the councillors. Jodi stated that this is difficult to do; however, this is why the executive makes decisions by committee, which is made up of three people, before moving onto thirteen councillors. Although a biased majority can happen, he stated that, perhaps, at that point it is no longer a bias, but fact.

Alice wondered about the likelihood of creating an external committee that meets once or twice a year to review decisions that have been made during the disciplinary process; a second opinion,

which could ensure non-bias. She understood what was being said but wondered about objectivity and fairness. Brandon questioned this idea's effectiveness, stating that in his nearly five years on Council, he had only seen three disciplinary procedures, which were minor and often about councilor requirements. With changes to these requirements, these were no longer a problem. Serious issues, such as broken policies, bylaws, and harassment are not common. Alice stated that she understood this and ultimately, it is up to the new incoming council; she simply wanted to voice concerns.

Councillor Sarah Blayney Lew was in favour of keeping the policy as is, believing that councillors know their ethical requirements. VPEX Natasha Donahue echoed the sentiment that councillors understand their ethical obligations and agreed with the edit as it stands. Councillor Christine Hudder, Councillor Josh Ryan, and Brittany agreed as well. The proposed motion passed with one vote opposed from Alice.

Next, the *Policy 2.16 Email Voting DRAFT* passed unanimously with a move by Josh and second by Brittany, as well as *Policy 9.25 Access to Education for Indigenous Learners in Canada DRAFT*, with a move by Brittany and second by Amanda. Natasha explained that *Policy 9.25* was an AUSU Council initiative during this past term to effectively advocate for Indigenous student issues. During the process, the committee heard stories and consulted peer reviewed sources and government statistics. The policy covers three main issues: how AU can support Indigenous students, the adoption of the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and advocating and implementing UNDRIP. Councillor Darcie Fleming called the policy "beautiful," stating that she could see all the effort that was put in. Natasha added that the policy would be revised with more research elements and helpful resources.

Next, the *2020 AUSU Annual Report* was introduced, with a move by Josh and second by Amanda. Jodi stated that the report attempted to show AU student life and used a mix of real and stock images that AU students could identify with. New this year was a move toward infographics and a message from the President. He also praised the hard work of Communications and Member Services Coordinator Donette Kingyens. Darcie thought it was "fabulous" and a "great job." The motion passed unanimously.

During the Election Debrief, Jodi stated that Council has a great incoming group and was very pleased with the work of CRO Bailey Daines. Of the 20 initial candidates, 16 members were placed on the final ballot. Many students participated, with a great deal of website traffic, forum participation, as well as the mobile app and *The Voice*. In total, 660 votes were cast, a lower number than the previous year, but percentage-wise the turnout was similar. In 2018, although approximately 800 votes were cast, ballots were given out to 1,800 more students. Jodi was thankful for everyone who participated and voted, revealing that the new council is going to be a mix of returning and new councillors. He welcomed the new councillors and hoped to continue the momentum on Council thus far.

Finally, Council discussed the allocation of up to \$7,000 in unrestricted reserve funds to increase the budgeted expense amount for a resume review program called VMock. The motion passed unanimously, with a move by Josh and a second by Brittany. Brandon stated that he had subscribed to the service and was pleased with the level of detail and benefits it provides.

The VMock program reviews and evaluates resumes line by line, dividing results into several categories, such as "Good Job!" "On Track!" and "Needs Work!" Brandon sees a lot of value in the program and stated that it was obtained at a significant discount as the company was intrigued that AU is an online university. Incoming Councillor Ian Stewart was curious if other similar products were available, to which Natasha answered that nothing comparable had been found,

some were a step below and a bit cheaper, while one was discontinuing its service. While Ian worried about the possibility of them going bankrupt, Brandon stated that there are no concerns in the short-run. Although VMock is a newer company, they have had successful partnerships with US universities. Jodi stated that since this is being treated as a pilot, there is no long-term risk and is “one of the better ones we’ve seen.” Brandon joked that the only risk is “students liking it too much so we reach our capacity.”

