



THE VOICE

Vol 29 Issue 49 2021-12-10

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You

Being a Female Author

The Unexpected Challenge

Dear Barb 2 Review

A Book Review of one of our Own

Plus:

*Five Hacks for Memorable Gifts
Homemade is Better
and much more!*



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Views and articles
presented here are those
of the contributors and do
not represent the views of
AUSU Student Council.

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

For weekly email reminders
as each issue is posted, fill
out the subscription form
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Volume 29, Issue 48

© 2021 by The Voice
Magazine

ISSN 2561-3634

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

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

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

Editorial

Big Money Politics

Karl Low



I've been diving into Bill 81 lately. For those not in Alberta, Bill 81, or the "Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2021". If you haven't heard about this, the UCP government has passed legislation purportedly to make elections and election financing more fair in Alberta, and by "fair" they primarily mean "restricting organized labour from organized participation in the process".

One of the things this legislation does is remove a protected "Third Party Advertiser" status from any organization that has leadership positions within a political party. What the "Third Party Advertiser" status meant was that a group so organized could take any amount of money donated to it and use it for advertising during a political campaign. The UCP argued, not incorrectly, that allowing this essentially allowed a political party to easily side-step spending limits by planning strategy and spending within the political party, and then offloading it to the other organization.

Now, in Alberta, this basically means the Alberta Federation of Labour, as the Alberta NDP's constitution specifically includes two seats for members from the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL). The AFL has indicated it will be looking at legal action to see if this law violates constitutional grounds such as freedom of association or expression.

But, the real flaw in this particular section of the legislation, however, is that it's ultimately meaningless. It simply requires the creation of a go-between group. If someone, say, a member of the AFL, were to create a new, separate, organization called the "Alberta Federation of Labour Political Working Group", whose members only include those nominated by the AFL, and then the NDP changes their bylaws to take members from this new organization instead, and things can proceed as normal with the AFL having enough legal separation to not fall afoul of the new changes, while the new group, that only exists to get around the law, not engaging in any political advertising activities.

The other issue you may have heard about is that the new law explicitly allows for people to buy memberships in other people's names, and does not specify that any sort of consent is required. When I first heard about this, I was concerned because I thought it might be a more egregious end run around political contribution limits, since a person could sign up a huge number of people, and, under the previous law, political party memberships (up to \$50) don't count against your contribution limit. However, that much, at least, was accounted for, as any additional memberships signed up count toward an individual's contribution limit.

But there remain other concerns with this issue. It's worth noting, for instance, that actions exactly like this are why the RCMP are still engaged in an investigation into the UCP leadership convention, where it is alleged that Jason Kenney or allies of his signed up many people without their knowledge, and then proceeded to engage in proxy votes for those same people at the convention. And that's ignoring what happens when a high profile figure finds themselves suddenly on the UCP membership rolls. The potential for disruption and damage to people and political parties is immense, but, as usual, that's not the primary concern of the Alberta government.

But that's just me. Meanwhile, here in the Voice, we've got a great interview with a student as our feature, and follow it up with not only a review of Barb Godin's latest actual book, but an article from her on one of the challenges she's run into as a female author. A challenge that nobody should have to face at all, but it's definitely worth the read. Even though it makes me upset to think about it.

Of course, we also have a lot of great other stuff, including advice, events, reviews, and more! Enjoy the read!

Handwritten signature of Karl Low.

MINDS WE MEET



Who are your fellow students? At times, in an online learning environment, it can feel like you are all alone, but across the nation and around the globe, students just like you are also pursuing their Athabasca University (AU) studies! Each week, *The Voice Magazine* will be bringing you some of these stories. If you would like to be featured next, do not hesitate to get in touch!

The Voice Magazine recently had a chance to chat with Delaney Leger (she/her), currently residing in Red Deer, Alberta, the traditional Treaty 6 territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux and Nakota Sioux Peoples, the traditional Treaty 7 territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy (the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Îyâxe Nakoda First Nation (the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta (Region 3).

Twenty-six-year-old Delaney has just completed her second-last term in the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology program at AU. She explained, "I chose to pursue a Bachelor of Psychology through Athabasca after transferring from the same program at another institution several years ago. My dream is to become a child and

family psychologist working with people of all diversities. To do so, I will be pursuing a Master's in Counselling through Athabasca when this degree is done—and I can't wait!"

Although currently located in Red Deer, Delaney has spent her life "between Alberta and [her] family's home in Ontario but [has] been here in Alberta full-time for about 20-years now." She continued, "My husband of three years and I live in Red Deer and are expecting our first child this coming December."

When this ambitious student is not studying, she "love[s] spending time in nature, whether it's going for walks with [her] two pups, kayaking and swimming in the summer, or ice skating in the winter." She continued, "I am a big fan of reading and my partner and I always have a book on the go. That being said, my favorite thing to do is cuddle up under a warm blanket with snacks and watching all genres of movies." Delaney is currently binge watching, "*Midnight Mass*, *Why Women Kill*, and the new season of *You*," stating, "If you haven't seen these shows I highly recommend them." She is also currently "reading a book entitled *Home Before Dark* by Riley Sager," which "has a similar vibe to the *Haunting of Hill House*."

When asked about the greatest influence on her desire to learn, Delaney spoke briefly of a childhood situation that set her on her current path. She related, "This may sound a [bit] odd

because it was actually a negative situation that lighted my fire to learn, but when I was quite young—around six-years old—my father left our family and my mother thought it would be a good idea to set up some counselling resources for us. Well, unfortunately it was not the best experience for myself, so naturally I was apprehensive to go to a psychologist later in life. This time though, the person I saw was wonderful and it just clicked for me that if I could be that person for some child and help them so much earlier than I was able to be helped, I could really make a difference. I started taking psychology courses in high school to prepare, but being a 3rd generation Canadian and the only one in my family so far to seek higher education, I knew that I would need passion and dedication to reach my goals.”

