



THE VOICE

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BEST OF THE VOICE 2022



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The Best of

The Voice Magazine 2022

What More do You Need to Know?

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Well That Was a Year.

Karl Low



Creating the Best Of editions is always a bit of a fun task. It gives me an excuse to spend a lot of time going through old editions of the Voice Magazine, remembering things that happened, both in the world at large and with the various Voice writers, over the course of the year.

On top of that, it lets me hear from the readers and find out a little bit more of what you like. This year, I didn't promote it as heavily as last year (the end of the year kind of snuck up on me) so while we didn't get quite as many suggestions for what should be considered part of the Best of 2022 as we did in previous years, we still got enough to provide for a great example of what makes the Best of the Voice Magazine when everything is firing on all cylinders.

Of course, what that also means is that every single one of the students who wrote in to me with their suggestion is going to get a bit of Voice swag, just as a thank you for caring.

So if you haven't heard from me yet, keep checking your box, I'll likely be in contact with you sometime over the weekend to find out a place where we can send you

goodies.

And if you didn't suggest, don't fret, there's always next year, and there's going to be a few opportunities for some good stuff this year too, stay tuned.

In the meantime, put your feet up, take this opportunity to reminisce, and have a look at what students and people like you considered to be the Best of the Voice Magazine for 2022.

Do I need to say enjoy the read? As if there's some other option.

Still, enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl'.

MINDS WE MEET



The Voice Magazine recently had a chance to chat with Ty-Lily Bussi, a 19-year old Labour Studies student residing in a small town near Niagara Falls, Ontario, who hopes to become a lawyer.

On a personal note, Ty let *The Voice Magazine* know, “I come from an Italian immigrant family and we live about 15 [minutes] away from Niagara Falls. I work with my Mom at our store, we sell holistic and wellness products, such as crystals & stones, vitamins, herbs, natural cosmetics, etc.”

The Voice Magazine also asked Ty for some study tips. The student stated, “I love listening to motivational speakers when I’m getting work done it helps to keep me focused on my goals and give me the encouragement I need.” Ty also had some tips for new students, namely “Be positive, don’t be mean to yourself, and if you don’t complete something that you hoped to do, there’s always tomorrow.”

When not studying, the AU learner loves “cooking, baking, and painting” as well as enjoying vacations, stating, “In 2017 I went to BC, I had the time of my life, it was one of those life changing experiences that you’ll never forget.”

Ty’s mother has had the greatest influence on her desire to learn, stating, “My Mom, she always taught me that knowledge is power, she’s my biggest cheerleader and motivator, she gives me the reassurance that I need, whenever I’m doubting myself. I’ve witnessed her do impossible things in my life, so why can’t I?”

As for the online learning experience so far? “I love the ability to be so focused on your work, as well as allowing you to complete your work on your own time is so helpful, it’s very freeing.” And although Ty has not had much communication with her tutors to date, the learner mentioned one of the things that was a help was “the writer program which greatly helped ... for an essay.”

When asked about a first project as the new president of AU, Ty mentioned, “I would set up a program that’s basically a networking system where students can talk all things spiritually, it is a huge part of my life that helps me to be a stronger person, so I would help to create a program for more like-minded individuals to come together to share how there spiritually helps them, throughout their daily lives and studies.”

When asked which famous person, past or present, she would like to have lunch with, and why, Ty chose “wood fire pizza” with author Elizabeth Gilbert of *Eat, Pray, Love* fame. “The movie, as well as book has really changed my life, Elizabeth’s journey of self-love and peace has truly inspired me for my own life, so I would just want to get to know more of her journey, because it’s so fascinating.”

Ty also mentioned another book, which had a great impact. The student stated, “*Alice in Wonderland* is a book that has had a great impact on my life, it’s Alice’s journey through self-discovery, it’s not an easy road, you go down there’s some holes along the way, but in the end you always become a better and new version of yourself.”

As for Ty’s most valuable lesson learned in life? “Love yourself, use your heart not your head. It’s a pretty crazy concept ... but our heart is full of love, passion, creativity, and truth, if I didn’t listen to my heart, I probably wouldn’t have been pursuing a career in Law.”

And the proudest moment? “Realizing that you are more than enough, I wouldn’t necessarily say it’s the proudest moment in my life, but it’s something that has changed my life and has had the most impact.” Best of luck Ty!

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!

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

[There were quite a few Minds We Meet articles nominated, as well as some non-specific nominations, such as from the student who wrote, "I enjoy reading different sections of the magazine but mostly about students' stories because it gives me inspiration to continue." There was no way we could have a Best of The Voice without a student interview. This one that came out on Remembrance Day in issue 3043 wasn't even that long ago. But it spoke to me as it spoke to some of you.]

Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group

Conversation starter. Nothing gives a thread traction like asking folks about their worst ProctorU experience. In amongst the gripes were posts advising students with ProctorU complaints to contact the exam unit, and perhaps also the student union.

Discord

Nothing is too crazy. Contributors in the #coffee-shop-lounge swap ideas for how to reward themselves when they've completed their AU studies. Beach, anyone?

reddit

Gift horses sometimes come loaded. A student notices a mark has been posted for an assignment they haven't submitted yet. Since the mark is high, many responders advise to say nothing and keep it, while others recommend contacting the course tutor to get it sorted out.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "We're redesigning athabascau.ca and we need your support! Fill out the following survey to share your thoughts on the current site and what you would like to see in a redesign. All participants have the chance to win 1 of 10 \$25 gift cards t.co/4JSED3RUPw."

@austudentsunion tweets: "AUSU Is Hiring A Chief Returning Officer (CRO) for its upcoming 2023 By-Election for Council Application Deadline: January 12, 2023 <https://ausu.org/2022/12/were-hiring-a-chief-returning-officer-cro/>."



Cross-Country Convoy Restores a Sense of “Canadianness” Barbara Lehtiniemi

Massive support shown as convoy converges on Canada's capital



Ottawa resident Nancy Shaver joined throngs of people on the Bayshore bridge in west Ottawa to watch some of the many waves of trucks draped in Canada flags stream into Ottawa Saturday, January 29.

You never know when you're going to get the lift you need.

On Thursday January 27, I drove the Franklin Blvd bridge over Highway 401 in Cambridge, Ontario. I was feeling a bit distracted because I was visiting Cambridge to deal with a family member's health issues. I was 600 kilometres away from home, away from my computer and temporarily out of touch with the world.

To my amazement, the Franklin bridge over the 401 was lined along one side by a row of parked cars and crowds of people. What's going on? Then I saw the Canada flags, and I knew. They were there for the truckers' convoy.

I knew about the convoy, the “Convoy for Freedom 2022”, a country-wide truckers' “march” to Ottawa to protest the recently-imposed vaccination mandate for cross-border truck drivers. Let me say this: I am fully vaccinated. I am also fully opposed to all the myriad vaccine mandates that have been imposed on people in certain jurisdictions in Canada and beyond. I recognize the harm the mandates are doing, and what seems their limited effectiveness in curbing the pandemic. Not to mention the ethical considerations of coercing people into making a choice they don't feeling comfortable making. But that's another article.

As I passed over the bridge, I slowed down. The convoy supporters were orderly and not blocking traffic, and most other drivers slowed down to look, to wave, and to honk their support. I felt so uplifted to see those people on the bridge, that I welled up with joyful tears.

A few minutes later, I heard a radio station in nearby Kitchener report that all the bridges over the 401, from at least London to Toronto, were similarly lined with supporters for the Convoy for Freedom. Not only that, but people were lining roads adjacent to Highway 401, holding signs and Canada flags, waiting to cheer the truckers on.