Reports

Moving on, Brandon stated that January was a very busy month, with the Alberta budget being released and the CASA SuperCon conference. The report revealed that during SuperCon, 130 meetings with MPs, Senators, and stakeholders took place. Since the conference also coincided with CASA’s 25 anniversary, the logo was redesigned, as well as the unveiling of a new marketing campaign for the next year. During the annual CASA awards ceremony, Brandon won the award for most likely to be CASA’s next executive director, while Natasha was awarded the MVP award. Alberta’s budget, which revealed a 5% cut to the operating funding for AB PSE institutions, meant a 1.3% cut for AU. In addition, the Alberta government “also announced that performance-based funding would be brought forward. This will result in a portion of an institution’s funds being subject to meeting metrics established by the government.” More clarification about the metrics remains forthcoming from the government.

Next, Natasha spoke briefly about AUSU opening a relationship with the Quebec Students’ Union. The report revealed that AUSU has ratified a new five-year agreement with l’Union Etudiante du Quebec, which expires in four years. Her report also discussed AUSU’s asks at SuperCon, which included expanding student grants, extending the interest-free grace period for student loans, pausing repayment for student loans for new parents, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, co-ops and internships for international students, and students on the board of Canada’s federal granting agencies. The response was positive overall; to date, the federal government has committed to the first three asks.

Next, Brittany spoke briefly about AUSU’s new student bursary, with a query for more information from Darcie. Brittany stated that it will be for new students who have completed three credits. Upon a question of amount from Darcie, Jodi revealed that the cyclical award (May and November) would be ten awards of \$300 each. The award specifically targets those students with eleven credits or less, who are not eligible for many awards. The amount is lower because, thus far, their contributions have been lower, but provides a level of support. Darcie then questioned the appropriateness of quoting a stakeholder in the report, to which Brittany replied that she had “nothing to say.”

The report also revealed that the Awards Committee received two computer bursary applications and one emergency bursary application, which were all approved. In addition, several course names were changed, including (INST) 377 Topics in Aboriginal Governments has been changed to Topics in Treaty Relationships and Indigenous – Settler Relations, to better reflect the course content and (SOCI/WGST) 345 Women and Work in Canada, which is now Women, Gender, and Work in Canada, to better reflect course content as well as addressing gender, men/masculinity, and LGBTQIA+ issues in the study of work.

Upon losing connection from Brittany, Brandon continued with the Finance Committee Report, as well as the Awards Committee Report, to both of which there were no questions.

Natasha continued with the MEC Committee Report, in which she mentioned that they had met to review the podcast from the past year, which the report is going to be ready for the next Council meeting.

Jodi's Executive Director's Report was left as presented. He highlighted the fact that while COVID-19 is wreaking havoc on society, AUSU is doing their part and have implemented a work at home plan that started this week. Darcie inquired as to who was answering phonecalls, to which Jodi replied that out of office alerts are in place and that students are encouraged to use email instead. Councillor Lisa Oracheski appreciated the extra information about the election, while Jodi was positive about how the election was executed. Brandon explained the number of votes could be a result that many AUSU members are visiting students from other institutions, who did not see the appeal of getting involved. In addition, votes are typically highest when things are going badly; there is a sense that members are comfortable with the direction AUSU is going. In regard to *The Voice*, the report revealed that the top stories this month were "[Asking the Candidates](#)", and "[The Reputation of Online—Athabasca University](#)." In addition, last month, the newspaper garnered 1,200 more views than January.

Question and Answer Period

The Question and Answer period began with a question by Meeting Reporter Natalia Iwanek who asked why, in recent years, the individual councillor votes seemed to average around eight per student ballot when there were thirteen candidates. Brandon explained that the numbers are not a perfect multiple because some students choose only a few candidates per ballot instead of selecting thirteen choices.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The meeting was officially adjourned at 8:00 pm MT. The next meeting will take place on April 16, 2020 at 6:30 pm MT. As AUSU members, AU students are encourage to attend council meetings via teleconference. Details can be found on the [AUSU website](#). In addition, AUSU's new Executive Committee will be elected on March 27, 2020.



Fly on the Wall

Spring Forth: AU Studies as Cosmic Renewal

Jason Sullivan



Nudge nudge...poke! Spring peaks its snout out from between piles of snow that can only dream of a future as glaciers. Wherever we came from, and wherever we go, it helps to take a look at the big wide picture. Thousands of years ago an endless winter covered almost every available patch of land across our Great White North; nowadays, we are annually spared this fate. At the cosmic level the planet's either in a glaciation or out of one; the years bunch together like snowflakes or thistle seeds. Deep time, like those endless stretches of space that make up our solitary individualized studies, seems almost timeless ([Cowan, online](#)) Yet,

spring reminds us to be present as we grow ourselves anew; a thaw of the ground implies a thaw in our brain.