When asked about her experience with online learning, Delaney had nothing but praise. She stated, “To be blunt, online learning has saved my academic career. When I was 19, I was diagnosed with a debilitating autoimmune disease. I went from an energetic and outgoing person to someone who required a wheelchair and to be bed-ridden most of the time. It really threw a wrench in my education plans since I figured I’d take a few gap years to save for college. It took me a year to gain the courage to attend my local institution, but all I could manage was one or two courses a semester due to the in-person demands. A friend of the family had suggested Athabasca to me after she completed her schooling online. I transferred my existing credits and signed up for classes. I was so excited. By the time I started with Athabasca, I had taken two years and only completed 10 courses. Since then, I’ve been able to handle three-four courses a semester all year long. I have always enjoyed self-motivated learning because I can work at my own pace. Athabasca has great supports set up for their learners. Working from home has allowed me to complete my degree much faster and get better at the same time. I am happy to report that I am currently in remission from my condition!”

Her most memorable course has been PYSCH 426: Families and Parenting, which is “a wonderful psychology course that fits in with [her] future plans.” She continued, “It’s my favorite because it seems like the material would be redundant with common sense but there is so much in there I hadn’t considered or seen more those perspectives.”

Overall, Delaney has not had any problems communicating with her tutors when she needs some guidance. She explained, “Luckily, I find that the courses are set up to be quite straightforward, so between course boards and the AU app I haven’t had to contact my tutors too often. That being said, this last semester, I was a bit behind due to the pregnancy and my tutor was so helpful without being judgmental at all. I know that the system was definitely overloaded with the changes from the virus so things were taking a bit longer to get to.”

If she were the new AU President, Delaney “would work on development of the student app.” She stated, “I find it very helpful, but most students don’t know it even exists. There is so much potential to grow the learner community, especially with those of us who are completely distanced.”

When asked which famous person, past or present, she would like to have lunch with and why, Delaney chose Audrey Hepburn, “without a doubt.” She explained, “Most people just know her from iconic movies like *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, but she was truly an incredible person who spent a good chunk of her life on humanitarian efforts. I would love to hear her perspective on our modern world.” And the lunch? “I mean, let’s be real – I can never get enough pizza!”

As for the most valuable lesson learned in life? “My most valuable lesson learned is to not compare yourself to others. It’s really hard to break the habit, but once you stop thinking others are better for doing this, or not doing that, you can really grow and come into your own. Once you find your own path you really start living life.”

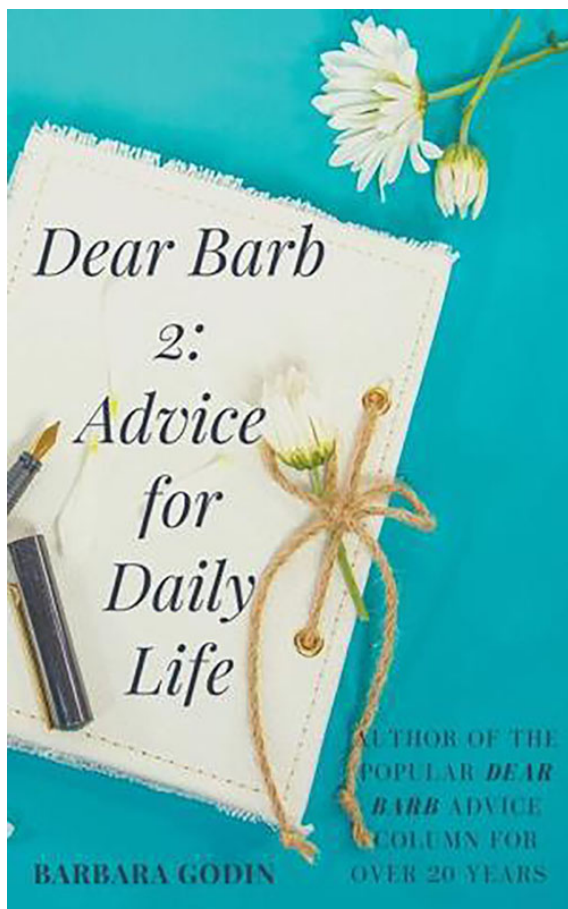
When asked to describe her proudest moment in life, Delaney recounted a recent incident. “My proudest moment (so far) happened today, actually. I just finished one of the hardest semesters so far while eight-months pregnant with a rather difficult pregnancy. I’m officially in remission; I will have my first child that we did fertility treatments to get in less than two months, and I am only one semester away from a degree I never thought I would get the chance to obtain. It’s hard work but I am so profoundly proud of myself. Every little bit I did mattered, and I’m so close to all my dreams.”

Finally, when Delaney was asked about one thing that distinguishes her from other people, she related some personal issues, stating, “Something that few people know about me is the health issues that I have gone through. I don’t complain and I keep to myself a lot, so when people find out what I’ve gone through to get to where I am I feel that proud that I don’t let it define me. Others with chronic illnesses will totally understand this, because we get a lot of stereotypes.” Best of luck Delaney!

Natalia Iwanek (she/they) is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Political Science at Athabasca University.

"Dear Barb" Godin Publishes Second Book of Sound Advice

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Godin's third book in two years continues her advice-giving tradition

Barb Godin hasn't had much time for hand-wringing during the pandemic. The restrictions that have curtailed activities for many of us gave Godin the opportunity to realize her dream of publishing a book. And then another, and another!

In early 2020, Godin published her first book, *Dear Barb: Answers to Your Everyday Questions*, a selection of Godin's "Dear Barb" advice columns from *The Voice* magazine. (See August 14, 2020 *Voice* article [Dear Barb Continues Advice Tradition in Book Format](#).) She followed that up with *Glimpses in Time: A Collection of Memoirs and More* in early 2021. (See March 26, 2021 *Voice* article [Glimpses of Barb Godin—A Book Review](#).)

Dear Barb 2: Advice for Daily Life, Godin's third book, was released in September 2021. A follow-up to her earlier *Dear Barb* book, *Dear Barb 2* contains a new collection of Godin's popular advice column.

Dear Barb 2 offers advice on such matters as family, dating, marriage, parenting, friends and neighbours, and etiquette. The issues cover current real-world problems, and a whole section is devoted to answering questions

relating to the pandemic and its challenges. Through it all, Godin provides thoughtful balanced answers, and often encourages people to see the issue from both sides.