The truck convoy making its way east on Highway 401 was but one branch of the massive convoys streaming from all corners of Canada to converge on Ottawa. The commentators on that Kitchener radio station seemed totally caught off guard by the support the convoy was generating locally. The day before, they'd been dismissive of the rally and its intentions. By Friday, the rally was the sole focus of their programming. Support continued to swell across Ontario, as it had across the rest of the country.

The convoys began arriving in Ottawa on Friday and continued arriving well into Saturday. The Convoy for Freedom's organizers had worked with Ottawa police to ensure the convoys entered the city in an orderly fashion. Parking for the convoy and its supporters was organized, and police helped to keep essential routes clear for emergency services.

On Sunday, I was heading back to my home in Eastern Ontario along Highway 401. By that time, some of the convoy and its supporters were starting to head home. While I drove hundreds of kilometres east on Highway 401, I watched as hundreds of vehicles festooned with Canada flags drove west. It was like the longest Canada Day parade ever, and that was the first time I can ever recall enjoying a drive on Highway 401. I found it so uplifting to see people pulling together, at a time when unity is so desperately needed.

Despite all the vehicles I saw driving away from Ottawa, many more remained in Ottawa for the full weekend and beyond. I was pleased to hear on the radio that, over the whole weekend, only one arrest had been made related to the rally. The police termed the rally "peaceful" and the mayor of Ottawa agreed, although he did note there were a lot of parking violations.

When I got home, I was able to monitor the rally online. The reports from some media outlets stood out in stark contrast from others. One radio station zeroed in on the few minor problems that had occurred during the rally and pounded out reports over and over about a handful of incidents as though they were the dominant actions of rally participants.

For example, when someone hung a sign on one statue, a few media commentators used terms like "defaced", "defiled", and "desecrated" to describe the incident. Another radio commentator, acknowledging the intentionally inflammatory language used by some of his colleagues, said tongue-in-cheek, that "redecorated" would be a more accurate term. Even after the weekend ended, some media

AU-thentic Events

Upcoming AU Related Events

Library Chat

Tues, Jan 10, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MST
Online

Hosted by AU Library
www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html
No pre-registration needed; access through chat box on home page

Library Chat

Wed, Jan 11, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MST
Online

Hosted by AU Library
www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html
No pre-registration needed; access through chat box on home page

Developing Your Research series

Session 1: Search Like a Pro

Wed, Jan 11, 12:00 to 12:30 pm MST
Online

Hosted by AU Library
www.facebook.com/events/1139661466913266/1139661483579931/
Register through above link

Library Chat

Thur, Jan 12, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MST
Online

Hosted by AU Library
www.athabascau.ca/library/index.html
No pre-registration needed; access through chat box on home page

Blended Learning Practice MOOC

Jan 15 to Feb 11

Online
Hosted by AU and the Commonwealth of Learning
news.athabascau.ca/events/blended-learning-practice-mooc-fall-2022/
Register through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

outlets persisted in dismissing the rally as involving only a “few hundred” trucks, despite abundant photos—not to mention traffic reports—showing otherwise.

Considering the thousands of people who went to the rally in Ottawa, and the thousands upon thousands more who supported them along the way, our current prime minister’s scorn-drenched comments about the Convoy for Freedom representing a “fringe” element seem, as one radio host commented, “tone deaf.”

Conservative MP Eric Duncan, of the Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry riding just southeast of Ottawa, had sharp words about the prime minister’s comments in a post on his [Facebook page](#):

“The Prime Minister is making this issue worse and flaming tensions even more when he says all participants are racists and extremists. 10,000s of Canadians who rallied on roadsides and participated in the protest in Ottawa this past weekend are not racists or horrible people. The small number of individuals responsible for unacceptable behaviour have been universally condemned and called out- rightfully so. To have the Prime Minister lump everyone together is divisive and wrong- and does nothing to unite the country and get us back opened up again.”

And while Duncan accuses the prime minister, along with some media and others, of continuing to sow divisiveness, many Canadians took the opportunity of the Convoy for Freedom to sow unity.

Thousands of trucks travelling thousands of kilometres requires much organization and support. As the convoy streams got closer to Ottawa, the support needed grew in tandem with the size of the convoys.

At each overnight stop, volunteers showed up with meals for the convoy participants, and food for the next day’s travels. People offered rides, accommodations, and showers to the truckers and their supporters.

In an opinion piece posted by the Western Standard, [Night in truck stop shows true value of being Canadian](#), Travis Smith had this to say about those volunteers:

“They exhibited a spirit of generosity, compassion, and optimism that has not been seen —or permitted — for a long time... It is refreshing to observe that the Canadian readiness to be, well, *so Canadian* to each other has not yet disappeared despite an unrelenting effort to extinguish it.”

For me, the Convoy for Freedom represented hope. To see the sheer size of the convoys, and the massive shows of support as it headed to, and arrived in, Ottawa, demonstrates to me that Canadian values are not dead yet.

It is not too late for us to recover the generosity, compassion, and optimism that Smith witnessed. It is not too late to recover our respect for our neighbours, our love for our relatives, and our dignity for ourselves.

I hope we don’t lose the momentum of the Convoy for Freedom. It’s time to end divisiveness, and instead embrace what unites us as Canadians.

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

[It already seems to have happened so long ago, but the Convoy for Freedom was only at the beginning of this year. This article in issue 3005, from right at the beginning of February, was about Barbara Lehtiniemi’s take on seeing the convoy’s approach to Ottawa. Barb and I have differing opinions on the Convoy itself, but I can’t deny that this was a look at it that we didn’t get from a lot of other places. And a different take on one of the top stories of the year from an educated AU student? That’s got to be part of the Best of the Voice.]

Why Decriminalizing Drugs Won't Fix Canada's Overdose Crisis Jessica Young



B.C. will become the first province to decriminalize small amounts of illicit drugs. Beginning January 31st, 2023, drug users over eighteen years of age will be able to legally possess up to 2.5 grams of methamphetamine, cocaine, opioids, and MDMA. Police will also not be permitted to confiscate drugs from the user if the amount is under the legal threshold.

Unsurprisingly, the decision has attracted significant criticism from all sides of the issue. Some are advocating that the legal threshold should be increased to a minimum of 4.5 grams, while others maintain that the only true solve to the overdose crisis will be when the federal government provides a safe, regulated drug supply to the user. Of course, there are also those who fear that decriminalization will encourage drug use and increase crime rates.

What *can* be agreed upon, however, is that the overdose crisis represents an enormous problem in our society, and that problem is only getting worse. According to [this CBC article](#), “More than 9,400 people in B.C. have died of toxic

drug overdoses since the province declared a public health emergency in 2016, an average of six people a day.” Regardless of your opinion on addiction, drug use, and the latest government policy—those numbers are simply tragic and terrifying.

The B.C. government’s decision comes from a harm reduction standpoint. According to [Harm Reduction International](#), “Harm reduction is fundamentally grounded in principles that aim to protect human rights and improve public health. Treating people who use drugs—along with their families and communities—with compassion and dignity is integral to harm reduction. The use of drugs does not mean people forfeit their human rights - they remain entitled to the right to life, to the highest attainable standard of health, to social services, to privacy, to freedom from arbitrary detention and to freedom from cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, among others.” A harm reduction framework focuses on keeping people alive and protecting their health through policies that are “facilitative rather than coercive, and aim to reinforce positive change in a person’s life, no matter how small or incremental that change may be.”

Unfortunately, I don’t believe that decriminalization will solve the overdose crisis. Not because of a too-low threshold, not because of a lack of safe supply, and not because I don’t agree with harm reduction. I don’t believe that the decriminalization of illicit drugs will solve anything because *drug use is not the problem*.