With meandering hints seasonal warming provides us with potential for resurgent joy in our AU studies. Being able to sit outside for a study break as temperatures climb gives us a chance to pause in reverence rather than keep moving forward to ward off the cold. Ironically, the motion

of molecules that makes us warm gives us the ability to slow down. But we don't only change our physical motion in spring; our minds are altered as well. Warmth stimulates the growth not only of new thoughts but of their loam grown deep in the buried recesses of our existence. A mosey down memory lane is just the ticket to an afternoon of fancy. What are our memories anyway besides concentric circles of seasonal change, like how snowflakes interchange with sunbeams in an endless looping cycle of personal meteorology? Dates on the calendar recur every year and each moment is at once new and old.

To The Microfiche! To Date Oneself is to Make the Past Present

Memories are certainly not an encyclopedia. As soon as we pull a moment down from its dusty mental shelf, that moment we reached for has already been altered. Memories are created out of the raw material of experience that was always a second behind reality; it's like an airplane passing and hearing its engines roar a moment later. The fact that memories are creations, discursive products, has been the soup-de-jour, or soupe-du-*printemps* if you will, of philosophy since time immemorial.

In Ancient Greece it's well known that learning itself was thought of as a form of remembering; those 'aha' moments are, or were, or shall always be, simply acts of recall outside of temporality. Our eternal natures were once taken for granted. The desire to learn certainly kindles something larger than a mere desire for a diploma.

Memories are timeless precisely because they are remembered outside of the time from which they originally occurred. We draw them into our present, but they remain formative sketches with our imagination filling details into blurry spaces. Our discourse and definitions make memories how they are; we add ourselves in the present to make our past reality complete. No wonder a course can seem more interesting in hindsight, or the past rosier than it was. Plato said that to understand our life as a whole invariably changes what we thought we were investigating: "it is necessary that the entirety of disseminated being shatter apart, as soon as it is grasped by discursive thought" (Plato in Badiou, 37). Our present self must contend with all our reality—not merely a general outline; spring, then, is not a recurrence or renewal but an arising.

To Think is to Map

How we think about the past frames the portraiture we recollect; spring reminds us of returns but also of true newness. Where we're going at AU isn't just to the next course or year, but to a place we can't anticipate fully in advance. The calendar, like our transcript, embodies a pale imitation of the transformation distance education provides. It's not a straight and narrow path, not one held together by the stability of a map. Memories show this; often what we've forgotten is with us in a way that our simple explanations cannot account for.

There are few straight lines in nature and the road to remembering is laced with belief systems. As geometry frames an artist's depiction of a face so do our ideologies frame the essential muchness of our lived reality. The composer John Cage famously put it, "as soon as the music leaves your head it's already compromised". As soon as we think back, either imagining ourselves as archetype for Humanity writ large or as teensy representative snails leaving trails upon the great sandy plains of time, we are inevitably placing ourselves onto a surface of interpretation.

If we want to be cartographers of our past, pristine presenters of our historical ascendancy to distance education excellence, well, forget it. The best we can hope for is to uncover the ways and means we've come to imagine our past in certain ways. But there's joy in them thar hills because journeys through our personal archive are replete with opportunities for new breakthroughs in self-understanding.

Wherever there's self-knowledge there's potential for growth. As we move forward in our studies the key is to remember that we aren't who we were before. So whatever we recall is laced with the intrigues of our present versions of self.

Glaciers hint at their arrival in every remaining patch of snow and gulch of shadowy cold, but, in our present epoch, we know the snow will retreat and then vanish like a wraith. If distance studies seem like a slow slog, spring can remind us that great leaps forward are in our future. This fact our past attests to unconditionally: the future kept coming. As frost retreats the earth is revealed and, in glorious metaphoric fashion, so is the reality of our life. Our prospects for a sunny future can shine through too.

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How to Be Productive While Socially Distancing at Home

Xin Xu



The question I often ask myself when choosing to work at home (or in an alternate setting like libraries or cafes) is whether my productivity is increased when I take my work elsewhere. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's become the norm to work or learn from home. Of course, for many of us, working from home isn't a new phenomenon. However, if the social-distancing measures mean that you're struggling to stay on-task then there are a few tips that can help you adapt to this new norm.