"I try to advise people to see the situation from the other person's point of view, and often they come to realize the person's intent was not what they perceived it to be," says Godin. "I feel through my many life experiences I have learned that forgiveness is vital to all relationships. Within my own family, I have experienced what hate can do and it isn't any good for either party."

Godin has been writing the "Dear Barb" advice column for over twenty years. She began the column after learning *The Voice* was seeking an advice columnist, when the previous columnist retired. Godin sent in a sample column and has since published over 500 "Dear Barb" columns.

Besides her regular advice column, Godin has contributed several articles to *The Voice*. Many pieces Godin writes give glimpses of her troubled upbringing and family frictions. One article, "Mary's Story", went on to win Best Short Article in the *Professional Writers Association of Canada's* 2019 writing awards.

Godin's second book, *Glimpses in Time*, contains a selection of those personal articles, along with some previously unpublished stories. She is currently working on a fourth book, *Can I Come Home Now*, a memoir which, Godin says, "brings all the stories in *Glimpses in Time* together." Godin wrote the manuscript for *Can I Come Home Now* over twenty years ago, and is currently reworking it. She hopes to publish it in 2022.

"I have always wanted to write my story," Godin says. "I kept journals through most of my life and wrote my way through many traumas, so it was just a matter of when I would write my book. In the early eighties I sent my manuscript to a few publishers and, while I received positive feedback, no one was interested in publishing it. I put my book away and began working on my degree."

While pursuing her BA degree at AU, Godin honed her writing skills by writing for *The Voice* magazine. Godin graduated in 2008.

"Through writing for *The Voice*," Godin says, "I discovered that people actually want to read what I write. Karl [*The Voice's* editor, Karl Low] was a positive influence in his analysis of my personal stories. I still get comments on my columns and stories that have been published in *The Voice*, so it has been, and continues to be, a positive writing experience for me."

Dear Barb 2: Advice for Daily Life is available in paperback and ebook formats. More information on Barbara Godin and her latest book is available on Godin's website at www.barbgodin.com.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU graduate (BGS 2018.) She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario.



Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of *The Voice Magazine*

With National Cookie Day just passed on December 4, we got a craving to take a peek at what our *Voices* past had to say about that tasty little snack.

I'll have what you're not having. Katie D'Souza offers advice on holding fast to your diet resolutions under the seasonal onslaught of baked goodies. "Even if we avoid baking such delicacies, the tempting morsels still arrive from friends and family. Even the chocolate-bringing Santa seems part of the conspiracy!" Health Matters – Just One More Christmas Cookie, December 24, 2010.

Spoiler alert: the cookies win. Deanna Roney wonders whether it's better to use the bonus time accorded December 31 contract-end dates to study or to bake. "There is nothing wrong with ambition and being self-driven; they are key attributes to success. But knowing when to pause is important too." Stop and Smell the Sugar Cookies, December 23, 2016.

Being a Female Author

Barb Godin



I am an independent author of three books, which means my books are self-published. Some people say that's not real publishing, but that's debatable and not what this article is about. I am writing this article to address some of the issues I have had to deal with being a female author.

The most difficult part of becoming an author is not writing the book; that's the easy part. Writers love what they do and, as Mark Twain said, "If you love what you do, you'll never work another day in your life." No, the most difficult part of being an independent author is marketing your book.

If you are published with a big publisher, they do most of the promotion for your book and help to arrange book signings, etc. As an indie

author, though, there are many scammers out there. Some offering to give you hundreds of book reviews as, apparently, books with more reviews sell more copies. Also, they will include your book in their weekly newsletter and email mailouts to thousands of subscribers. These ad campaigns can cost from twenty dollars to thousands. As a new author you desperately want to get your book read. After all, that's why we write—to share our stories. And possibly to help others to get through similar experiences. You can also choose to promote your book through Instagram, a Facebook Author page, or your own website.

So, after a few months of modest sales, I thought I would try to create an ad and post it to Instagram and Facebook. I included a button where the readers could message me for more information. Maybe I am naive, but I was floored by some of the responses I received. One was a emoji of a dog doing his business, while others were comments like "who needs your f...ing advice."

While these were slightly annoying, everyone is entitled to their opinion, so I quickly removed them. The remarks that were most disturbing to me were from men, and judging by their profile pictures, they were older men, and they were written in the wee hours of the morning. Some were accusing me of selling sex online under the guise of books. Others were inviting me to join them in their hot tub, and those are the comments I can repeat. Most were extremely disgusting, and it makes you wonder what kind of men are doing this.

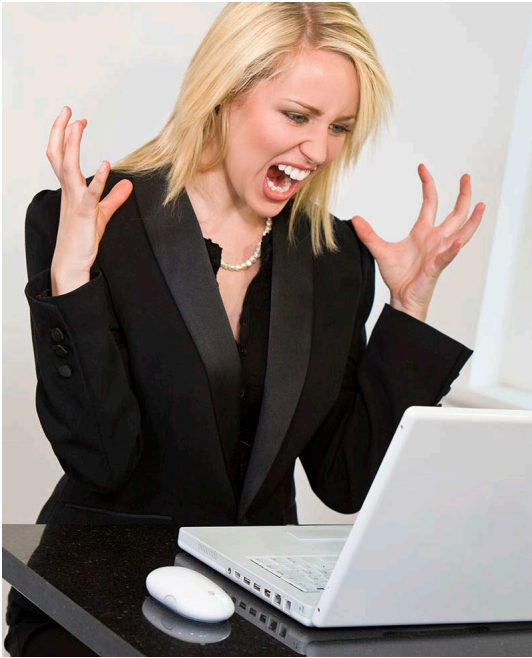
I wonder if perhaps these are the men that are out hunting for women to fulfill their sick fantasies. I fear for the missing indigenous women and girls and all women and girls who have been victimized simply because they are female.

Becoming an author and sharing my stories has been a lifelong dream for me, and I was shocked to have to deal with this disgusting behaviour. But it won't stop me from writing. I will continue to share my stories with the hope of providing a voice for women and girls everywhere.