In 1985, Dr. Vincent Felitti, the man behind [the largest, most important public health study you’ve never heard of](#), developed the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences study) questionnaire. Dr. Felitti began the ACE when he realized that the vast majority of his chronically obese patients had a history of childhood abuse. The ACE questionnaire asks patients [ten questions](#) about their life experiences before the age of eighteen. Five are personal — physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect. Five are related to other family members: a parent who’s an alcoholic, a mother who’s a victim of domestic violence, a family member in jail, a family member diagnosed with a mental illness, and experiencing divorce of parents. Each

type of trauma counts as one. The higher your ACE score, the more likely you are to experience adverse outcomes in adulthood. For instance, with an ACE score of 4 or higher, the likelihood of chronic pulmonary lung disease increases 390 percent; hepatitis by 240 percent; depression by 460 percent; and attempted suicide by 1,220 percent.

Dr. Felitti eventually realized that treating his patients' obesity was never going to work, because he was trying to treat the solution to their problem. Binge-eating was his patients' coping mechanism—their solution—for dealing with their *actual* problem: the lasting affects of adverse childhood experiences.

I believe that the overdose crisis is rooted in the same problem. The CDC reports that 1 in 6 adults have an ACE score of 4 or more—many chronic drug users will fall into this category. When we live in a society that is overflowing with people attempting to cope with childhood trauma, coupled with the consistent toxic stress caused by other prevailing societal issues such as poverty and discrimination, the *actual* problem behind the overdose crisis becomes much clearer. While I don't believe that the decriminalization legislation is a negative thing, I believe that what the government should be focusing on is investing in communities and families, schools, housing, and mental health resources. I believe that the government should be investing more in our children—working preventively to reduce the need for drug use in adulthood.

I truly, genuinely, whole-heartedly hope that the decriminalization of illicit drugs in B.C. will save lives; but the real change will only happen once we address the problems that are imbedded in our society.

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

[This one was recommended with the note, "Jessica was so right when she said that the ACE research study was one of the most important research projects that nobody has ever heard of." That was pretty much all I needed to read to decide this would probably be a good fit for the Best Of edition. And going back to issue 3022 in mid-June to read it again simply confirmed that.]



Traditional versus Self-Publishing

Barb Godin



Many years ago, I sent my book out to several publishers and all I got was rejection letters. So I put my book away in the drawer and gave up on a dream. Years later I was happy to be writing again when I was chosen to write an advice column. It evolved into my long running "Dear Barb" column in AUSU's Voice Magazine. Writing this column, plus some short stories, awakened my desire to try to publish my book again, but I was reluctantly faced with having to approach publishers and going through the rejection process again.

However, through writing my column, I became connected with other writers and gained confidence, especially since readers

seemed to enjoy my column and stories. The spark was revived, and I began an investigative

journey into the world of publishing. I decided to begin my publishing journey with the birth of *Dear Barb: Answers to Your Everyday Questions*, which is a compilation of 90 questions and answers which were previously published in *The Voice*.

Initially I struggled with whether to self-publish or pursue traditional publishing and for a variety of reasons I chose self-publishing. I am now the author of three self-published books and working on my fourth. It will also be self-published, as I believe this is the future of publishing. But there are advantages and disadvantages to each.

An obvious advantage to traditional publishing is that there is no cost to create the book and the publisher pays for all marketing and promotion. Authors may also receive an advance, which would later be taken out of royalties. A big plus going with a traditional publisher is that they are knowledgeable and experienced in creating a book cover and title that will sell. Traditional publishers also have extensive contacts with bookstore owners, who will not hesitate to accept their recommended books.

But a disadvantage to traditional publishing is that once you sign the contract with a publishing house, you are giving away all your rights to what you have written, which means you cannot sell, use, or republish your book anywhere else. Also, the road to publication is slow, often taking more than a year to get your book on the store shelves.

Alternatively, self-publishing can be an expensive venture depending on whether you format the book yourself or hire an editor, cover designer, or proofreader, which, totaled, can be in the thousands of dollars. If you have the time you can learn to do on your own, as I did. Initially I paid \$450 for someone to format my book into the required formatting to upload to Amazon. I also paid miscellaneous expenses for adjustments and changes to the cover design. While going through this process I decided I was going to take the time learn to do it myself, as I had more books I wanted to get published. I then successfully published two more books, completely on my own, and, as mentioned, I am working on my fourth.

Also, the road to self-publishing can be lonely, as you do not have the support you would when venturing with a traditional publisher. But the tradeoff is you have complete control on when and where your book will be published. As well, you will be able to keep more of the money made per book than you would with a traditional publisher, however you also must consider the costs of marketing and promoting your book. Unless you are an experienced promoter, this can be one of the most difficult and expensive aspects of self-publishing.

You can also find more information in Rick Lauber's ["17 Pros and Cons of Traditional Publishing vs. Self-Publishing"](#) in *Writer's Digest*.

The biggest roadblock I found to self-publishing as opposed to traditional publishing is the negative reactions I received when telling someone my book was self-published. It seems credibility is immediately lost. The thinking is that if you had to self-publish, then obviously a traditional publishing house was not interested in your book. But this is not always the case.

The introduction of kindle has changed the publishing industry. Indie authors are generating billions in eBook sales every year, and account for 30-34% of all eBook sales. However, it is difficult to get a proper accounting for all self-published book sales, as many are sold at craft shows, through author websites, or on consignment. [Facts and Figures about Self-Publishing: The Impact and Influence of Indie Authors \(selfpublishingadvice.org\)](#)

Loads of support is available for indie authors, as there is a plethora of indie writing groups accessible on the internet where you can promote your books, design your cover, ask questions,

or share information. I belong to a few of these, and when thinking about this article, I posted the question of why authors chose self-publishing for their books. Only a handful answered, although most are looking forward to reading this article when published.

One person I had spoken to mentioned that they went with a traditional publisher, because she felt self-publishing would be too much to learn at her age.

Another person said if she had not self-published, her books would not be published. She has authored several books and I believe she is moderately successful.

An author of seven books said flatly she would not go with self-publishing. Here is her reason:

“In my opinion, if none of the publishers I sent it to think it's as incredible as I do, then maybe it's not as good as I think.”

Two other self-published authors of several books said they are completely happy with their choice and will make the same choice with future books.

There are also several famous authors who've self-published. Dale, of SelfpublishingDale.com, has [a list of ten of the best](#):

