



THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 29 2020-07-24

Minds We Meet!

Interviewing Students Like You!

Will Online Learning Save You Money?

The Financial Boost of Distance Learning

AUSU's Disabilities Initiatives

Interviewing AUSU's VPFA

Plus:

*Harry Potter & Cancel Culture
Homemade is Better
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 Word Power

Karl Low



This week I'm happy to announce the return of Minds We Meet. We're coming back to it with a slightly different style, however. Instead of just our straight up question and answer format, new Voice writer, Kaitie O'Shaughnessy, has brought us more of an interview-based profile. Let me know what you think of it. I think it gives us a more readable article, even if it's not as concise as our Q&A format. But if you disagree and preferred reading students answers entirely in their own words, let me know.

Also this week, we're talking once again to AUSU's VPFA, Monique Durette, this time interviewing her about AUSU's moves in the students with disabilities space. What has AUSU been up to in support of the many members who are taking their education even while dealing with some sort of disability? Natalia Iwanek digs in to find out.

There is also, right now, a lot of talk about what schools and post-secondary institutions are going to do in the fall semester, how do they handle COVID-19 on campus? Adrienne Braithwaite takes note of how moving to a more

online manner of delivering courses could wind up giving some much-needed cost savings to students.

I want to be sure to direct your attention to Natalia's second article, inspired by the reaction to Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling's recent set of tweets, where she examines what's come to be called cancel culture. Social media is filled with calls to stop patronizing certain people or businesses based on how some of these people's or businesses actions or statements can be seen as furthering types of discrimination against marginalized people.

I'm thinking of this in connection with another quote I saw earlier today, noting that putting someone down because they don't share your view on an issue is bullying. I don't argue that statement, but part of me thinks, "doesn't that need to be done sometimes?"

One of the most difficult things about trying to be a person who values freedom and justice is to find a way to balance the freedom to be horrible to others with justice. Obviously, we know that when it comes to physical confrontation, that's going to far. You can't be free to swing your fist when it's going to impact somebody else's face. But with words, that's much harder to do. We can't deny, after all, that words have power. If nothing else, they form rallying cries and bulwarks that people get behind to justify actions that, in other contexts, would be reprehensible.

Should somebody have shut down talk about #pizzagate, a false conspiracy about a paedophilic ring of high powered people who met in the basement of a pizza shop. A basement that doesn't actually exist, but the words were nonetheless powerful enough to drive a man to take a weapon into the shop and fire off several rounds in an attempt to "investigate" the ring. Those who argue for freedom of speech over all never seem to understand or accept accountability for the actions that words can cause. And this brings us around to cancel culture. At what point does it become acceptable to bully someone into silence? How do we judge the harm of words? I don't know the answer, but it's an interesting question. Enjoy the read, hopefully these words won't cause any harm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl', with a stylized, flowing script.

MINDS WE MEET



As I spoke on the phone with Athabasca University student Vevangapi Katjamana, I was excited learning all the interesting things about his life. Vevangapi was not able to start post-secondary education as soon as he wanted to because he was born in Namibia and had spent the last nine years attempting to receive immigration status. But now he is enrolled in the undergraduate Bachelor of Arts program, majoring in Political Science. Although he just started in June, he hopes to eventually get into law school.

Vevangapi moved to Toronto at the age of 18 while the rest of his family stayed in Namibia. He finished his high school education in Toronto and then moved to Edmonton to save for post-secondary. Now that he has finally been able to start on his path to law school, he says his greatest challenge is working full time to support himself while trying to find time to study. In addition, Vevangapi has not been able to see his family since moving to Canada nine years ago. While he did get used to not seeing them after a time, and he talks to them on the phone, "Sometimes in life you have to make sacrifices," he said.

While juggling a full-time job and post-secondary education, he also volunteered to deliver meals and

groceries to at-risk community members during the initial outbreak of Covid-19. Vevangapi has also been part of a group of students working with United Way to address the issue of poverty within Alberta. He and his group are focusing on improving the 211 help-line number in Alberta. They won a ten thousand dollar grant from United Way and are now working closely with the Government of Alberta to tackle poverty within the province.

There were many challenges along the way to the campaign being successful, but he maintained an optimistic outlook and persevered. He said he realized, after the first group of students he worked with all backed out of the project, that if he wants to see his project come to life, he would "have to do it myself", noting that he doesn't "want to miss the chance to change the world."



Vevangapi with his cousin and grandma in Okarupuka



Vevangapi serving food to homeless people.

Helping his community seems to be a fundamental part of Vevangapi's life. I asked him what type of law he is interested in practising, and he said he would like to focus on human rights—he wants to stand up for people who face inequality. So I asked what he thought about the Black Lives Matter protests and activism currently happening in Canada, and he noted, as a black person himself, that he faces racism—particularly when it comes to dating or finding employment. But, he says, “it’s not just me alone.” He wants to remind us that along with black people, Asians, Indians, Indigenous peoples, and other minorities face discrimination as well. So if he stays in Canada to practice law, he wants to focus on human rights and equality. Vevangapi stressed to me that, although Canada does offer so much for people of colour, we need to do more for indigenous populations

as well. In addition, he says we need to fight more against stereotyping and discriminations for all people of colour. “But,” Vevangapi says, “Canada is doing better than a lot of countries in this world. In this country, you can be who you are.”

A motivated individual who focuses his free time and energy on helping people who live on the margins of society, Vevangapi has passion and a will to fight, but his demeanour is kind and approachable. Vevangapi has big, commendable dreams, and studying at AU is just one step towards those dreams.

As an avid fan of classic rock, you'll typically find me by the lake with good tunes, good food, and good conversation. Once I had enough of the chef life I decided to go back to university and started at AU for English and Philosophy.

Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Haywood Hunt Scholarship Program

Sponsored by: Haywood Hunt & Associates Inc.

Deadline: August 31, 2020

Potential payout: \$1250

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or have other legal standing that allows them to study in Canada, and be accepted or enrolled in a Canadian university or college for the 2020-21 academic year.

What's required: An emailed application, along with a 500-1000 word post on a website, blog, or online forum that expresses your top 5 ideas how "Individuals Can Stay Safe by Protecting Their Privacy Online."

Tips: Read the Application Guideline sections for information on what to include with your submission.