Barbara Godin is a graduate of AU and writes the "Dear Barb" column. She lives in London, Ontario with her husband, and two dogs. She can be reached on twitter @BarbGod

Organize Your Computer

Marie Well



We are rarely taught how to organize our computer files. We just learn on the go, perhaps duplicating the same single file in multiple locations. What a mess for most of us!

At university, back in the early 2000's, my computer was a tornado. Files with no folders. I had no clue how to create a folder, never mind a sub-folder. I also didn't save multiple drafts of my files. Instead, I had one file per essay topic. One wrong move, and I'd have no backup file replacement.

Luckily, my system for backing up files was to print them out. To make things less time-consuming, I'd crumple up past versions of the essay and toss them on the floor. My papers were often crumpled ankle high, spread throughout the entire office, and served as a fire hazard instead of an archive. It was a wading pool of academic ideas.

So, how should super-students go about organizing their computers?

Here's a logical system you might choose to adopt:

Choose your "Documents" folder as your main directory. After all, the "Documents" folder comes automatically with Windows operating system, assuming you're using Windows. So why not use it? Within your "Documents" folder, create two separate folders: one for "University"; the other for "Everything Else."

Within your "University" folder, create folders by year: "2022," "2023," "2024," and "2025." Within these folders break them down by semester: "1-Fall Semester," "2-Winter Semester," "3-Spring Semester," and "4-Summer Semester."

Within each of these semester-based folders, make folders for each course you've enrolled in or intend to enroll in. Your "1-Fall Semester" folder might include "Math 211 Linear Algebra," "PSYC 300 Introduction to Clinical Psychology," and "ENGL 250 Poetry."

Nest subfolders within these course folders. For instance, if you have a course folder called "COMS 111," then insert in that "COMS 111" folder some subfolders labeled "Exams," "Essays," "Quizzes," "Presentation," "Class Notes," and "Reading Notes."

Make sure to insert within these "Exams," "Essays," "Quizzes," etcetera subfolders, an additional layer of subfolders called "superseded files," "supporting materials," and "final version." For instance, in your "Essays" folder, you might have an essay on Socrates. But don't just have one "Socrates" essay; have multiple ones: Socrates-Draft-1, Socrates-Draft-2, and so forth. In that case, you'll want to save your most recent draft in a folder called "final" and your earlier drafts in "superseded files."

But be sure to clean up old files on a regular basis. Archive them in the superseded folders or in the supporting documents folder, depending on which folder makes more sense. Do this clean up of files at least once a week.

Regularly back up files on a cloud server or an external hard drive—or better yet, both. An external drive is just a big old memory stick. You plug the USB cable into your computer and treat it just as you would treat a memory stick.

On a final note, why not get a little adventurous and map out all the courses you want to take for your entire degree? Put the courses in each year's semester folder. You can always change the classes later. You'll have a road map you can adjust over time. And nothing gets us closer to the promised land than well-structured directions.

Fly on the Wall

Losing and Finding Ourselves in the Eddies of Education

Jason Sullivan



Imagine yourself as driftwood, bobbing and floating and carried along by an inexorable current of education. One moment on the surface as though with an invisible propeller, the next under the surface like a shipwreck waiting to sink and be found. Our study lives are framed by our ability to lose and find ourselves in our studies. But lest we get too carried away in our readings, we can always revert to the status of an ordinary consumer of stories and novels, the sort of person that emerges on the shores and beaches saying merely I read that.

There's more to studying than reading; this we know. We have to go with the flow and add something of our own. Consider the ancient Chinese sage named Zhuangzhi; he wrangled intuition into a simple

spine-tingling twinge akin to what we get when we read course material and feel as though we'd somehow known it all along.

"Zhuangzi and Huizi were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Zhuangzi said, 'See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That's what fish really enjoy!'

Huizi said, 'You're not a fish—how do you know what fish enjoy?'

Zhuangzi replied, 'You're not I, so how do you know I don't know what fish enjoy?'

'I'm not you,' responded Huizi, 'so I certainly don't know what you know. On the other hand, you're certainly not a fish—so that still proves you don't know what fish enjoy!'

Zhuangzi said, 'Let's go back to your original question, please. You asked me how I know what fish enjoy—so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao River.'" (Zhuangzhi, online).

By seeing the world swim by, by being distanced just enough from society, we can realize our unique position on the reef of learning. We're alienated in a sense, lost and floating, even as we're learning and growing. No groupthink captures or enraptures us only to leave us spent and spat out like exitees from encounter group otherwise known as a classroom conversation. On the other hand, we are isolated almost too much unless we test our pedagogy with diatribes and interactions with our peers, family, and fellow students on forums.

This is where the beauty in our brains really shines: unlike brick-and-mortar college kids in demographic lockstep and parental-supervised teleology, we at AU can just go, just go and do the learning and become ourselves as actual individuals. Fishies and humans may or may not share a sense of awareness and yet context matters. Consider Zhuangzhi watching minnows from a bridge and how it'd be to be a garden-variety university student; let's do so with Dead Kennedy's lyrics:

"I go to college
That makes me so cool
I live in a dorm
And show off by the pool
I join the right clubs
Just to build an impression
I block out thinking
It won't get me ahead
My ambition in life
Is to look good on paper
All I want is a slot
In some big corporation". (Dead Kennedys, online).

By watching the stream of life steam past, as we better ourselves at AU, we can recall what we're missing. Or, to be true, we can recall that we're not missing much. In reality, we may be all equal in our consciousness and certainly in our ability to learn. Consider the following analysis of Buddhist metaphysics as it relates to the swimming experience of life itself.

"Going a step beyond phenomenalism, the 'real' world experienced in a state of enlightenment (nirvana) is described as empty or void (sunyata); as 'mind only', or as pure or foundational consciousness (alaya vijnana) without form. It is described by the following type of imagery: a sky devoid of clouds; an ocean, still without waves; infinite space; or as with Dogen, we're like fishes swimming in water." (Morris, online)

So, finally, we can consider how everyone else we've ever known is a fellow learner in life. If need be we can even reference Kurt Cobain and the nature of knowing the other as something commensurate and equally unknowable; the idea of learning, like the idea of pain, depends upon our epistemological beliefs and upon our actual decisions. And those choices, unlike course learning objectives, precede our advancement into post-secondary education. Consider how the classic Generation X poet portrayed his vagabond surroundings:

"Underneath the bridge, tarp has sprung a leak, and the animals I've trapped, have all become my friends...but it's okay to eat fish cuz they haven't any feelings" (Nirvana, online).