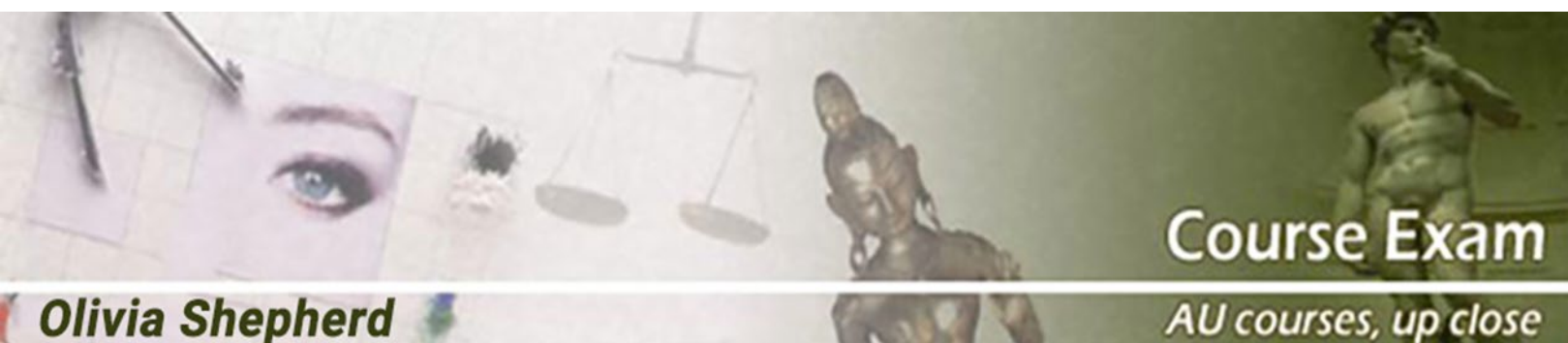
1. Margaret Atwood self-published a book of poetry many years before she became a best-selling author.
2. EL James of 50 Shades of Grey fame, self-published and within one year it was picked up by a traditional publisher and went on to sell over 100,000,000 copies.
3. Robert Siyosako decided to self-publish Rich Dad, Poor Dad after being rejected by numerous publishers. It went on to sell 40,000,000 copies and remain on the NYT bestseller list for over 6 years.
4. Lisa Genova self-published her novel Still Alice in 2007, which was turned into an Oscar-winning film.
5. Wayne Dyer self-printed 4,500 of this first book Your Erroneous Zones and spent the next year travelling and promoting it. Your Erroneous Zones would go on to become a top selling book, selling over 100,000,000 copies.
6. Irma S. Rombauer initially did a print run of 3,000 of her famous book The Joy of Cooking which got picked up by a traditional publisher in 1936 and sold over 18,000,000 copies.
7. Andy Weir self-published The Martian and it became an Amazon Bestseller and a movie starring Matt Damon. Weir signed a publishing and film deal and has sold over 3 million copies and the film grossed \$630,000,000.
8. Beatrix Potter self-published 250 copies of The Tale of Peter Rabbit. Within a year the publishing company that had rejected her, signed her to a deal and The Tale of Peter Rabbit has sold approximately 45,000,000 to date.
9. Mark Twain was signed by a traditional publisher in 1884 but was tired of the bureaucracy so he started his own company and published two of his highly successful books Personal Memories of Ulysses S. Grant and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.
10. And finally, Stephen King self-published People, Places and Things in 1960 at 15 years old by his own publishing company. Only one copy out of the ten that were published remain, and King owns it.

As for myself, I have never regretted self-publishing, although in the back of my mind I keep hoping that a big publisher will come along and make me a bestseller. But in the meantime, I love what I'm doing. I am sharing my stories with others. My autobiography will be coming out within the next few months, and I believe it will be helpful to people who share a similar story to my own.

Information about my books is on my website barbgodin.com or my [Facebook Author Page](#).

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

[Every once in a while, Barb Godin takes a break from Dear Barb to do something a little different for The Voice Magazine and they often generate a lot of comments at the time from students and other readers. From issue 3034 at the start of September, this was no exception, and with some solid advice and a strong personal connection it made it worth inclusion in the Best of the Voice.]



Course Exam: PHIL 367 Existentialism and Phenomenology

Philosophy (PHIL) 367 (Existentialism and Phenomenology) is a three-credit Arts or Humanities course with no pre-requisite, however, previous credit in Philosophy is recommended. PHIL 367 is not available for challenge. Throughout this course, students will find themselves presented with a background in two major schools of modern European philosophical thought. The course is divided into two parts: Part I on Existentialism and Part II on Phenomenology.

Who Should Take This Course and Why

For this article, we had the opportunity to interview the course coordinator of PHIL 367, Dr. Wendell Kisner. Dr. Kisner is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as the Program Director for the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Program. When we asked him who should take this course he said, "There is no particular type or kind of person who is drawn to philosophy. It's more about willingness than already being a certain kind of person: willingness to critically examine one's own assumptions and let them go should they turn out to be mistaken or one-sided." In the course outline, students will find Dr. Kisner further elaborates on how assumptions of knowledge blind students from learning—to be open-minded to the possibility of being challenged in what you think. He continues to say that "this course in particular addresses questions about the meaning of morality and human existence ... through genealogy and phenomenology. While both entail shifting away from metaphysical speculations, genealogy focuses on historical developments while phenomenology leads us to carefully attend to how things actually appear as opposed to how we may reflect on them. Both entail suspending the habitual assumptions and judgements we tend to make in our everyday existence."

Course, Assignments, and Exam Details

The course consists of ten units divided into two parts. Part I covers Nietzsche and Existentialism and its units include (1) The Historical Context of Existentialism and Phenomenology, (2) Good, Evil, and Morality, (3) Guilt and Punishment, (4) The Ascetic Ideal and Western History, (5)

Nihilism, Affirmation, and Eternal Recurrence, and (6) Jean-Paul Sartre, Freedom, and Atheistic Existentialism. Part II covers Heidegger and Phenomenology and its units are divided into (7) Existential Phenomenology and the Question of Being, (8) Human Existence, Anxiety, and Death, (9) Modern Technology, and (10) Earth and Sky, Gods and Mortals. As there is no textbook for this course, each unit has a written “lecture” covering the need-to-know information, as well as the Unit Objectives, Key Terms and Concepts, any required reading assignments, optional supplementary material, and study questions.

The final mark in PHIL 367 is based on the study questions for each unit and two essay assignments.

The study questions are weighted at an overall 20% of the final grade (2% for each submission). It is best to answer all of the provided study questions for your personal use, but only one question provided in the list must be submitted for grading. Study question responses should adequately answer the question in 300-500 words. It is noted in the instructions to utilize the provided course material and avoid outside sources when answering them.

There are two essays for PHIL 367, weighted at 40% each. Both essays coincide with each part of the course—essay one follows part one, and essay two after part two. Essays should be a minimum of 1600 words and the general outline and marking rubric are provided in the course. While you cannot access the essay drop box until it has been opened, students can find the topics for these essays in the “Professors Section” of the course outline.

Note that this course follows a sequential order, meaning study questions and essays must be submitted one after the next. The drop boxes for each assignment do not open until you have submitted the previous assignment.

There are no quizzes nor a final exam for this course. To receive credit for PHIL 367, all assignments must be submitted, and a composite grade of 50% (D) must be achieved.

Course Advice

Dr. Kisner states that success in this course “requires the willingness to think through arguments made in the readings, following them step by step so that it’s clear how we get from their premises to their conclusions. This takes patience and careful reading.” He continues to say that “often students come to philosophy courses with the mistaken expectation that they’ll be treated to a collection of various beliefs and opinions, and they must learn to let go of the habit of merely reporting beliefs and opinions as if that’s what philosophy is about.”

As someone who has taken this course, I can say that PHIL 367 is one of the heaviest reading courses I’ve yet to do. Each unit contains plenty of description and commentary, and there are multiple books and essays to be read throughout the course.

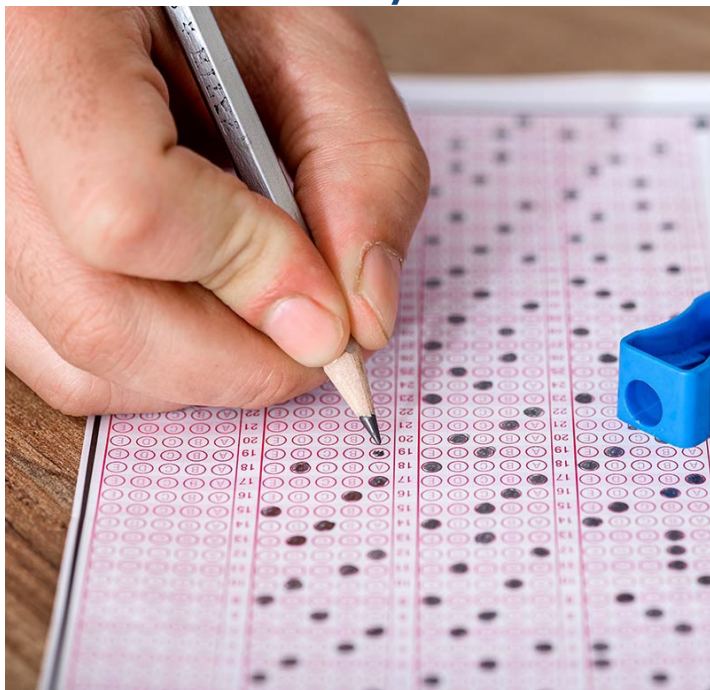
While the supplemental readings are optional, they came in very handy to further expand on the writings and aided in answering study questions. I often found myself re-reading sections a few times over, breaking down every piece of information and integrating it into the bigger picture. Students may struggle with the amount of reading in this course, or as Dr. Kisner mentioned, may struggle to let go of their own assumptions. Students need to be willing to be challenged, and not immediately think, “I disagree with this,” to find success in this course.