Where to get info: www.haywoodhunt.ca/scholarship.html



Will online learning save you money this fall?

Adrienne Braithwaite



Most universities in Canada are switching to online or a hybrid of online/in-person learning for this upcoming fall semester. Those familiar with AU's popular education format can attest to how learning from home can save you money on upfront costs without sacrificing quality instruction. Tuition costs have been on the rise across Canada, but with the changes coming this fall, many students can expect a reduction in students fees, increases to available bursaries and a move toward digital textbooks. Transportation costs to get to and from university may also amount in savings for commuting students. With a reduction in commute time and more flexible instruction schedules, part-time employment also becomes more accessible for students. Over the course of a year, these small modifications can amount to saving thousands of dollars on education costs.

With limited extracurricular activities available onsite, many Canadian universities are reducing non-instructional fees (recreational, student association and transit pass fees) for the upcoming semester. If these reductions carry over into the winter term, this could mean a savings of several hundred dollars just in non-instructional fees. Mandatory fees such as recreation, transit passes, and students' union fees are the main non-instructional fees projected to be reduced in 2020/21.

Textbook costs are also notoriously high. At AU there has been a shift away from hard copy textbooks to providing students with online versions which are just available for the duration of the course. If all universities began offering a digital textbook this could save students thousands of dollars each year in textbook costs alone. Hardcopy textbooks are often available for those who prefer them, but for many students the ease of access to e-books and the cost savings outweigh the benefit of having a personal copy. COVID-19 has made reselling and tracking down used copies of textbooks more difficult; by transitioning to digital textbooks professors can help students save money this upcoming year.

Commuting students also have a chance to both save and make extra money this academic year. Virtual learning can save more than one hundred dollars a month on gas for commuters. Some families with multiple vehicles have opted to temporarily reduce their vehicle insurance on their second vehicle. By choosing to drive only one vehicle during the pandemic, families can cut unnecessary monthly fees. With more time available, online learning also allows students more free time for employment while studying. Virtual courses provide flexibility and students spend less time traveling to and from classes. For example, my full-time academic schedule has been modified so I only have classes three out of seven days a week and only one day has an optional in-person component. This saves me a 45-minute commute to the university giving me more time to allocate towards my part-time job.

The Government of Canada has also increased their funding for students this year by doubling the grant money available. Among other student loan benefits, grants for "Full-Time Students will increase up to a maximum of \$6,000 and the grant for part-time studies to \$3,600." 2020/21

student loan applications just recently opened and students can apply on the [Government of Canada's student aid website](#) by province of residence.

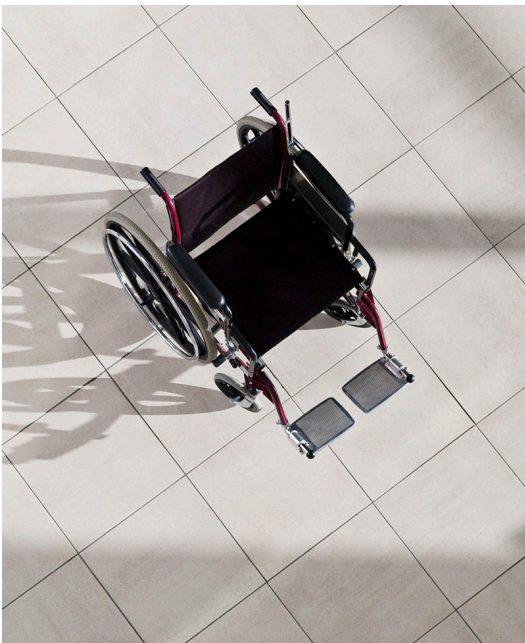
With ever increasing tuition fees, students have been getting creative finding ways to save money on the non-instruction costs associated with higher education. AU offers a variety of student [scholarships](#), [AUSU awards](#), and [financial aid](#) opportunities. Personally, I would recommend looking into union and employer scholarships as often these financial aid sources go unnoticed and unclaimed. Saving opportunities are out there, you just might have to dig to find some of them!

Adrienne Braithwaite is completing her After-Degree in Secondary Education at AU. She has a passion for literacy and cultural studies and hopes to pass on her enthusiasm to secondary students in the future.

AUSU's Recent Initiatives for Students with Disabilities

An Interview with AUSU VPFA, Monique Durette

Natalia Iwanek



Through With recent global events and grassroots movements striving for equity, representation, and acknowledgement and redress of historical, as well as current injustices, *The Voice Magazine* reached out to AUSU about their new initiatives to increase inclusivity here at AU. Our second in a series of interviews focuses on the recent initiatives for students with disabilities, with AUSU VPFA Monique Durette.

Although the new AUSU disability initiative has not yet been formally written, it is currently on the Monique's Council work plan. When asked about the origins of the initiative, Monique recounted that when she first decided to run for Council, she read a great deal of Council literature, such as minutes and finances, beforehand to get a sense of the organization. She noticed what "was missing was the voice for students with disabilities." This became the focus of her campaign, suitably, since as she stated, accessibility is

"something that is part of my life and part of my husband's life."

Monique continued by building upon [her previous interview](#) with *The Voice Magazine*, where she spoke briefly about the car accident that caused permanent disabilities for her husband, as well as PTSD and anxiety for herself. Although her husband originally began his education at Mount Royal University (MRU) in 2017, Monique started at AU right away. Despite MRU having a great accessibility services department, when her husband eventually transferred to AU, she stated, "it became apparent to me that there were some things that were, not necessarily lacking, but the navigation of them was significantly different." Additionally, although she did not necessarily think that she herself needed accommodations when first starting at AU, this changed over the years. She continued, "Since being on Council and being elected to the Executive, I found that about half of our Council uses the ASD services, so to me it was a natural progression."

Expanding on the origins of this initiative, she stated, "It has since been acknowledged by AU and AUSU that not a lot of focus has been put on students with disabilities. And I say that in a very

positive way, in that ... persons with disabilities weren't even a focus of anyone until the 2000s [I]t just shows that there's this progression that is happening towards inclusion and equity for persons with disabilities."

The goal of this initiative, according to Monique, is similar to other AUSU position policies, such as the Indigenous policy, in that it ensures representation for students with disabilities who have different needs than other students. She stated, "We are aware of this and we are going to advocate for those needs to the University at all times."