It's up to us at AU to swim with or away from the currents of culture as we learn and grow and decide for ourselves what really matters. Education could grant us no greater benefit.

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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.

Music Review—Still Insane

Jessica Young



Artist: Still Insane

Single: Stay Home

Quebec City punk rock band, Still Insane, has released a single from their upcoming album—their first-time releasing music since 2017. The single is titled “Stay Home”, although the name of the new EP is still under wraps. The band will be releasing the full album February 2022.

Still Insane consists of Eric Dorval on vocals, Jean-Sébastien Arsenault on guitar, Steeve Rock on guitar, Jean-Philippe Bérubé (Bub) on bass, and Sylvain LaBrecque (LabWreck) on drums. The band is self-described as a melodic punk band with 90’s Californian Skatepunk influences.

Honestly—it was difficult to find out any further information on Still Insane. The band doesn’t have much of a social media presence. The last

time they posted on their Twitter account was January 2020, and the comments are turned off on their Youtube channel. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing (I personally avoid social media like the plague), but when trying to create a following, engaging with your fanbase is probably a good idea.

“Stay Home” has a chaotic, fast-paced sound; almost like the band was going for a System Of A Down vibe mixed with old school British punk. Unfortunately, this song missed the mark for me. While Still Insane seems to be going for the classic anarchic punk sound, they seem to be anything but classic anarchists. Dorval’s vocals are almost *too* clean for a punk band, and LaBrecque’s drums are uninteresting. Still Insane seems to have all the cookie-cutter elements of a punk band without the necessary fervor to drive it.

As you can probably guess from the title, “Stay Home” is an ode to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lyrics are about social distancing, washing your hands, and “staying the f*** home”. The middle of the song is cut with clips of news anchors talking about the first cases of COVID in Canada. It’s nothing that hasn’t already been done at this point (see Blink-182’s “Quarantine”).

I’m all for artists openly expressing themselves through their music, and I acknowledge that the pandemic (and all the difficult emotions that have come with it) could certainly be a source of musical inspiration. However, the lyrics of this song read like a government sponsored ad, trying to sound “hip” for the kids. There’s no emotion, no experiences, no passion—just instructions. Not to mention that responsibly following government directives doesn’t exactly fit with the band’s anarchist, “insane”, image they seem to be going for.

Overall, I feel like Still Insane could have done a million things with their first single since 2017—but this shouldn’t have been it. I look forward to hearing the rest of the album in 2022. Hopefully it’s better than the single.

Check out Still Insane on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Youtube](#).

Jessica is completing her Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations degree while pursuing her passion for writing and drinking coffee.



Five Hacks to Giving Memorable Gifts

Xine Xu



Sending the right gifts during Christmas can be a headache. Especially for people whom you've barely interacted with or interacted with for a long time but hardly know their interests and hobbies. These can be colleagues, classmates, professors and other acquaintances. What are some ways you can give authentic gifts relevant to the individual without being generic and unmemorable?

Here are 5 hacks to giving memorable gifts:

Plan in advance

Make a list of people you will likely need to purchase a gift for. These might be individuals you're interacting with this holiday season. Are you going for a housewarming party or a Christmas gathering? If so, showing up empty handed may be a faux-pas. I find the sheer panic of finding a gift last minute prevents me from thinking creatively. Moreover, with the current supply chain disruptions of the ongoing pandemic, if something is sold out in store, you'll have ample time to look for items elsewhere.

Food gifts relevant to the person

Is the individual a food lover? If so, they would definitely appreciate a thoughtful gift such as a gift card to their favorite restaurant. For myself, I like to bake Christmas cookies for my sweet-toothed friends and tea advent calendars for the tea-connoisseurs in my friends circle. Thoughtful gifts means that you've focused on a detail about their personality or interests that makes it unique. Despite having received many chocolate boxes in the past, I've never eaten any of the chocolates I've received, making this a highly unthoughtful gift. To be safe, avoid food items that may precipitate common allergies such as peanuts.

Draw on connections

If you're unsure of the person's interests and hobbies, is there a mutual

friend or connection who can point you to the right direction? The mutual connection can offer insights and perspectives into the gift you're contemplating on giving.

Experience gifts

Sometimes I run into a mental block when I look for gifts for those who have it all. They might have a home with the interior decor or kitchen appliances you were considering gifting. It's oftentimes difficult to pinpoint a relevant item in their situation. In these cases, experience gifts can be a great option. For example, two years ago I gifted a pair of tickets for a friend to experience a winter lights festival that easily became a favorite gift of theirs. The experience also strengthened my friend's personal romantic relationship and was a memory she will talk about for years to come.



A few years ago, my part-time work office purchased this gift for our boss whose favorite activity was hiking but never got a chance to visit Banff. Without asking his close friend who works in another department, we would not have known he never visited Banff before.



Three years ago, two close friends received a pair of tickets to Paris as a graduation gift



Customizable gifts

While certain items are commonplace such as a water bottle, this year I gifted a personalized gift card to a friend. The customization was relevant because he had just recently graduated from his degree and also is a stand-out to his collection of other water bottles. Other customizable gifts include charcuterie boards engraved with a friend or a newly-wedded couple's names. Even apparel and other home decor can be customized with photos of the individual or names of the individual.

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

These are customizable vacuum water bottles that are great for tea-lovers like these two friends whom I bought them for!

Homemade is Better Stuffing

Chef Corey



With the holidays around the corner, many of us will head to the store and buy ingredients for a most delicious holiday meal. It might be turkey, or goose, or even prime rib, but then you're going to travel down an aisle with shelves full of stuffing in a box, and you might think to yourself, "I'll grab a couple of those; it'll be easier." I'm here to tell you, "Don't do it!" Stuffing can be the most straightforward recipe, and whether you put it in your turkey or cook it on the stovetop or even bake it in the oven, homemade stuffing is way better than that box of false promises.