Majoring in psychology with a minor in philosophy, Oliva experiences an existential crisis at least once a semester and psychoanalyzes everyone she knows.

[I like the Course Exam column, I wish I had more of them to publish, as each one of them tends to be among the most viewed things on the site. So I knew from the start I needed a Course Exam in the Best Of edition. This one, from early October in issue 3038, got picked because it gives us not only a look at the course from the course coordinator, but also gives us some decent advice for how to get through it from Olivia directly, as she’s already had to do it.]

How to Write an Essay Exam

Marie Well



To excel at a college or university you must work hard and follow systems. For example, let's examine a technique I adopted for writing essay exams. Interestingly, I later discovered that a very similar system was adopted by other top students who authored study tip books. It's testimony that maximum academic performance is like a game you can win with the right systems and effort.

With that said, let's dive into how to write an essay exam. Don't be the student who writes essay exams without direction. Instead, be the student who mastered the following system:

Prior to the Essay Exam:

Before the essay exam, read the course syllabus and course outline thoroughly. There may be clues as to what the essay exam will cover.

Also access past syllabi if possible. They may

indicate what the exam covers.

Sign out textbooks from the library that are very similar to the ones you were assigned by your professor. There is a chance that their problem sets will indicate a potential essay exam question.

Also, read all course assigned readings, ensuring you highlight facts and relevant or noteworthy points. Memorize these points. Take it a step further and draft short summaries of all of your readings and lectures.

Identify and memorize all the points that the professor stressed during lectures. That means learning anything he or she repeated, slowed down to articulate, spoke loudly about, or otherwise signaled as necessary.

Make several mock outlines for possible topics that might appear in the essay exam. Ensure you have material from the readings or homework to pad each topic.

Study your memorized point right up to the moment you go into the exam. The common belief is to stop studying on the day of the exam. However, from my experience, studying right up to the exam time produced the best grades.

During the Essay Exam:

As soon as the exam begins, rapidly dump as much as you can remember onto scrap paper. Remember that each point you make may equal an extra mark. For instance, if your essay is worth 30 marks, you'll need at least thirty ideas relevant to the essay topic.

Read all instructions at least three times.

Circle relevant keywords, such as "argumentative essay" or "persuasive essay." You should know what exact essay type you are to write. Ask the professor for clarity if you are not clear on what is expected.

Divide each section of the exam questions into total allotted minutes, with 1/10th of the outline generation time and 1/10th for final edits. So, for example, if your essay is worth 40 marks and

your multiple choice is worth 10 marks, then spend 4 times longer on your paper than on the multiple choice exam.

If you have multiple choice questions or other non-essay questions, do those first, as they often offer clues as to what may be expected in the essay.

Take the scrap paper you dumped all the points onto at the start of the exam. Sort related items on scrap paper according to headings that apply to the essay topic. Do this by writing down beside each point a capital roman number (I, II, III) with a short one or two-word heading (ie., II Risk-Taking). These headings should relate to your essay topic. Or they should help you form a relevant essay thesis statement.

If you haven't done so already, find a way to tie the headings into a single thesis statement.

Make a separate outline, starting with roman numerals for each heading (i.e., I Aversions, II Risk-taking, III Safety seeking). You will mark up both the outline and the points on the scrap paper with these roman numerals.

If your heading is II: Risk-taking, order the subpoints logically (for example, II Risk-taking A: Why it's favorable, II Risk-taking B: Who takes risks, II Risk-taking C: who it harms, ...). You don't rewrite your points on scrap paper. You just assign the relevant roman number and alphabetical letter beside each point to structure it. You can do the third subdivision of issues using the standard numbers (1, 2, 3) if you wish.

Write the essay starting with a great intro, clear title, and thesis statement. Each body paragraph should contain a central idea supported by your readings and lecture materials. In addition, each body paragraph should have an introduction, supporting evidence, and a conclusion.

Don't just dump points on the paper; try to weave them together into a single overarching theme. Try to also make connections between points so they tie together nicely.

Leave a blank line in between each line of your essay. This way, you can add material if necessary, especially if you remember something valuable after writing the draft.

Use transitional words from one idea to the next. These words are "however," "therefore," "on the one hand," "nevertheless," and so forth.

Watch the clock like a hawk. As soon as you get close to the maximum time allotted for each section, speed up so that you can complete your exam with time remaining for final edits.

If time is running out, insert final essay points as bullet points.

Don't use first person, emotional responses, or ideas unrelated to the reading materials. Only do so if instructed or if such an insertion justifies an extra mark and is defensible. If this is the case, then defend the emotional response with ideas from the readings and lectures.

Don't just hand in your essay. Also, hand in all the notes on scrap paper you've made. They could earn you extra marks.

On a final note, yes, essay writing is a system. Getting top grades is all about hard work and methods. So, now you've learned a new approach to help you boost your essay exam performance. Try it out in mock, timed essay exams you create at home until you feel comfortable performing them in a real essay exam scenario. After all, you were born to rise to the top!

[I'm always happy when I get submissions that relate directly to some part of the AU experience, and essay exams is something any AU student has to deal with sooner or later. So I was just as happy when this article from late August, issue 3033, was recommended for the Best of edition.]



A Beginner's Guide to: Surviving Frostbite

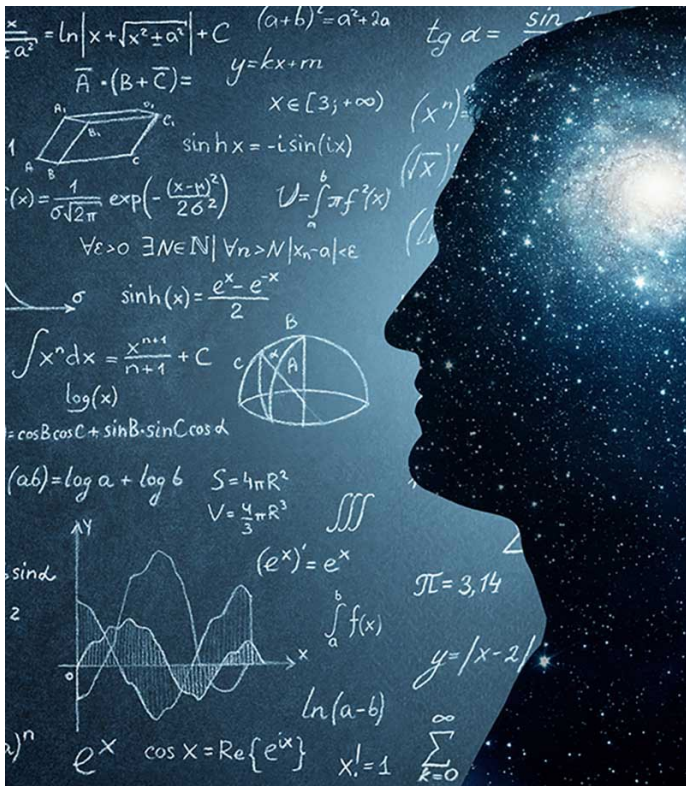
Savannah Ugo

[Back in late April, issue 3016 was one of the few Voice Magazine issues that published with two comics. This one, from Savannah Ugo, tickled me because I used to know a couple of people very much like this. They took 'don't sweat the small stuff' way too far, and it was fun to have what felt like such a significant change from our normal, very text-heavy magazine. As such, I thought that warranted being in the Best Of, because who doesn't like just a little bit of a change-up here and there?]