Create space

For myself, recently I've had to make multiple changes, beyond just physical space, that have allowed me to be more effective in the home workspace. Space means setting aside a location in your house specifically designated for working virtually or studying. While staying in bed and working from a bed tray may feel cozy, it doesn't allow us to cognitively and physically focus on the task at hand. We mentally associate coziness with relaxation rather than being mentally alert and writing a term

paper for instance. While you may not always work in the same space, it is important to designate a location that helps you stay organized. I find that by separating my work and entertainment spaces, I feel more confident that I can do both more effectively.

Dress for work

I learned this tip from a friend who works from home permanently year-round. He mentioned the difficulty in staying alert when working in PJ's or sweatshirts. When I first heard of the idea, it was enough to elicit a chuckle, however in recent weeks I've found that dressing professionally in a home environment did change my behavior drastically. I no longer slumped over when I responded to emails and felt more energetic and workaholic as a result. It's no coincidence that the adage "dress for the occasion" also applies here.

Use earplugs or noise-cancelling headphones

This small change can work wonders into a students' routine at home. Particularly if you live with your family or other roommates. There have been so many instances where I have tried to study but a roommate decides to fry chicken leaving me to listen to the loud crackling of the hot oil or other distractions. Using a good quality pair of earplugs for myself meant that 80% of this noise was blocked out, leaving me to pursue more important tasks at hand.

One task at a time

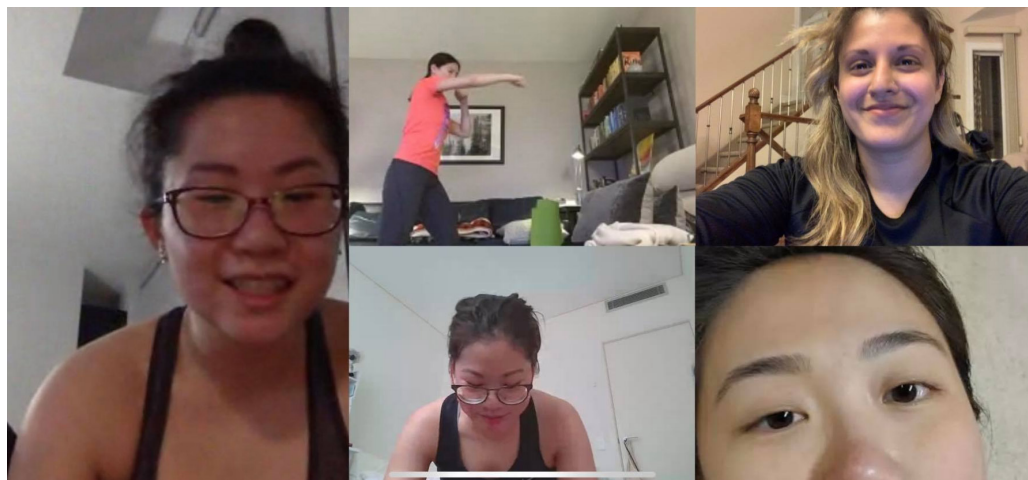
You might be rolling at your eyes at this common tidbit of advice, but you would be surprised at the number of university students who turn on an episode of *Friends* in the background while studying. Even for myself, resisting the urge to have *Mindhunters* in a separate window of my laptop is insanely difficult, especially while working from home. You may even find that when your to-do list is checked off, being fully immersed in your favorite movie is a more pleasant experience than committing 50% of your attention to two different tasks.

Plan your day

For many students, online learning can be a true test of self-discipline. Especially when the perfectly curated schedule from classes, volunteer work and part-time job is off the hook. I find that in the absence of a clear schedule, my entire circadian rhythm is frazzled. Both from a cognitive level but also physically, I feel tired and unmotivated. To keep ourselves accountable to our learning at this difficult time, planning can go a long way. Especially when online lectures can catch up in a short period of time and make it even more pivotal to stay on top of school work. For myself, planning each hour of my day helps give some clarity to my daily activities. Moreover, looking back on the to-do list helps you track your progress and helps make the day more meaningful. Even activities such as learning to podcast or experimenting with a new recipe should be part of your daily planning.

Keep in touch

Part of the challenge with social distancing is feeling connected in a genuine way. A current struggle I have is tracking all the various emails (oftentimes, paragraphs upon paragraphs in length). Sometimes, we might agree that simply picking up the phone to call someone or hosting a small meeting on Google Meets can spark joy in our current lives. Having meaningful conversations with others virtually can help everyone stay hopeful during times of stress and might just be the secret to staying productive. It's hard to be productive, when we're lonely and upset.