I would hazard a guess that we have all had stuffing (or dressing) at one time in our lives. Maybe you recall a time when you would spend a holiday meal with a large family gathering, and someone would stuff the turkey before cooking at some early hour so that the stuffing would get the turkey flavouring. I recall meals like that when I was younger, but these days it seems like we can't do anything that we used to do. The USDA and Health Canada have recommended not stuffing the turkey because of possible food-borne illness. But I have a way to combat that recommendation and get to stuff your bird.

The concern, as I mentioned, is that you'll get food poisoning if you stuff your turkey with cold stuffing. It comes from having an ideal temperature range that scientists have stated is the "safe zone." Cooks around the world have widely accepted that between the temperatures of 4°C to 60°C (40°F-140°F) bacteria thrive, the best of both worlds being 20-25°C. If we think about it, those here, despite being born in this sometimes arctic country, prefer a warmer climate. 20 – 25°C is the perfect temperature for me. It's warm enough that you can wear shorts and a t-shirt, but not too hot that you can also wear jeans and a hoodie (Bunny hug for those of you in

Saskatchewan). If most of us feel that way, then logically, the bacteria that likes us would also prefer those temperatures, multiplying quickly.

When you cook food above 60°C (140°F), bacterial pathogens start to die, and when you keep food below 4°C (40°F), it's too cold for them to spread quickly. Health Canada recommends cooking poultry (including turkeys) to ~80°C (180°F), that's the final temperature. They also suggest cooking that stuffing to 74°C (165°F). You might be thinking, that is possible! Why would I need to worry about this? The answer is stuffed birds cook slower than open ones. In contrast, the outside of the bird might hit 74*79°C (165-175°F); it's possible that the stuffing does not.

The hack, if you will, is to start with already par-cooked stuffing. If you have mostly cooked the stuffing beforehand and let it cool so it can be handled, your stuffing will hit the recommended temperature by the time the bird does. We can usually hold items of body temperature, 37°C (-98.6°F), allow the stuffing to cool until it can be handled; you have given yourself a head start. Now you can cook that turkey and still get its juices into the stuffing. The alternative to this method is to cook the stuffing until the turkey is ready, remove it from the bird, and continue cooking until the final temperature is 74°C (165°F).

I wrote earlier not to be tempted by grabbing that store boxed stuffing because it is easy, so here is my recipe for easy stuffing. Feel free to play this a bit, add craisins or walnuts, apricots or whatever your heart desires for some added texture, or don't add anything else; that's ok too.



Stuffing – Approximately Six Servings



Ingredients:

6 cups cubed dried bread (store-bought plain croutons are perfect)
2 cups chicken broth
1 medium onion (any colour) – peeled and diced
2 stalks of celery – diced
2 carrots – peel and diced
1 TBSP Poultry seasoning
1/4cup butter
Salt and pepper

Directions:

- 1) If your bread isn't dry already, place it single-layered on a baking sheet and leave it overnight to stale.
- 2) Over medium heat, melt the butter.
- 3) Add the carrots, celery and onions and cook until they are soft. The onions should be translucent.
- 4) Add the poultry seasoning and a couple of pinches of salt. Give it a taste to see if it's good.

- 5) Add 1 cup of the broth and bring to a simmer.
- 6) Add the cubed bread to a large bowl.
- 7) Pour the veg and broth over the breadcrumbs and let them soak up the liquid.
- 8) Add more broth until you get it to the moisture you want; keep in mind some will evaporate as you cook the stuffing.
- 9) If you think of putting this in a turkey, return everything to a pot or fry pan and cook for ten more minutes over medium heat. Allow it to cool until you can handle it and place it in your Turkey before entering the oven.
- 10) If you are cooking this separately, cook for 30-40 minutes covered in tinfoil.
- 11) Remove the foil and cook for up to another 30 minutes if you want it to have some crispness.
- 12) Enjoy your holiday feast!

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



Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of *The Voice Magazine*

The eruption of Mt Semeru on Indonesia's Java island recently got us thinking about what *The Voice's* contributors have had to say about volcanoes.

Something is bound to get us. *Voice* editor Karl Low reviews the web-based documentary and book, *Dystopia: What is to be done?*. "To my mind, it feels too much like propaganda or a negative political campaign advertisement, hoping to generate and then capitalize on a fear-based emotional response—which is really too bad, because if you get beyond that and into the narrative, what Dr. Potter has to say is interesting and well-presented."

In Review – Looking Toward Dystopia, March 11, 2011. (Note: the full documentary appears to be no longer available online, but the book is still available at [amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca).)

Volcanoes for tourists. Tanja Ahlin shares her experience of a field-studies course in Costa Rica. "Even though I sometimes still think the environmental situation is hopeless, I now know there are people who firmly believe the battle is not lost yet." Costa Rica – Behind the Scene, January 13, 2006.

Beyond Literary Landscapes Journalistic Literature, Part II

Natalia Iwanek



From my early beginnings as a young introvert, the public library has always been a bit of a refuge. Years later, not much has changed, albeit with an additional affinity for endless hours spent scouring second-hand bookstores to add to my ever-growing “to-read” pile.

From one bookworm to another, this column will be underscoring and outlining various literary genres, authors, and recent reads and can serve as an introduction for those unfamiliar with these works, as a refresher for long-time aficionados, and maybe as an inspiration for readers to share their own suggested topics. Do you have a topic that you would like covered in this column? Feel free to [contact me](#) for an interview and a feature in an upcoming column.

Who

This is the second part of my look at the wide-ranging Journalism genre, and will primarily focus on two major late journalists, namely Ryszard Kapuściński and Anna Politkovskaya,

who may serve as an introduction to Journalism in general, a reminder for fans, and an inspiration for further reading.

Students interested in further reads in this genre, may pursue the writings of last week’s featured journalists, including Alma Guillermoprieto, Eduardo Galeano, Gabriel García Márquez, and Joan Didion. For those interested in more local and more recent journalism, consider Desmond Cole and Robert D. Kaplan.