You Too Can (and Should) Learn Mathematics

Chris O'Brien



Dr. Goodaire swooped down the stairs of the Auditoria style classroom two wide steps at a time to deliver his first lecture of the morning for a Calculus I class. It was the first week of September 1992 and this was my first class of a six-year long engineering program at Memorial University.

I was well prepared for the course. While I didn't have the option of taking AP courses in high school, I did a pre-calculus course in Grade 12 in addition to the usual geometry and algebra topics. I did well in these courses, though I have no reason to believe I have a particular talent in this topic—I just did the assigned homework consistently (I recall spending perhaps an hour most nights on math homework). I would have considered math one of my favorite subjects, though I never had a passion for the topic.

It wasn't long, however, before I felt like I was in over my head with university level math. Where I once felt mastery of the material, I now felt

defeated. Grades in the 90s were replaced by 60s and low 70s on my assignments and mid-term.

I felt that Dr. Goodaire was a very good lecturer, but the course was intimidating. I didn't keep up with him. He covered multiple sections of the text per class sometimes, a blistering speed compared with high-school pace. I don't think I missed any lectures, but most of the time I barely understood the material; sometimes not at all. The text was hard to read (I never learned how to read a math text in high school). I didn't know how to persist when encountering difficult problems. Even the course number, "Math 1000", was a little chilling.

I recovered somewhat by the end of the course, thanks to some lengthy tutorial sessions which included practice exams. But I never *fully* recovered. I never really learned how to study math, and throughout my program I never regained the confidence that I could obtain grades comparable to those I received in high school.

Fast forward to 2019 when I enrolled in the B.Sc. Applied Mathematics program at AU, originally with the intent of taking a few courses to learn more about a subject called machine learning. I managed to bring my grades up to the level I achieved in high school, maybe even better. This was a pleasant surprise as I had once convinced myself that it was not possible to achieve 90s in university level mathematics. I am no smarter than I was, no more able to learn the material. What made the difference? While I employ several different study tactics, I believe that a genuine interest in the topic, coupled with confidence and persistence are at the root of my improved results.

Over time I had developed a greater appreciation for the contribution of mathematics to daily life. It probably goes without saying that space exploration wouldn't happen without some of the mathematical discoveries since the Renaissance, however you are probably not aware that much of today's comforts would not exist without certain discoveries in the mathematical

sciences. GPS and cellphones—gone. Internet—wouldn't have been invented. Commercial aircraft—we wouldn't have gone much further than the Wright brothers. Electricity—it likely would be more expensive and less reliable. Even in the research community there are many crossovers with various branches of mathematics. Biology, climate science, economics, cryptography and encryption, and social sciences to name a few areas, all make use of complex mathematics. To my surprise, I have learned since my first university courses that mathematics research (both pure and applied) is alive and well, though the work in pure mathematics often takes many years to be applied by business or research outside of mathematics.

Activities in my work and personal life have also illustrated the applicability of mathematics in everyday experience. At the office, I once encountered some product pricing problems that required algebra and calculus to solve (note that I wisely excluded the math component in my presentation to the executive!). In my personal life, I noticed the importance of math in understanding personal finance. If the equation $y = p * (1+i)^x$ means nothing to you (hint: your high-school text will cover a simplified version of this for sure), then you are missing out on very important information concerning your future finances.

Consider the plight of students or recent graduates looking at some furniture options. They might be forced (as I once was) to make a purchase with a credit card or go without. They might also have the option to purchase furniture through a retailer on credit (in the form of a weekly or monthly payment). This option may seem attractive as it typically comes with a low weekly payment in comparison with a credit card charging nearly 20% interest. Exploring these options, as part of writing this article, I found a sectional sofa which could be purchased from one retailer on credit for \$24 per week for 156 weeks (3 years) vs. \$1560 from a 2nd retailer. If students were to put their high school or early university math skills to work with the equation above, they might be shocked to learn that this pleasant weekly payment conceals an interest rate of 70%!! Ouch. And I am not cherry-picking examples here—this was the first example I reviewed.

So the integral (pun intended) of these experiences, related to the applications of mathematics, opened my eyes to the benefit of a mathematics education, for both society and the individual. The other part of this story is about developing confidence and tenacity.

Confidence comes from application, which is easier when coupled with genuine interest. So, to start, I read non-technical books outside the curriculum on the subject. *In Pursuit of the Unknown: 17 Equations That Changed the World*, and *Love and Math: The Heart of Hidden Reality* were among the books I read. I also began listening to science and math podcasts and reading popular science journalism from sources such as Quanta Magazine. This material made the topic interesting and more relatable—some of my readings were less about the math but rather about the people behind discoveries, and some of the authors have a style that is quite infectious.

I also read Lara Alcock's *How to Study as a Mathematics Major* soon after starting my first course at Athabasca (she is a university professor specializing in mathematics education). The book described many of the problems I encountered as a math student and indicated that they were quite common. As stated earlier, I struggled to read math texts. I didn't understand the vernacular of mathematics (e.g., definitions, axioms, lemmas, theorems, and some symbols). I was terrified of proofs. I didn't know how to get 'unstuck' on a problem. And as silly as it may sound, I didn't know how to get help or ask the right questions or speak to the professor. Of course, I also had the added problem that university social life can be very distracting (Alcock doesn't help with that one!).

Alcock's book also helped with terminology and study skills: how to read math, how to write math, how to deal with proofs. For example, it helped normalize the fact that I often had to read

a section 2 or 3 times before I really got it. “Sleeping on it” is another valuable technique. I learned to spend days or weeks on hard assignment problems; nudging toward the solution with a little bit of effort here and there, aided by the confidence that I would eventually find an answer.

I wish I had this book when I started my undergrad in 1992. The validation I felt would have helped me through the transition to university, while the advice and general description of the subject would have made the topic more accessible and would have helped me move forward in the lectures more confidently. Validation may seem an odd thing to help you study, but when you realize that so many people taking calculus and stats courses are going through the same experiences, you don’t feel so bad about your own struggle. It provided me with confidence that I could improve.

In the end I cultivated a passion for the topic (I’m not exaggerating—if someone would volunteer to pay my bills, I would love to do a Ph.D. in applied mathematics). Math studies have ceased to be ‘work’, but rather have become an intellectual play.

So there you have it; a strategy to tame this subject that seems the bane of so many students. It would be too optimistic of me to think you could come away from this article with the interest I have for the subject, but I do hope, if you are in the “I suck at math”, or “I hate math” camps, that you give it a chance. If nothing else than for self-interest. Math is kind of like a superpower, or maybe a superpower-lite. While you may not use most of your learned math skills directly, anything that you do in life that involves problem solving, logical thinking or numeracy, be it inside or outside of academia, will benefit from math studies.

[This is the single article that Chris submitted for The Voice Magazine in 2022. It came out in late July in issue 3028 and it's got pretty much everything I think makes for the Best of the Voice, a strong personal connection to an AU student, real advice for other students that's directly related to our studies, connections to the real world, AU, a career, and paying for our education. The only thing missing to be a complete microcosm of the AU student is time juggling. There was no way this article wasn't going to be here.]

Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: TD Scholarship for Indigenous Peoples

Sponsored by: TD and AFOA Canada

Deadline: January 16, 2023, 5:00 pm EST

Potential payout: \$10,000 per year for tuition, plus \$5000 per year for living expenses, for up to four years.

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be First Nations, Metis, or Inuit; be members of a First Nation, Metis, or Inuit community; and have applied for a full-time minimum two-year program at an approved post-secondary institution for the next year of study or are enrolled in or accepted to a full-time minimum two-year program with an approved post-secondary institution for the next year of study. See [Terms & Conditions](#) for full eligibility requirements.