When asked about consultations with students with disabilities, she revealed there are already quite a few students with disabilities on Council, "so it's easy to get perspectives on the day to day," but that they have also been approached by AU students with specific stories and scenarios. Although Council has yet to take the step to directly seek out students, she stated, "We are doing what we can right now to open those doors and ensure that students know that they can come to us and talk to us about what their needs are and what their experiences have been so we can advocate" for them. Monique also mentioned that students with disabilities many not be aware of certain accommodations currently available, including the ability to borrow iPads from ADS for e-reading, as well as various apps, such as ReadWrite for note taking, in addition to regular accommodations.

Currently, Monique has begun building a relationship with the ASD department, as well as plans to reach out to the Alberta Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. She intends to strive for both internal advocacy as well as external advocacy to national and provincial organizations that represent students with disabilities on a post-secondary level. In addition, Monique sits on many of the Council's AU Committee seats, stating, "I'm constantly advocating to AU for students with disabilities. I'm always making sure that those needs are being represented. And I've actually started to see a little bit of feedback in that other people are also now saying, 'Oh, what about students with accessibility needs?'"

Next, Monique spoke briefly about the possibility of the initiative becoming something akin to an AU Committee with specific goals and projects, which would include faculty, administration, and students, "ensuring that there is a holistic viewpoint." She also mentioned the possibility of developing a bursary or award specific to students with disabilities, as funding for students with disabilities is often lacking. In addition, although not yet a reality, there are hopes for collaboration with other student unions in the future.

She also referred to VPEX Stacey Hutchings' external advocacy portfolio, which advocates on an external government level, mentioning the different funding level of students with disabilities, as "students who are taking a reduced course load but are still considered full time are going to take longer to ... get their degree. And so, they shouldn't ... have the same lifetime limit as other students because it's going to take them longer to finish."

Monique believes, "There is still so many conversations to be had ... There's still so much that can be done. It feels positive in that these doors haven't been closed yet, they haven't even been opened." Although the initiative is still in its beginning stages, AU students will be informed of any possibility to become involved in the future. In the meantime, students are encouraged to join any committee position that becomes available, including Member-at-Large positions, as well as the upcoming by-election. All positions are remote and virtual, which means one less barrier to accessibility.

Monique also revealed that the response from AU "has been very positive," including Carrie Anton from ASD, who is "open to all the ideas that I brought forward," as well as Deputy Provost

Anne-Marie Scott, who is “a very big believer in having student voices at all tables, and so she’s always open to hearing what we have to say ... We’ve had nothing but positive experiences with Anne-Marie Scott so far.”

This year’s Council is only a few months into their term and AUSU is just getting started, she continued. Addressing previous years’ efforts, “I don’t say that in a way that it has been purposely ignored or anything like that; it’s just that there hasn’t been a specific focus on it.” She believes “there needs to be more specific focus going forward.” Monique would like to pursue a similar direction that Council has taken with the Indigenous Representation Committee, because students with disabilities are “such a large portion of the student body and so it makes sense to have a formal representation.”

As to the future, Monique spoke from her experience in working in the non-profit sector, stating, “things don’t happen overnight like some people would hope that they do” in any large bureaucracy—including corporations, governments, and even smaller institutions like AU—many steps need to be taken.

She ends on a positive note, stating, “I’d love to say that I’m going to be able to accomplish all of my goals and dreams for accessibility in my one-year executive term, but it will probably take a little bit longer than that. But I am hoping to run again for my second-year term. It would be great to know that I can continue this work or at least set it up so that whoever comes in next can just carry it forward. That’s really my goal; that it’s not just something that dies with me. I can build something that will continue on for as long as students with accessibility needs require representation, which is to infinity.”

Monique welcomes any questions, comments, or stories from AU students, including those with disabilities. Students who would like more information about AU’s ASD – Learner Support Services are encouraged to visit their website.

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



Fly on the Wall Learning to Love the Blank Screen

Jason Sullivan



“I’m stuck.” A plaintive cry rang out through my elementary school classroom as another student fell victim to that mysterious vortex comprising blank page syndrome. To demonstrate resistance to the gnawing emptiness of staring for too long at an empty sheet of paper some kids would expertly place their textbook on their desk and, like unplugged robots, allow their bodies to fall lifelessly forward such that their forehead crashed with a resounding thud against the bookish pillow.

Younger years with foolscap paper and precise cursive expectations drove an

incisive wedge between our teeming creative selves and the rigid confines of our learning objectives. Today the blank page or screen can seem like a dead article as countless distractions clamour for our attention. We're never just sitting there in the way we were before the internet and cell phones; even as we remain glued *in situ* at our desk, there's unlimited potential for stimulation that swims us away from our necessary coursework. (This is another reason why watching videos online isn't the same as studying a textbook and writing up an assignment.) Clearly, being stuck is a metaphysical state just as prevalent today as in the pre-screened realm of childhood yore.

A Word From Our Sponsor in Inspiration: Crickets (Metaphoric or Literal)

Crickets, ahh, those meme inducing paragons that create a backdrop of peace and quietude. They're at their best in summer and their chorus is a wonderful backdrop when the academic juices are flowing. Yet, sitting at the computer, it's easy to still get stuck. And when that happens there are a bajillion (or more) happy accidental distractions on offer. Many a brief pause in coursework leads down a garden path of games and monkey business and even 'educational' reading that nevertheless leads us astray from our primary purpose: to kick tail at our distance education.

Chirping crickets can illustrate boredom or can provide doorways to divine instruction. Their presence symbolizes the songlike potential within empty spaces. A Saskatchewan-born artist named Agnes Martin spent her career mapping the blankness of space amidst unimaginable vistas of the spirit. Many of her paintings, with titles such as 'Wheat' and 'The Laws', impart a magical mystery to those moments of sitting and gazing out onto the world while feeling a universal resonance within our soul.