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



The Creative Spark Getting Into Character

Marie Well



You must have a story to tell. Deep down, we all do. But to tell a meaningful story, we must expose ourselves through our characters: share our desires, fears, pet peeves—or those we've come across in others or those begging for an escape from our imagination.

According to The Open University, to write convincing fiction, you need to dissect “your character’s inner life: what they want, think, remember, resent, fear, dream, deny. Focus on your character’s contradictions and conflicts in order to create a complex person and also to generate plot ...” (66%).

That's how you begin to shape your character. But how do you reveal your character through story? The Open University says to reveal characters, use any of “the six key methods identified by Novakovich – summary; repeated action or habit; self-portrait; appearance; scene; combination of techniques” (58%).

Let's analyze each of these six methods for revealing your characters:

Method 1: Summarize your character.

“Link the character traits that strike you as the most important ones, and you’ll have a complete character summary” (50%).

Think of the lyrics in the Tom Petty song *Free Falling*:

“She's a good girl, loves her mamma
Loves Jesus and America, too
She's a good girl, crazy bout Elvis
Loves horses and her boyfriend too, yeah yeah.”

That's a good summary of a character. Could you take this character summary and craft a story? Your story would be unique, as would be your character, as your eyes have seen a world no-one else ever could.

Method 2: Reveal your character through habits.

“Repeated action or habit: This is the most common notion of character – the expectation of how a person will behave in a given situation, based on the observation that she has behaved like that many times, that she has the habit” (52%).

You could write, “Every morning, without fail, she’d put out cat food in the backyard for the chirping magpies. She'd then, without fail, take to sizing up the birds. ‘Are they too fat?’”

What might this habit say about the character?

Method 3: Have your character give a self-portrait.

“Self-portrait: The writer may let the character introduce himself to us” (52%).

If I gave a self-portrait to a character, it might say:

"I'd die for love and for God. Everything I do surrounds the two. Sorely, past blunders, and the betrayal of a brother, bred a great regret: unrequited familial love. No amount of 'I love you's,' no amount of flowers, no amount of prayers, bridged the chasm. Just cold words for consolation. Sweeter than silence, to say the least. But mostly silence.

I'd retreat if not for the good book. Reconcile a brother, sister, mother, it says. But how? Flowers and fawning seemed less daunting."

Method 4: Let your characters come alive by revealing their appearance.

"Appearance: Image is not everything, but it does account for a lot. Through how a person looks, you may try to infer what the person is like – but appearances may be deceptive. Still, to suggest the person's character, you may select and interpret details, to guide the reader's expectations" (53%).

I recently saw an image of a woman in her fifties or sixties. She had dyed blonde long straight hair. She wore no makeup, but had a pretty face, albeit a double chin and about fifty extra pounds. She wore a star necklace and a hippy-like dress. A younger photo of her revealed a beauty, although she was, even then, just a touch too heavy.

What might you infer about this woman based on her appearance? (And what might you infer about the narrator?)

In reality, she had a near death experience and claims she went through an alien abduction. I love this woman, and her story means the world to me.

But could you have guessed, based solely on her appearance, that this was her walk in life? Appearance is telling!

And could you have seen that "her appearance points in the direction of the key conflict of the novel" (53%)? She was struck by lightning multiple times and had multiple near death experiences. Now that's conflict!

Method 5: Characterize through a scene.

"Scene: In a scene you set your character in motion. Especially if she's speaking, you can show us the character in action, without needing to summarize and generalize, although you may supplement the scene with a summary" (54%).

Screenplays and plays—at least the script versions—are big on dialogue. Take this dialogue:

Sharon: "Did you?"

Walter: "Everything but."

Sharon: "Is he alive?"

Walter: "More alive than ever. I need a doctor."

Sharon: "A doctor?! The only ward we'll see is in prison! Walter dear, I'll fix you. I'll fix this."

Walter: "Like you fixed him? He struck first."

Sharon: "He gets mad. Bat swinging, gun slinging mad. Many nights, dear Walter, death struck hard, dragging me to its underworld. Each time, I barely fled."

Walter: "He's coming for me."

What does this scene reveal or hide about the three characters? You might view Sharon as a schemer, and Walter as a weak follower, possibly the lover of Sharon. You might also view the third character as an enraged wife abuser.