What's required: A completed application form (to be submitted either online, by mail, or by fax), including personal, contact, and academic info, two reference letters, and answers to five questions about you, your goals, and how this scholarship would benefit you.

Tips: Be sure to read the [Terms & Conditions](#) carefully.

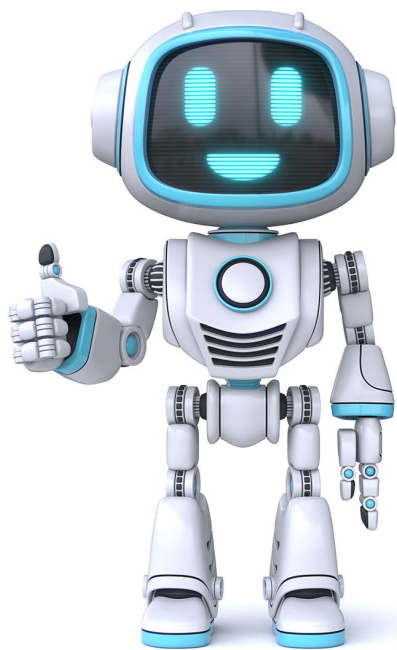
Where to get info: afoa.ca/td/



Mindsets

Alek Golijanin

The Importance of Positivity and Curiosity



How important can having a positive or curious mindset really be? According to Chris Voss, a retired FBI hostage negotiator with over 20 years of experience and who now trains other professionals while also teaching at Harvard, it is critical. Chris quotes research that has shown that a positive mindset and the positive emotions associated increase your IQ capacity and improves your frame of mind. Seeing how life is a constant negotiation, it also helps when it comes to asking the right questions and being able to dig deeper. The two traits are interconnected at a deeper level than we imagined.

A Positive Mindset

With the increasing speed the world is moving, the pace can really wear people down and have a significant impact on our interactions. Chris Voss explains that most negotiations are emotional and irrational interactions, but that the academic approach focuses on rationality. A positive mindset contributes positively towards emotional intelligence, and it allows you to keep the odds in your favor. In addition to the impact that being positive has on the psyche, it has been shown that positivity also keeps individuals in better physical health

by reducing stress hormones and the body's physical response to them and their ability to give way to chronic health problems.

A positive mindset is powerful. It is an ideal state of mind for optimal brain function. But eliminating emotions altogether is the wrong approach rather we need to remove the negative ones while leveraging the positive ones.

A Curious Mindset

Being curious has always been considered a positive trait, and our greatest advancements are the result of "what if?" hypotheses. However, rarely does anyone get directly to the desired answer, and it is the persistence and pursuit of that hypothesis that gives way to the breakthrough. The most relevant traits to curiosity all have to do with positivity like being persistent and not giving up when things do not go your way. Chris Voss describes this as being "antifragile", not letting things take you off track and explains how it is impossible to be mad and curious at the same time. Simply put, allowing yourself to be overcome with negative emotions will hold you back from doing what needs to get done to get to where you want to get to.

The Art of the Deal

When it comes to making tough decisions with no right answer, the importance of positivity and curiosity is key. Having the ability to look beyond lose-lose outcomes has long-term importance for both personal and professional development and you can identify the least undesirable outcome through thought shaping questions. Think of it like this, whichever decision you end up making you will regret, but which regret would you rather live with? You have the ability to shape your reality, but you can also shape the reality of those around you, so stay positive and be curious.

What I have learned from listening to Chris Voss on communication and negotiation is that the way we think about how to get what we want is probably wrong. A person that is trying to apply negotiation principles they learned from *Art of the Deal* is in for a major reality check. The “real” in reality TV has no connection to the “real” in real life, so try not to let a person’s bravado convince or mislead when you know better. Instead, I recommend reading Chris Voss’ *Never Split the Difference: Negotiating As If Your Life Depended On It* and learn from someone who has saved countless hostages from people—people with mean streaks who you and I would not want to have anything to do with.

Alek Golijanin is an AU alum who considers himself a gentleman first, a scholar second, and a combat sports fanatic third. In that order.

[I'd forgotten about this article when I saw it nominated. Alek doesn't tend to stick to a single topic, so it was fun to read it again. This article came out back in March in issue 3011 and it's a bit of a different take on the mindfulness type articles we get a lot of here, connecting it almost to a book review of sorts, and it's those type of unusual connections that are some of things I think make for the Best of the Voice.]

My True Love In My Soul

Eliza Neven-Pugh



A couple months ago I wrote to my family and friends saying that, using my paternal grandmothers wedding ring, I was making a commitment to give my heart to my God. Saying that if I was going to have a romantic relationship I was going to wait until seminary school. A couple weeks following this, I realized that I was being called to become an expert in Critical Disability Studies. In realizing this changing path, I prayed.

I gave my life letting go of my plans, including the secret certainty that seminary romance *was going to happen*. Not only did advocacy connections fall into my lap but my true love came in: Jesus. As shocking as this may be to those who know me as the hopeless romantic, the search for a prince is over, I found him in my heart.

As a Christian, I believe Christ lives in me (Colossians 1:27) not just as an idea but a being. This very well may get me some criticism. His love makes it worth it.

Despite this my ego questions leaving the best friend zone. What will my family and friends say? Will they think I'm just being overzealous? Am I just saying this because I'm scared rejection is my lot in life when it comes to romantic relationships? Isn't this just reinforcing the perspective of pop culture that says disability means being single forever (Ingham, 2018)? Isn't this an all or nothing response?

Believe me, I have thought long and hard about each of these questions at different times. Including right now. In truth, the logical answer is maybe, and perhaps, and even most likely. Fortunately, I have used reason. And in thinking about things I have come to this foundational question.

Do I want to be logical and try to fit in, making myself miserable in the process? Or, do I choose love and let that be my source of ability by way of personal happiness? With the second perspective in mind, here are my answers.

My parents and family want me to be happy even if my choice might surprise them.

By not rejecting the love I feel from God around me I accept who I am. Which is the greatest form of advocacy in my opinion.

If I truly believe Christ is in me and in everyone who shows love I'm never alone and now or ever!

For me, not giving my all would be coming from the internalization of the cheese and crackers mindset. That is I can't expect much because of my disability. A mindset that is pervasive and effects every aspect of life.

No more! I gave my heart to the beloved. I'm not giving it to someone else.

Reference

Ingham, E. (2018). Attitudes towards disability in society viewed through the lens of critical disability theory: An analysis of me before you. *Counselling Psychology Review*, 33(1), 2-12.

[I'm not a religious or spiritual person. At all. But that doesn't mean I don't understand how such things can bring value to other people's lives. Elisa started writing for The Voice Magazine mid-way through the last year, and her articles performed well right from the beginning, so it was little surprise that two of her articles got nominated. This one, from issue 3033 in late August, seemed somewhat more timeless and connected to Elisa herself, which is what brought it to the Best of the Voice edition this year.]

Music Review—Decompose

Jessica Young



Artist: Bring On The Storm

Single: "Decompose"

Calgary-based melodic hardcore/punk rock band, Bring On The Storm, has released a single titled "Decompose". Stream the song anywhere you get your music and check out [the official music video](#) on YouTube.

The band was founded in 2016 by guitarist Brandyn Smith, bassist Josh Wallace and drummer Clayton Fandrick. In early 2017, singer/guitarist Chris Kreuger joined the group, and their debut album *Altruism* was self-released on November 4th, 2018. With a new album set to drop in 2022, Bring On The Storm now hopes to bring their fast-paced and earnest punk rock to stages across the globe.

Chris Kreuger elaborates on the heavy message behind the new single, explaining, "This tune is about an invisible monster that burdens and even sometimes takes life away. We all know victims. We've named the monster depression."