Joyous *jouissance* doesn't have to be limited to what we've already defined as 'fun', after all, and Martin expertly draws us into her web of ragged grids and subtle lines, with shading and hints of colour that like sibilant whispers speaking through eye contact of syllable-less speakers. Out of blankness, that rich fullness of potential squirms and writhes and dances and flows. Martin draws out the exuberance of life between the frail senescence of certain thoughts and clear feelings: "my paintings," she said, "have neither object nor space nor line nor anything-no forms. They are light, lightness, about merging, about formlessness, breaking down form. A world without objects, without interruption, making a work without interruption or obstacle. It is to accept the necessity of the simple direct going into a field of vision as you would cross an empty beach to look at the ocean." (Martin, 84).

Whether seas of a meadow or oceans of meaning, Martin's art reminds us that when at first there seems little to focus is precisely the moment where we can capture our creative energy. The death of the blank screen happens not when we are unsure what to write but when we don't allow ourselves to be enveloped and liberated by the potential of literal and figurative space. It's all in our mind, our senses merely capture data that our thoughts and sentiment combine into meaning. To find purpose and poignancy is thus to accept blankness long enough for new ideas to rush in. Finding our own voice as we read arid course material is to give oneself over to the Midas touch of inspiration that eureka moments are made of.

As Martin turned wheat fields into grid patterns so can we discover new ways to express what we've learned. To think laterally and usefully is to let go of what we expect to see on the screen when we look up again with our corporeal eyes, rather than our mind eyes. Premeditation is likewise the bane of free-flowing writing; if we've studied enough before we apply fingertip to keypad much of what we know will evacuate our cerebral cortex in a wonderful flow that brooks neither pauses nor discontents. And *voila* an 'A' assignment is born!

We're never really stuck on or at a place so much as we drift far from ourselves in moments of writer's block or study stultification. To allow a blank screen to stare back at us is thus to refract our essence; or as Allen Ginsberg put it, to remember that "after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world." It's this confidence in our powers that can propel us forward. Magic likewise ensues when we realize the abundance enabled by those pauses of nothingness in which we seem hopelessly tangled. It's never us that is stuck but our inability to draw upon reservoirs of being that animate our spirit like blood circulating through vesicles.

Blanking Beyond...Bringing Clarity to Opacity

Expectations of what's required are a huge barrier to writing those first words down; they hold us back and tie us in place like a sad mule in some old anthropology film. We're weighed down because we think we know what we know, and we ironically proceed to stop there rather than engaging our critical thinking skills. H.G. Hegel wrote that "the familiar, just because it is familiar, is not cognitively understood. The commonest way in which we deceive ourselves or others about understanding is by assuming something as familiar, and accepting it on that account; with all its pros and cons, such knowing never gets anywhere, and it knows not why" (Hegel, xxxi).

When we're stumped, then, it's because we're too sure of what's required of us rather than being open to the uncertainty of our creative skills. The fearful realm of the unknown is where sublime creativity lies. It's up to us to challenge presumptions and that begins with realizing that we're stuck because we're being too taut and enclosed in our thinking.

An example of breaking through invisible study barriers is provided by Jacques Derrida. Instead of thinking in morose interpretative ways, with tired lines of descent down into abysses of closure, Derrida asks us to engage in the playful act of allowing abundant new meanings to emerge from a given text. In each academic moment we can choose to make a game of it, a productive exercise in thinking and writing, or we can choose to treat it like that old scourge: work. Creativity and play are the stuff of success; the slogan 'are we having fun yet?' was perhaps invented as a reminder that fun is always possible.

If we give rote responses in our assignments we're missing out on the active creation of interpretation. Hermeneutic potentials abide in the solitude of self and page, or screen, and begin with an opening (rather than slamming shut) of the doors of possibility. When we're stuck we may be thinking too much about finding a right answer rather than one that feels correct and exists only in shades and penumbras and margins along which new battle lines are drawn.

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

Bannock and a Movie July Edition - Inuit and Inuk Stories

July 1 to July 31

Online

Hosted by AU Nukskahtowin
news.athabasca.ca/events/bannock-and-a-movie-inuit-inuk-stories

Access through above link

2020 AUSU By-election Call for nominations

July 24 to Aug 7, 2020

www.ausu.org/governance/elections/
Visit above link for more information

General Q&A about AU

Tues, July 28, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm
MDT

Online via Microsoft Teams

Hosted by AU

www.athabasca.ca/online-learning/how-au-works/open-house/

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

The Grad Lounge

Fri, July 31, 1:00 to 2:00 pm MDT

Online via Microsoft Teams

Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

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

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

Learning as a Shining Golden Path, A Yellow Brick Road

To think in new and creative ways while demonstrating that we've absorbed our course material—such that we can recapitulate with organic precision the terms and methods on offer—is a core learning outcome of every course. It remains for us to get unstuck simply by allowing the flow to go through. This doesn't mean drifting away from that eerie oracle of a blank computer screen or that ominous scroll of foolscap paper, lined like some sort of corridor inhabited by a Cretan Minotaur of failure. Going with the flow means the way out of being stuck is the way through, we are never as stumped as we seem. Recall the line of advice given to Dorothy, probably the most famous prairie-born heroine of all time: "You've always had the power my dear, you just had to learn it for yourself." Home, after all, is where the mind is. And our academic home, like hermit crabs wearing the best shells their claws can find, is wherever we find ourselves to be studying. Wherever we go there we are and wherever we are our inspiration is with us.

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Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.

Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

New student Kara posts about difficulty logging in to myAU; a few quick responses identify the issue and offer solutions. Roderick wonders if AU will advise the student when transcripts have been sent to another institution; no immediate answers on this one. Heather seeks insight on the LPN to RN course and connects up with current students.

Other posts include computer choices, WhatsApp group for PSYC 289, IT maintenance timing, course extensions for ASD students, and courses ACCT 253, LGST 249, and WGST 322.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Set yourself up a Saturday Read! @au_press is thrilled to announce the launch of a new reading platform for their open access publications. t.co/5k9UY2tbRD."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Wonder what work AUSU does behind the scenes to advocate on behalf of #AthabascaU students? Check out our latest AUSU Executive blog for an overview of AUSU's advocacy work from President Natasha Donahue! <https://youtu.be/zARdDNPHtdI> #igo2AU #studentleaders."

Youtube

AU Prof Dr. Dietmar Kennepohl explains how and why he created an open, web-based textbook in this 3.5-minute Athabasca University professor's open textbook wins innovation awards.