If that scene scares you, you're not alone. Most movies scare me, even sarcastic comedies. That's why I read nonfiction—and spiritual books. (If you recall, what just preceded is a self-narration style of character reveal.)

Method 6: Combine techniques to portray your characters.

“Combining techniques: Most developed character descriptions combine two or more approaches. During the course of a novel, we see a character in the ways the author chooses for us. That, too, is lifelike – you hardly ever experience all the aspects of a friend right away. It takes time – different situations, communications, perceptions, and thoughts” (55%).

We can never have too many friends, the saying goes. Create a friend through your writing, and the world grows less lonely.

Now you know how to reveal a friend in writing. Better still, that friend, ultimately, is you.

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Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group

In addition to queries about course withdrawals, extensions, and exam rebookings, topics include timing for parchment delivery, convocation, the AU phone app, and GPA boosters.

reddit

One post from a prospective student who is curious about learning online, and another post from a student who has just completed their degree requirements and eagerly awaits a parchment in the mail.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "The Canadian federal government is placing a 6 month interest-free moratorium on the repayment of Canada Student Loans for all individuals currently in the process of repaying. Alberta Student Loan repayments will be paused, beginning March 30, 2020. <https://bit.ly/2TXpvUw>."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Applications are now being accepted for our Spring awards cycle! Over \$20,000 in awards and bursaries to give away to #AthabascaU undergrads! Apply online at <https://bit.ly/1GIWJhi> #igo2AU."

@AULibArchives tweets: "AU Library is still here to help you! We might be working from home, but we have extended our chat hours to provide you extra service during this time! Pop into <http://library.athabascau.ca> from 10:30am-2:30pm MST and chat with us about any of your library questions!"



Porkpie Hat The Road Ahead

Darjeeling Jones



There are so many oracles and prophets these days, it's hard to know where to turn to for insight, who to believe. The existential weather forecast on Radio Isolation is calling for silent skies, and ominous grey clouds veined with silver, accompanied by intermittent bursts of beauty and occasional hellfire, with 70% probability of unexpected transformations.

I have always been drawn to the idea of predicting the future. I went to a psychic once, many years ago, in Vancouver. Oddly, or maybe appropriately, she worked out of a tiny space in the back of an insurance agency. She had tarot cards and a lot of pashmina scarves strewn about. I don't think she was very accurate with me but, to be fair, I used to be a really terrible believer. I kept expecting her to predict imminent fire damage or sewer back up. Fortunately, I'm a much more gullible person now, since my capacity for cynicism has been fried to a crisp by the overload of recent politics.

These days, I have been fantasizing about getting my fortune read again. In my overheated imagination, it would go something like this:

The old soothsayer's shop is located in the shadows of the fairgrounds, between the rollercoaster and the bumper cars. I pull back the pungent fur pelt that is her entranceway, and step into an atmosphere of lamplight and the smoke of burning herbs. We negotiate terms; she asks me what I want to know, then she shakes the teacup filled with tiny rabbit bones and rolls them out upon the scarred wooden table. "Now, all is revealed to me! I can read the secrets of the universe as effortlessly as any obituary written upon a page, and I see exactly how the future shall unfold: it shall unfold unpredictably. There will be moments where everything is lost, and other moments so splendid and rich that a single one of them will be worth ten times all that you have suffered. There will be false hopes, ecstasy and betrayal. There will be luaus and parades, revelations, reckonings, recessions, and plagues. There shall be sour nights, bitter twists of fate, and sweet ripples in time. Most of all, there will be the necessity to cross my palm with silver, if you wish to leave this tent alive." Stepping out of the tent onto the well-lit midway, with the scents of powdered sugar and approaching rain, feels like a blessing in itself.

But perhaps, after all, this predicting the future business is not what I thought it would be. Perhaps the most reasonable thing to do right now is to just get on with life to the best of one's ability. There are many of us who are getting emotional eyestrain from trying to peer too far ahead.

Perhaps we should just focus on lending a hand to others, and finding and giving comfort however we can. Maybe, for now, we should go home, tend to our wounds, and rest up for the inevitable challenges to come. We've seen bad times and good times before. When it's safe to do so, we can bring each other pots of rooibos tea and cups of cocoa. We can share canned peaches and sardines on toast. We can plant begonias in the window box and read ghost stories together by the light of the beeswax candles your grandmother once sent you. I bet—almost before we know it—we will have built the future, one hour at a time. And, just maybe, we will make it through this somehow.