What

As defined last week, Journalism is a wide-ranging topic, which can include war correspondents, foreign correspondents, columnists, and reporters. Some classics in this genre include Kapuściński’s *The Emperor, Shah of Shahs*, and *Imperium*, as well as Politkovskaya’s *Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya, A Russian Diary*, and *Putin’s Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy*.

More recent works include Cole’s *The Skin We’re In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*. Other well-known books include Robert D. Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*.

Where

Although from different parts of the world, including the US-Russia and Poland, these two journalists combined have covered a wide range of geographical locations, including the former Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Ethiopia, Iran, and beyond.

When

These works mainly take place during 20th and 21st-centuries, from 1917 onwards, with a particular focus on the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Why

For readers interested in learning more about global history, politics, and economics, including life under the former Soviet Union, Russian politics, the ongoing Chechen conflict, Haile Selassie I the former Emperor of Ethiopia, and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the former Shah of Iran, the works of these two journalists are a start.

How

AU's wide range of diverse courses make it effortless to study this topic in depth. Courses loosely related to Journalism are available in a variety of disciplines, including one's that may fit into your Degree Works. (Always check with a counsellor to see if these particular courses fulfill your personal graduation requirements!)

AU students interested in learning more about this particular topic are recommended to visit HIST 210: A History of the World in the 20th Century, a three-credit, junior-level course, which introduces learners to "the major economic, political, social, scientific, and technological developments in post-Second World War history." Happy reading!

Natalia Iwanek (she/they) is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Political Science at Athabasca University.



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Mayor Andrée P. Boucher Memorial Scholarship

Sponsored by: Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Deadline: January 31, 2022

Potential payout: \$4500

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be female Canadian citizens currently enrolled in undergraduate or graduate study at a Canadian university or college

What's required: A completed online application form, along with a cover letter, a maximum 1500-word research paper on women in politics, and two letters of reference.

Tips: Read the Submissions section carefully for requirements for the cover letter and research paper.

Where to get info: fcm.ca/en/about-fcm/awards/mayor-andree-p-boucher-memorial-scholarship



Four Steps to Get Inspired for the New Year

Marie Well



It's almost the New Year. You now have this festive opportunity to set some New Year's resolutions. But don't just make any resolution; make ones that inspire.

But what if you can't think of anything cataclysmic? There's a goal out there that is perfect for you. Perhaps it's the dream so big you may have shied away from entertaining it. Even if your goal seems impossible, it's attainable. It's called the Law of Will! If you will it, it will happen.

Think hard about what your resolution might be and then break it down into four steps: (1) vision, (2) goal, (3) strategies, and (4) feedback loop. So, let's get inspired with this four-step process of mapping out a truly meaningful New Year's resolution

Step 1: Vision

Perhaps you see yourself working in a dream career. You may have done personality tests to discover your ideal career. And now you know what career you want. But how do you get there?

I keep trying to quash my goal of earning six-figures, but it keeps surfacing. My brother was nearing earning a seven figure annual salary. And he's now taking some time to groom me for six figures. So, instead of going without a vision for the New Year, I'm running with it. If that's your vision, too, let's get there together, through articles such as these and, of course, through the Law of Will. (If you will it, it will happen.)

But if a six-figure salary is not your vision, think now of what grand dream you desire (within ethical bounds), and begin pursuing it. 2022 is your year to chase your dreams!

Step 2: Goal

2022 sounds like a good year to get another degree. It could also be your year of top fitness and health.

For me, 2022 is the year of acquiring certificates and a diploma. I know one fellow who owned a fitness studio and aimed to amass all kinds of certifications for his craft. I truly admire his perspective.

My wealthy brother amassed skills, and I'm currently doing that as well. I recommend you consider doing the same. Skills will fast track you to any dream. 2022 is your year to dream!

Step 3: Strategies

I've acquired top fitness in the past, so I know it's quite a different world. Within about two years, I went from an anorexic who couldn't run a few steps without wheezing to trying out for the university wrestling team. Reading books on weightlifting is essential, as is getting a gym membership and working out five to six days a week for a minimum of an hour each workout day. Eating protein within an hour of exercising is another strategy for building muscle. I'd

recommend also using a bicycle as a vehicle. I used to ride even in the winter, but only when the snow was light.

Getting a certificate involves other strategies. Hours and hours of daily study are essential. Memorization tricks are helpful. Essay writing hacks are beneficial. But daily discipline is a must.

To succeed you need time, money, motivation, and perseverance. (If you don't have all these elements, you can create them.) Registering for the class is fun and easy, but six weeks later, the class becomes challenging. Thus, it's vital to map out your study schedule on a regular basis. And adhere closely to it.

Step 4: Feedback Loop

The feedback loop would involve some system that makes sure you are on the right path. The feedback loop needs to ensure you are studying, going to class, and doing your assignments. Again, proper scheduling is a must. It's vital to take the time to break everything down into tasks on a regular basis.

Scheduling could mean getting out of bed by 8 am and committing to a 10 hour day of study. Achieving set goals provides feedback that you're on the right track.

The feedback loop may also include your grades for your assignments and essays. It may include a coach's advice. It might consist of your tutor's guidance.

Using these four steps, find a goals journal that contains a calendar and begin crafting the steps to realizing your grand vision. Remember, you truly have no limitations except for the one's you mistakenly place on yourself. It's 2022, your year to dream!

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) Info Session

Wed, Dec 15, 3:00 to 4:00 pm MST
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business
news.athabascau.ca/events/doctorate-in-business-administration-dba-information-session-20211215/
RSVP through above link

Sacred Circle of Squares for Indigenous learners

Thur Dec 16, 1:00 to 3:00 pm MST
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
news.athabascau.ca/events/sacred-circle-of-squares-for-indigenous-learners/
Indigenous learners only; RSVP to mjay@athabascau.ca by Dec 13

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Seeing into the future. A student wonders if there's any way to know that a course is going to be closed for revision in the near future; one AU insider responds that sometimes a course is temporarily closed due to sudden lack of materials and even AU doesn't know in advance.