Social Determinants of Health

The Forces and Systems that Shape Us

Alek Golijanin



People do not approach situations neutrally. We tend to have our own preconceived beliefs towards life, and those beliefs vary depending on your life experience. But if you really want to get a better idea of why people are the way they are, for better or for worse, you should start with the social determinants of health. These allow us to understand real people, real problems, and real experiences, because appearances rarely measure up to reality.

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies, and political systems (World Health Organization, 2020). These determinants can be separated into five categories: neighborhood and physical environment, health and health care, social and community context, education, and economic stability.

The key elements of neighborhood and physical environment revolve around access to healthy food, quality housing, exposure to environmental conditions, crime, and violence. The focus topic has to do with quality housing. Depending on where one lives, they may be more exposed to a life a crime and it can lead to the normalization of unacceptable behaviors or actions.

For health and health care, concerns revolve around access to different levels of health care and health literacy. This determinant has to do with approaches to health. Depending on how health care is delivered, it can make a significant impact when health professionals are able to visit the communities they are serving and can witness the challenges of those people.

Social and community context is also important and includes such things as social cohesion, civic participation, discrimination, and incarceration. To deal with it, you need to look at the neighborhood fabric, social connectedness, and the criminal justice system. Depending on if rehabilitation programs are offered or if there are alternative access to resources, a challenging environment can leave people feeling alone and it can lead toward a life of crime. Once people go to jail, the road back can be long.

Education is the fourth determinant and the key elements of it revolve around early childhood education and development, high school graduation, enrollment in higher education, language, and literacy. Childcare and quality educations are the main areas that need to be focussed on to understand these elements. Parents that need to work can be held back if they do not have access to appropriate childcare, and leaving them with strangers can be dangerous for the children. For children trying to overcome poverty, the only way they can experience success is through education and that is why a quality education is so important.

Finally, the key elements of economic stability revolve around poverty, employment, food insecurity, and housing instability. The focus topics have to do with economic opportunity, homelessness, and affordable housing. People that find themselves living in low-income areas are unlikely to have access to nearby employment and transportation accommodations add to

financial hardships. Without affordable housing, people struggling to get their finances in order will end up homeless.

These real-life challenges and stress have an impact on the way people are. The social determinants of health are interconnected factors that allow us to better understand people for the way they are, but they can also help us identify points of contention. When we begin to see disparities in health outcomes, these can be attributed to circumstances associated with one's surroundings. The immediate surroundings can often be a better predictor of overall health than one's genetic code or family history.

Understanding where these troubles originate from allows us to work towards achieving the highest level of health for all people, a society that leaves nobody behind.

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Alek Golijanin is a fourth-year business AU student who is a combat sports fanatic that likes to read research papers and has participated in international development projects.



The Creative Spark When the Wicked Witch Becomes our Hero

Marie Well



There's a new fad in fiction where authors rewrite fairy tales, myths, and biblical passages from the point of view of—not the hero—but the villain. When we read the tale from the villain's eyes, we might grow to love him.

But what about the villains in movies and books? They are so despicable that they deserve our scorn, right? But what if we gave them our empathy instead? What if we saw their hearts and minds fully? What if we aimed to help them realize their potential and inner beauty? Aren't all living beings worthy of our love?

We gain twofold by writing a story from the point of view of the villain. For one, we stand to develop greater empathy. For another, we hone our fiction-writing craft: "Take a well-known story, show it from a different character's perspective, and you have a powerful new work of fiction" (77%).

Let's explore writing from the points of view of villains and victims. (Special thanks to author Rayne Hall for her book *Writing Deep Point of View*).

See the world from the villain's point of view.

Rayne Hall (2019) says, "Try telling the tale from the [point of view] of the villain. What reasons did he have to act the way he did? Once you consider his perspective, his actions will suddenly make sense. You may discover that he was not evil or selfish, but honourable, self-sacrificing, and brave" (78%).

Rayne Hall (2019) rewrote Hansel and Gretel from the point of view of the wicked witch. In Rayne's version, the witch had good intentions toward the children, and the children were the true villains.

Have you heard the saying that hell is paved with good intentions? That's a lie. Love is paved with good intentions. Make the villain come from a caring motivation, and he becomes a hero.

"He may even have been a victim of propaganda—it's up to you to set the record straight" (Hall, 2019, 78%).

Change the whole story with a selfish hero.

According to Rayne Hall (2019), "From the new perspective, the hero's supposedly noble deeds may suddenly appear selfish and false. He may have been an opportunist, a coward and a cheat, who took advantage of other people's good faith and then employed spin doctors to glorify him and spread his version" (78%).

Remember the expression two wrongs don't make a right? Often a hero does wrongs, too, like seek vengeance. If the hero seeks vengeance, or does some other wrong, you've got an opportunity to flip him or her into a villain.

I believe one wrong and one higher ground can make two rights. At least, taking the higher ground can make a wrong hit you like a feather instead of a dagger. And then the trouble often dies down. But fiction likes friction, so if your misunderstood villain takes the higher ground, he appears heroic, while the hero's flaws seem almost vile.

Make the victim's point of view a tear jerker.

Rayne Hall (2019) reveals that "besides villains, you could also focus on the victims" (78%).

You could tell a biblical passage from the point of view of Mary, Jesus's mother. Imagine her suffering as her son underwent unthinkable torture. What a tale of love and grief she'd tell.

Or you could write a script from the point of view of one of the Sikh gurus who underwent unthinkable torture, steadfast in his faith.

The world awaits the final warning.

Rayne Hall (2019) warns, "Don't count on being the only one to retell the story from Cinderella's sister or from Snow White's stepmother. Having a cool idea is not enough. Your story needs to stand out by its quality and its original approach to the topic. The [point of view] character's motivation is the key to success" (80%).

Yes, that brings us back to the misleading quote, hell is paved with good intentions. Remember I said love is paved with good intentions? And what a motivator love is.

I wrote in an earlier article that a villain can have good goals and good motivations, but a bad means of realizing them. For instance, a woman may want true love with her dream man, but, to seek this bond, she aims to commit adultery. That bad means holds the key for a painful lesson awaiting to be learned. And that lesson could be the basis of your villain-turned-hero's journey.