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

A Missing Piece

Dear Barb:

I hate to be focusing on this with what's happening in the world, but, well, life goes on. I was adopted at 6 months old by a fantastic family. I have always been well cared for and loved, but I felt like there was a void in my life. I never looked like anyone in the family, as I am fair and everyone else is dark. My adoptive parents had been married for many years and were unable to have children when they adopted me. They eventually had three children. They told me stories of how they had chosen me and that I was special to them, but I always felt if they would have waited longer they would have had their own children and wouldn't have wanted to adopt me.

In my teens I began to think about finding my biological parents or siblings. By the time I was in my twenties I decided I would seriously pursue it. I told my adoptive parents and they were completely supportive and provided me with as much information as they could. That was two years ago, and I have recently found my birth parents, who are now married with two other children. We have spoke on the phone about arranging a meeting. They seem excited and anxious to meet me; however I'm a little apprehensive. After all they got married and had a family and never pursued finding me, that makes me wonder how receptive they really are. Do you think I should meet them? And do you have any suggestions on the best way to handle the initial

meeting? I am so filled with anxiety!! Thanks, Wendy.

Hi Wendy:

Thanks for your letter and you are right; despite this horrible situation, life does go on and people still have issues to deal with. You are at an important crossroads in your life. As you say, despite how your adoptive parents loved you and chose you, you still felt a void in your life and for that reason I would say that you need to meet your biological parents. Some people never feel that void and are perfectly content without ever meeting their biological parents, but I think it's important for you to resolve this.

You do need to prepare yourself for the meeting, as these meetings do not always go as we envision in our mind. You already appear to have some resentment because your biological parents never looked for you, and you will need to address that. Perhaps some counseling with someone who is educated in these type meetings would be a helpful place to begin. Speak with your family doctor about where these services are available. Also Origins Canada offers some insight into what you can expect from a reunion with your biological family. Good luck Wendy, and keep an open mind.

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 Enshadowment

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 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for May](#)
- **Apr 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting May 1](#)
- **Mar 15:** [May degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Apr 16:** [AUSU Council Changeover Meeting](#)
- **Apr 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for May](#)
- **May 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Jun 1](#)

COVID-19 Updates

Your AU Students' Union is doing our part to help minimize the spread of COVID-19. The AUSU team members will work from home until further notice. The best way to reach the Students' Union is by email at admin@ausu.org. We will get back to you as soon as possible.

We are aware of impacts of COVID-19 on your studies, and are dedicated to keeping students informed about updates being provided by the University, as well as the impacts to your studies and the resources currently available to you.

COVID-19 Updates from Athabasca University

For updates related to COVID-19 and related impacts to your Athabasca University studies, please check the AU website:

- [COVID-19 General Information](#)
- [COVID-19 Questions and Answers](#).

AU has outlined some great supports for students impacted by COVID-19, including free course extensions, exam rebooking fees waived, & who to contact with questions.

If you have any questions not answered in the links above, please contact covid@athabascau.ca and AU will answer your questions as quickly as possible.

Mental Health Support

AU has a [mental health and wellness program](#) through Homewood Health to provide students free counselling, as well as coaching and services on mental health & wellness.

If you are looking for immediate support from a professional counsellor, have your AU student ID number handy and call Homewood Health:

1-800-663-1142 (English)
1-866-398-9505 (French)
1-888-384-1152 (TTY/hearing impaired)
1-877-301-4776 (Outside of Canada)

We urge everyone to be kind and patient, wash your hands, practice social distancing, and stay safe!

Health and Safety Information

We recommend all students follow the advice of the public health officials in their jurisdiction for ways to mitigate the spread of the virus and to keep safe.

Canada:

[Government of Canada COVID-19 page](#).
[Canada's Economic Response Plan](#)

Alberta:

[Government of Alberta COVID-19 page](#)
[COVID-19 Support for Albertans](#)
[Alberta Health Services COVID-19 page](#)

Ontario: [COVID-19 Page](#)

British Columbia: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Quebec: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Saskatchewan: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Manitoba: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Nova Scotia: [COVID-19 Page](#)

New Brunswick: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Newfoundland and Labrador: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Prince Edward Island: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Nunavut: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Northwest Territories: [COVID-19 Page](#)

Yukon: [COVID-19 Page](#)



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

THE VOICE

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