Discord

Seasonal student fuel. Students gotta study, so the seasonal beverage conversation thread centred on coffee-based beverages, as well as different ways to prepare hot chocolate or eggnog. Followed, naturally, by a conversation about fruitcake.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Winter days are made for studying. Feel the warmth with our Cozy Little Playlist on Spotify! #AthabascaU #nowplaying <https://spoti.fi/3pq6ObZ>."





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Christmas Crisis

Dear Barb:

It's that time of year again and my anxiety is through the roof. I hate family get-togethers at any time of year, and Christmas just seems to make it all that much worse. Everyone was so upset last year about not being able to get together with family at Christmas, but not me. I was relieved and had the best Christmas day ever with just me and my boyfriend. My family members are already starting to argue about who will be cooking what, who will be hosting the get-together, blah blah blah. Also, my parents are divorced and remarried so we must go to both families. I suffer from anxiety attacks, and I am looking for ways I can control my stress level so I can get through this Christmas without having arguments with other family members. Can you suggest anything that will help to reduce my anxiety? Thanks, Lexi.

Great question Lexi!

Many people are feeling as you are at this time of year. In fact, research suggests that at least 10% of the population suffers from some type of social anxiety. While experiencing some anxiety around social gatherings is normal, people who suffer from social anxiety may obsess about the event for months ahead, to the point where they become physically and emotionally ill.

Family gatherings often cause family members to revert to dysfunctional roles within the family, which leads to some very intense situations. To manage anxiety, it's important to maintain a sense of control over our situations. There are several ways to achieve this. For example, if someone is treating you in a dysfunctional or abusive manner, don't hesitate to speak up for yourself. You are not that little girl or boy that was picked on, you are an adult, and you deserve to be treated with respect.

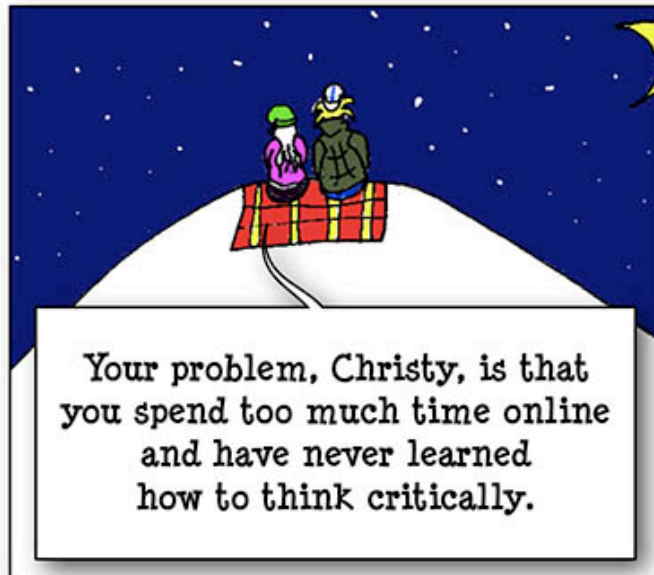
One option would be to bring a friend with you. This way the family dynamics will be different, and it won't be so easy to revert to our childhood ways. Also, if someone is treating you poorly, you have the option to get up and walk away. Go into another room. Read a book or play a game on your phone. I know these are behaviors that are frowned on in social situations, but it may be the only way to distract you from a stressful situation. For the most part family gatherings are a positive experience for children. Therefore, when things get stressful go hang out with the kids. Play games with them or watch a movie, anything that will get you away from the anxiety producing situation. Remember you have control over your life. Choose to focus on the positive, not the negative. Best of luck Lexi.

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 Mave Critical Thinking

Wanda Waterman



This update is provided to The Voice by AUSU.
Contact services@ausu.org with questions.



AU Students' Union will be **closed for the winter holiday from December 20 - 31, 2021**, with regular office hours resuming on January 4, 2022. If you require assistance from AUSU before then, please contact ausu@ausu.org.



Check out the [2021 Year in Review](#) with your AUSU Executive Team including external advocacy, efforts to lower tuition costs, undergraduate research, and more!



2021 Distinguished Alumni Award winner Dr. Wayne Clark is a relatively recent AU grad, having completed his [Doctor of Education in Distance Education](#) in 2020, but has done much to distinguish himself before, during, and since his degree.

Clark said he is one of the few Inuit to have earned a doctoral degree in Canada. He said while it's not always easy to integrate Traditional Inuit Knowledge with the policies and procedures of academia, that's now changing.

"I want to carry the message of post-secondary opportunities to Inuit who live in northern communities," Clark said. "It is possible to get a degree through distance education when you're living in these locations."

Clark's thesis, which highlights an appropriate way for health professionals to engage with his Inuit community, reflects this—as does his current work as the executive director of the Indigenous health initiatives program with the University of Alberta's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry.

[Read more](#) on Dr. Clark's research and goals today in The Hub.



[PowerED™ by Athabasca University](#) and [Ethically Aligned AI](#) have launched Canada's first micro-credential in AI ethics.

As AI continues to expand into ordinary everyday business, ethical issues in AI will continue to grow. Examples of this range from privacy and consent to the use of data, biased datasets and models that can create discriminatory outcomes to bigger questions about how AI will impact jobs, human relationships, and the way society operates.

[Artificial Intelligence Ethics](#) is a four-course program that delivers foundational skills needed to address issues around the ethical development of AI systems. Courses include an [Introduction to AI Ethics](#), Data, Machine Learning Models, and Roboethics. Check out the [course overview](#) today!



AUSU will be doubling the number of \$100 gift cards awarded through the Virtual Food Assistance Program this December from 5 to 10. Students often endure hardship while furthering themselves. This is especially true around the holidays.

The gift cards will be for a major grocery chain in Canada convenient to those selected through the draw. In the case of rural or international students who do not have access to one of these chains, AUSU will offer alternate options. [Apply today!](#)



AU Students' Union is an independent, student-run organization representing AU undergrads. It serves over 38,000 members annually in home-study locations across Canada and the world. Monthly membership is approximately 24,000 students.

AUSU supports students through various online programs and services including career services, community and wellness initiatives, and an awards and bursaries program. [Visit our website](#) and learn more today!

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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www.voicemagazine.org

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

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

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ISSN 2561-3634