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Cancelling Harry Potter

Natalia Iwanek

Freedom of Expression and the J.K. Rowling Controversy



In a recent article, I discussed the possibility of separation of art from the artist with the inevitable ties to cancel culture: the boycotting or firing those facing accusations of impropriety or immoral or questionable behaviour. Cancel culture has recently faced criticism for destroying reputations—and livelihoods—as well as charges of silencing voices opposed to “ideological conformity and “illiberalism.” as seen in a now infamous letter to Harper’s Magazine.

Detractors abhor any sort of limits to what they consider their fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression in Canada and freedom of speech in the United States. Unfortunately, what is deemed “free speech” or simply one’s opinion may frequently be homophobic, transphobic, and racist and often directed toward those holding the least power in society. And despite freedom of expression, hate speech is prohibited in Canada.

As an alternative to cancel culture, “calling in” is a way of using offending parties’ words, actions, and behaviour as a teaching moment. Instead of boycott and ridicule, it allows offending individuals the chance to reflect on this additional information, as well as grow and change. Unfortunately, many opponents do not condone any sort of monitoring of their actions.

However, in my mind, increased empathy, equity, and inclusivity—especially for those most marginalized in society—are not negative traits. On the contrary, they should be promoted as ideals. In my personal opinion, reactionary views that desperately hold onto remnants of the past, including a world dominated by the views of a select few and the refusal to include voices traditionally silenced, are something to be feared.

Over recent months, famed Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling has steadily subjected Twitter followers to increasingly transphobic statements. As fans, fellow authors, and actors who have portrayed her characters in film adaptations have reached out to Rowling in an attempt to highlight the detrimental effects of her words, she steadfastly refuses and continues to press forward with her claims.

CBS News reports that GLAAD issued a Twitter statement that revealed, “JK Rowling continues to align herself with an ideology which willfully distorts facts about gender identity and people who are trans. In 2020, there is no excuse for targeting trans people.”

Diatribes against already marginalized populations are not free speech, or the freedom of expression in the case of Canada. They only inevitably lead to violence against these very communities. *Disclosure*, a recent documentary on Netflix produced by Laverne Cox, features a variety of trans voices and discusses the misrepresentation of the trans community in media and the ensuing violence over the years. While increased visibility and mindful representation can lead to increased societal acceptance, including full rights and protections, it can also lead to increases in violence as well. In the previous two years alone, attacks against the trans individuals have increased, in particular BIPOC individuals.

Other examples of increasing visibility resulting in violence exist as well. During each yearly Pride Month, without fail, there are calls for Straight Pride, stemming from misunderstandings

about the historical reasons, as well as the continued need, for queer Pride. Like our straight counterparts, queer individuals deserve to live without fear of persecution and violence, and without the constant looming reality of new bills and legislations threatening often hard-earned human rights. In a similar vein, a similar sentiment was also recently seen with misguided cries of “All Lives Matter,” in response to worldwide actions in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, disregarding the fact that black lives are disproportionately targeted and killed by police.

The power of language and the importance of our choice of words is increasingly apparent, as speeches from world leaders have led to violence against communities, as seen during this pandemic. Hate crimes are increasing worldwide, with a global shift toward right wing extremism. On July 12, 2020, Poland, the country of my birth, has recently elected Andrzej Duda as President from the fiercely homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic, and racist *Pis* party (Law and Justice) with 51.2% of the vote, while towns all over the country have declared themselves “LGBT free zones.” Throughout his campaign, Duda had targeted the queer community with a pledge to defend against “LGBT ideology,” which government and church leaders compare to the plague, communism, and Nazism. Duda’s new charter will not support queer marriage or adoption.

I was in Poland during 2019’s parliamentary re-elections when *PiS* was also victorious, and, although shielded through various privilege as well as my ability to leave, it was difficult to feel at peace in a place where my family had already faced years of struggle as minority ethnic-Ukrainians. To hear this country once again tell me, “You are not welcome,” inevitably fills me with sadness, and also fear. Not only for myself, but for the countless queers and marginalized communities who do not have the opportunity to escape to slightly more tolerant places.

The Community Keeps Moving Forward

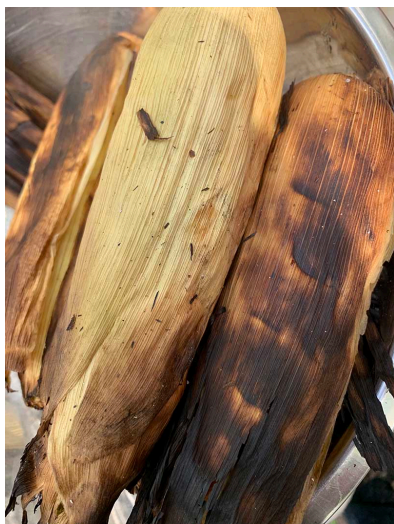
Despite continuing struggles and setbacks, the worldwide queer community remains strong, with increasing Pride parades and events, representation, activism, and demands for rights and dignity. In traditionally conservative Ukraine, 2019’s Pride parade in its capital city, Kyiv was the largest and most peaceful to date, while the first ever Pride took place in the eastern city of Kharkiv, with minor clashes with the far-right. In Canada, smaller towns, such as Jasper, Fort St. John, and Camrose have also begun hosting Pride parades and events as the struggle for rights and representation continues. In 2018, I was fortunate to attend the second ever Pride event in the northern oil town of Fort St. John, BC, a memory that I cherish to this day. However, parades, events, and token representation are not nearly enough; a great deal more work needs to be done until all queer individuals are able to live in safety and dignity, until all have protections and basic human rights, especially those most vulnerable. To this day, in many countries, queerness remains illegal and punishable by law. In Canada, queer rights have been quietly under attack for years, while in the United States violence continues as well, including an early June ruling that erased gender identity protections in health care.

Although slightly cliché, the words “with great privilege, comes great responsibility” still ring true. J.K. Rowling does not exist in a vacuum; her words have incredible power because of her international renown and Harry Potter’s incredible popularity. In a perfect world, those in positions of influence would use their words to uplift and protect marginalized communities, instead of inciting violence. Although cancel culture can be ineffective at times, in cases with those who continue to dehumanize and jeopardize others’ safety in the name of their own personal freedoms, despite facts to the contrary, it may be the only way to protect those most marginalized from further harm.

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>.

Homemade is Better Camp Like a Champ, Part II

Chef Corey



We recently camped with some friends near Smoky Lake, and when it came time to make dinner, we had realized none of us had a pot large enough to boil the corn for our crew. Enter ingenuity! We had just roasted our potatoes in the coals and I realized I should just put the corn over the firepit. So, we built up the fire a little bit more to replenish the coals, placed the corn (with the husk still on) over the firepit and rotated them a few times. After about 20 minutes it was done.

I was curious if this method was ever popular in the past and found that corn is thought to have been domesticated for about 10,000 years in Mexico. It comes in six varieties: Popcorn, sweet corn, dent corn, flint corn, pod corn, and flour corn.

And I found that, in the early 19th century, retailers called “Hot Corn Girls” used to sell it on the streets of NYC in what is possibly the precursor to the hot dog stand. The corn we eat is a tiny fraction of the total corn grown in the world, and we eat immature corn. That’s why we must cook it: it is unpalatable otherwise. When I cook corn still in its husk, I am using the natural moisture in the kernels and husk to steam it. This same principle can be transferred to a grill, oven, or smoker.

Another interesting fact about corn is that it can lose up to 25% of its sweetness within 24 hours of harvesting. I found this interesting because we generally buy corn from a grocery store, and I would hazard to guess to say it was likely not harvested that week. No matter if you eat corn or not, it is an ancient food of North America. I enjoy it with a bit of butter and some salt, but I’ve also seen recipes that call for a bit of sugar or seasoning salt. If you want to make it slightly spicy, add a dash of chilli powder and table salt, then sprinkle it on your corn.

Firepit Corn on the Cob

Ingredients

4 -5 cobs of corn husk on
One firepit
Seasoned firewood burnt to coals

Directions

1. Light yourself a decent fire in a firepit. You’ll want to start at least 30 – 40 minutes before you plan on cooking. If you cut your wood thin, as I do, then it might not take that long. YouTube is a great teacher, and many a Scout Master or outdoor enthusiast has strategies for building a great fire. The point here is you want hot coals and some flame.
2. Place your husked corn on the grate and rotate them every five minutes.
3. After a few rotations, the layers might start to come off, one at a time. These should be dried out and can go right into the firepit. After about 20 minutes, check the largest looking cob. It should be a bright yellow and have a softer texture, kind of an al dente feel. Meaning, you should feel some resistance when you touch the kernels but not a lot. I like to use long tongs and a pair of welding gloves for this because it doesn’t get burned as quickly.
4. Now husk your corn, and you’ll notice it comes apart cleaner than when it was raw. Rarely do I have a lot of hairs straggling after using this method of cooking.
5. Feed your cohorts and allow them to marvel at your mastery of cooking over an open fire.



Chef Corey is a student in business management who first graduated from NAIT’s Culinary Arts Program in 2007

Scholars, Start Your Business

Three Steps to a Customer Service Vision

Marie Well



Do you have a business, or are you in the process of starting one during this COVID crisis?

Whether you've got no employees or a hundred, consider a customer service vision. A solid customer service vision can take your start-up to limitless growth. Ah, now that sounds worthy of a business. You don't need hundreds of dollars either. A shoestring budget can get you an ooh-la-la customer service vision.

Customer service expert Jeff Toister (2017) says, "Many companies over-engineer the process of creating their customer service vision. Expensive consultants are hired to spend months conducting research and writing drafts before presenting their recommendations to senior leaders at an executive retreat. The final product is inevitably so convoluted or out of touch with reality that it fails to resonate with employees" (24%).

I've worked at a firm that had no clear customer service plan. If it had one, my guess is its stock would've skyrocketed. And I've seen a company that had outstanding customer service but bad product. And it still got five-star reviews. It did so with free samples and exaggeratedly fuzzy warm staff.

There's no smile too broad for good customer service. That's my customer service motto. But I just came up with that out of the blue. You'll want an in-depth process for creating your customer service vision.

Here's a snippet of that process, as outlined by Jeff Toister in his book *The Service Culture Handbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Getting Your Employees Obsessed with Customer Service*:

He says, "There are three steps to creating a customer service vision. The first is gathering input from all stakeholders. The second is writing the vision itself. The third step is validating the vision statement with key stakeholders" (2017, 24%).

Ready to explore these steps?

Step 1: Ask employees about their vision.

Step one, according to Jeff Toister (2017), involves gathering input—from a cross-range of employees: "Creating a customer service vision shouldn't be an autocratic process driven by a few executives. You want the vision to feel right to employees if it's going to guide their behavior. Therefore, you need to include them in the process. Here are examples of employee groups you might want to include: frontline employees, middle management, senior executives" (24%).

I went into a small shop today, and the manager and staff shone. They were down to earth and decent, often breaking into wild laughter. Compare that with the formal settings of most downtown offices. The customer service culture will vary. You want to capture what it means for you, your company, and your staff.

So, how does Jeff Toister (2017) gather input from employees when crafting a customer service vision? He says, "I usually gather stakeholder input with an online survey. It's a fast, easy, and

inexpensive way to gather data from a large group of people. I use Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), but there are many other survey programs available” (25%).

You can even use Google docs to make a free, live survey. Just send a link to your employees. But what if you've got no employees yet? Maybe then it's okay to ask your stakeholders for their input. Or, you might draft a customer service vision statement on your own. You can always revise it once you get staff.

So, if you've got input from your employees, then what? To analyze his data, Jeff Toister (2017) uses “a text analytics program to create a word cloud, which is a visual depiction of the written comments. The most commonly used words are large and bold, while infrequently used words are less prominent” (25%).

Just type what your employees say in the word cloud software. Then, take three of the biggest, boldest words in your word cloud. Weave them into your customer service vision statement.

Step 2: Gather ten people to draft the vision.

Jeff Toister (2017) says the second step is to convene to write the vision: “The next step in creating a customer service vision is to convene a meeting to draft the statement. You'll accomplish two things in this meeting. The first is the actual writing of the customer service vision; the second is [to] Identify illustrative stories that exemplify employees living the vision” (25%).

First, review the word cloud, and then take the next four steps:

“1. Split into two teams 2. Each team drafts a vision statement (15 minutes) 3. Share drafts and compare 4. Edit down to one draft” (Toister, 2017, 25%).

Toister (2017) says you want no more than ten people at these meetings. I went through a similar team event, but we had to paint what we thought of the company. Our group painted a gaudy face with big earrings as a symbol of our company. To this day, I have no clue what the face meant.

Second, “is to develop illustrative examples. These are anecdotes that clearly define behaviors that are aligned with the customer service vision” (Toister, 2017, 28%).

Illustrative examples capture your best employee-customer service interactions, says Toister (2017). When I worked retail, I'd say hello to every single customer as soon as they entered the store. That might be an illustrative example of the word-cloud word “welcoming.”

Step 3: Is everybody pumped? If not, tweak it or draft another one.

Step three, says Toister (2017), is making sure the vision resonates: “The final step in the process is to validate the vision with key stakeholders You'll know whether your customer service vision is on target if it receives enthusiastic support. Ideally, you want people to read the statement for the first time and think ‘Yes! That's us!’” (28%).

Toister (2017) says, if staff aren't pumped by your customer service vision statement, tweak it, or reconvene.

You could say that about all of life, though, couldn't you? If what we do doesn't say, “Wow!” there's room for growth. And with your customer service vision, don't stop until you and your crew chime, “ooh-la-la!”

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Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

The Cat House

Dear Barb:

I am a guy in my twenties and have been dating an awesome girl for the last year. I live at home with my parents and she has her own apartment. We have started talking about moving in together and we both feel we are ready for this move except that I have some hesitations because of her cat.

I really do not like cats, I find them extremely annoying and I hate getting hair all over my clothes. I have not mentioned this to her, although I think she has an inkling that I don't care for the cat. Whenever the cat jumps on me I push it away. I try to do this when my girlfriend is not looking, but it's almost like the cat is trying to annoy me, because he jumps right back up on my lap. When I stay over the cat sleeps right beside me. Some mornings I wake up and it is on my pillow, purring into my ear. My girlfriend loves this cat and she has had it for five years, so I don't know what to do. I don't know whether I can live with the cat, and I don't think she would get rid of it. Can you think of another option? Looking forward to your advice.

Thanks, Tyler.

Hey Tyler;

Thanks for writing.

Your situation is fairly common where one person doesn't like the other's pet. There are some things you and your girlfriend can do to try to improve your circumstances before making any rash decisions. First you need to discuss your feelings with your girlfriend. You said she has an idea that you don't like the cat, so she probably won't be shocked when you tell her. Together you need to set some guidelines. For example, you don't like the cat sleeping with you, which may be a solvable problem, simply keep the cat out of the bedroom. If the cat has his own area, which includes a scratching post, you should be able to train the cat to stay out of the bedroom. It may take a few weeks for the cat to adjust, and most likely he will be scratching or meowing at the door. Also with the cat hair everywhere, perhaps additional vacuuming or grooming the cat would help. There are groomers that specialize in caring for cats. Your job may be to find a cat groomer in your area, and perhaps paying for the grooming could be your responsibility. Over time you and Puss N Boots may find some common ground and be able to live in harmony, heck you may even learn to like the cat. Hope this was helpful.

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



Chazz Bravado Pro-Mask



I know all you fellow male feminists have been wondering, so let me set the record straight: The Chazz-Man is pro-mask!

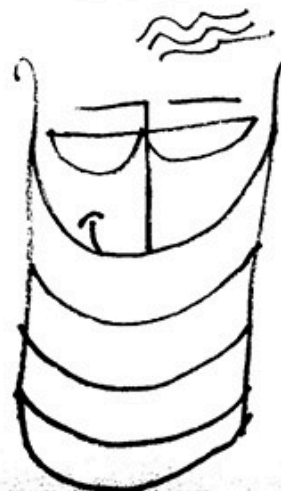
Wanda Waterman



Think about it, fellas-- masks make it hard to hear what the chicky-poos are saying, so you can imagine them saying whatever you want!



For example, "You want another beer now, bud?" could be interpreted as "I want you here and now, stud."



Yes, a mask is a good thing. And chicky-poos, remember-- wear a mask, if it's the only thing you DO wear.

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

- **July 24:** [Call for Nominations for AUSU By-Election](#)
- **Jul 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Aug](#)
- **Aug 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Sep 1](#)
- **Aug 15:** [Sept degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Aug 19:** [AUSU Public Council Meeting](#)
- **Aug 25:** [AUSU By-election](#)

Run for AUSU Council!

AUSU currently has 4 vacant seats on council, so we will be holding a by-election on August 24, 2020!

If you are interested in advocating for students, being a part of an amazing team of AUSU staff and councillors, and creating an AU student community, [then run for AUSU council!](#)

Any AUSU member can run for council, no matter where they live or what they study. Since AU students are all distance learners, councillors can work remotely from all over the world, and most council work is done through email and teleconference.

What do AUSU councillors do?

AUSU councillors represent AU undergraduates students and advocate on their behalf. They also guide and direct the students' union organization through its mission, vision, and values. Councillors attend council and committee meetings by teleconference, develop strategic plans, policies, bylaws, an annual budget, and more. Councillors serve for a 2-year term. Since this is a by-election, the newly elected councillors would serve until April 2022.

To run for AUSU council, submit [Nomination Package](#) to cro@ausu.org by Aug 7, 2020.

Visit our website [here](#) for more info.

NEW Peer Course Reviews

AUSU has launched new online [Peer Course Reviews](#) for Athabasca University undergraduate courses! The Peer Course Reviews were developed to provide students with a confidential way to rate their course experience at AU, and to provide feedback for fellow students!

You Could Win \$100!

AUSU will give out three (3) Amazon Gift cards worth \$100 each to students who fill out a Peer Course Review by August 31, 2020.



Recipients will be chosen. To enter the prize draw, you will be asked to enter your AU Student ID number (optional). Student ID numbers will not be publicized, provided to AU, or connected to the review content in any way. They will only be visible to the Students' Union staff for the purpose of drawing prizes.

Why should you fill out a Peer Course Review?

- They can be filled out any time
- They are completely **anonymous**
- They are different than the course evaluations sent out by AU, using a peer-based review perspective.
- Students can view the peer reviews feedback to help them make informed course choices.
- AUSU can advocate on behalf of AU students using anonymous feedback from the reviews.

Fill out a Course Review online [here](#).



CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students!
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THE VOICE

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