First of all, I sincerely appreciate music that is raw, real, and has a cause. After listening to "Decompose", I have no doubt that the band poured their heart and soul into this song, and most likely have some experience with the monster of depression, with lyrics like: "Daylight dies, darkness pours over your mind. Hope drifts away, there's no place left to go. Die alone".

But the message isn't the only good thing about the song. If "Decompose" is any indication of what's to come, we should be expecting some great things from Bring On The Storm. Their sound

reminds me of Killswitch Engage—specifically, “Decompose” reminds me very much of Killswitch’s “My Curse”. It’s heavy and intense without sounding noisy. The vocals are crisp. And it features a killer guitar solo around the 3:30 mark.

The music video for “Decompose” was shot in Calgary, of course, at Ill Fated Kustoms. The video was shot by Alan Bremner and features the band performing their brand of fast technical punk amongst an array of choppers. The video begins with drummer Clayton Fandrick pulling up to the shop on a motorcycle. The camera follows behind him as he walks inside and is excitedly greeted by his bandmates. He sits down at his drum set and the music begins. The rest of the video is simple—only featuring cuts of the band, dressed in matching black, from different angles and close-up shots. I especially liked the close-up shots of the guitar solos, where the musicians really got to show off their skills. The video ends with Fandrick coolly throwing his drumstick in the air and catching it.

The filming and editing of the music video looked professional and the band looked great. The simplicity of the video felt appropriate considering the heavy subject matter. I also loved that the band included the lyrics to the song in the description.

Overall, I loved “Decompose”. I can’t wait to see what Bring On The Storm does next.

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

[We've had a lot of music review columns published this year, this one stood out to me in part for the local connection, and in part because it goes beyond the song and gives us a review of the video as well. If we can provide some publicity for good, upcoming Canadian groups, I'm all in favor. And who knows, some of these may even be AU students, as the distance learning model would be able to fit with touring. Either way, it seemed like it needed to be in the Best Of edition to me.]

Beyond Literary Landscapes

Isabel Allende

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 column serves as an introduction to the works of Isabel Allende, a reminder of some of the author’s classics, and as an inspiration for further reading.

Born in Lima, Peru, before moving to Chile, Allende is a popular Chilean-American author. With her family, in 1973, she was forced to flee to Venezuela after the assassination of her uncle Salvador Allende, then President of Chile.

Many of her novels are considered magic realism, which is defined as a “chiefly Latin-American narrative strategy that is characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction.” First developed in 1925 by German art critic Franz Roh and coined as “magical realism” in 1955 by literary critic Angel Flores, magic realism became immensely popular throughout Latin America. In particular, “French-Russian Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier was influenced by magic realism.” The popularity of the genre has since spread to other countries.

In addition, most of Allende’s works “examine the role of women in Latin America,” as well as South American politics.

For further reading, authors covering similar topics, themes, or writing in similar styles include Laura Esquivel, Alejo Carpentier, Gabriel García Márquez, and Miguel Angel Asturias.

What

Some of Isabel Allende’s well-known works of include *The House of the Spirits*, *Of Love and Shadows*, and *Daughter of Fortune*.

Other notable works include *Paula: A Memoir* and *Island Beneath the Sea*.

Where

These novels (and memoir) take place in Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

When

Allende’s works are often set in the late 19 and early 20-centuries.

Why

For readers interested learning more about magic realism, family, love, loss, and grief, as well as the Haitian Revolution, Chilean political upheaval, military dictatorship, and family sagas, the works of Allende are a place to begin.

How

AU’s wide range of diverse courses make it easy to study this topic in depth. Courses related to the works of Isabel Allende 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 topic may consider a broad research topic in ENGL 458: The Latin American Novel, a senior-level, three-credit course “focusing on fiction and memoir written in the context of history, politics, culture, identity, and genre.” Although Allende is not included in the current syllabus, the works of other magic realism authors, such as García Márquez and Asturias are. Happy reading!

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

[I didn't understand this column when it was first proposed. But I've gained an appreciation for it over time, even just as a quick reminder of things I've been meaning to read. So I was happy to see this one from late February, issue 3008, nominated, as I would have wanted to put one in anyway just to properly represent what folks can expect from The Voice Magazine.]

Fly on the Wall

Jason Sullivan

Eyes Up Here: Authority, Royalty, and Attention Span



In a timeless instant, simultaneous and thereby immeasurable, a Queen passed away and a King occupies the throne. This instant transfer in power serves as a reminder that, lest we forget the centuries of history that have culminated in our *clickbait* culture, aversion to even a moment's pause weighs heavily on many institutions. Ambiguity breeds discontent in politics as well as in schooling and maybe, just maybe, in life itself.

Royal succession's clockwork procession may serve as a reminder that our brief and newt-like attention spans are the product of a human tendency to avoid limbo—lest chaos ensue. A case can be made that protocol, in our case taking the form of a relatively rigid study schedule, is all that prevents us from regressing into illiteracy and an intellectual form of what kids today call *goblin mode*. We're

better than mental sloths but the fact's in our acts, right? While attention spans and deferral to authority often go hand in hand, think of how much effort elementary school teachers give to keeping the class in order. Being there and paying attention do not go hand in hand, see? Maybe that's why there's that meme noting that the past is past and the future to come while the gift is in the present and that's where it gets its name. Or something like that; it's not like I was taking notes for an exam.

Where power is concerned, the grace of a period of pause is often seen as less than noble. In our studies we are wise to likewise avoid gaps between, lest our lesser impulses seize the day. Priorities are key too. In 1987, my Grandpa gave my siblings and I a shiny new coin: the *loonie*! Newly minted, it led me to ask what would happen with those drab old dollar bills. They would slowly be phased out of circulation as no more were made, was the answer. After all, smooth transitions in money mean nothing can stop the flow of things as they are. Like housing costs lashed to a white whale of profit and invisible hands in the marketplace, literal money is seen as impervious to quick, dare one say revolutionary, changes. Appearances are everything, and where a Royal family must seem stable in one way, the magical mystery tour of capitalist currency must maintain confidence in quite another. There will always be death and taxes, goes the proverb.

Just as having a singular ruler on a throne is core to monarchist ideals, so too do we have to, in many moments, put our studies ahead of other masses of time-passing options clamouring for succession in our hierarchy of interests. At AU, our individualized studies mean we are at once taskmaster and pupil, sovereign and subject.

Eyes up here, a phrase used by primary school teachers to encourage kids to play the part of a rapt student body, regardless of their inner states of mind, serves to remind us that attention and deference to protocol are part and parcel with performance as well as results. It's like if you sit at your desk with nary an internet browser open then sooner or later you might get some actual AU coursework accomplished. Discipline is for our own good if we are to become sovereign over *our* domain. To comply with our best desires and become academically successful we have to think like bosses over our more vulgar tendencies.

Attention span is not easy in these times, yet, ironically, it's never been easy to allow ambiguity to carry the day—as the instant ascent of King Charles shows us. A study notes that, contrary to the whopping nine second attention span of a garden variety goldfish (the kind easily replaced in a jiffy if it dies and upset children are to be placated), humans today tend toward only an eight second attention span (Ebstein, online). Try writing a good essay answer in that time, let alone a good exam response. What's disturbing and bucks the trend of limited attention being kith and kin with life itself, be one a royal ascendant or a royal stable-shoveller, is that as recently as the year 2000 we ostensibly possessed a swarthy twelve second attention span. But wait, there's more: “males (33 percent) had a better attention span than females (31 percent). On a positive note, the researchers found the ability

to multitask has significantly improved" (Borrelli, online). Make of that what you will but perhaps bear in mind that to really dig into a unit in our coursework we have to give it all of our reading eyes and interpreting mind. Short of a podcast, not many household tasks can easily cohabitate with the act of reading and thinking.

From the instantaneous moment of transfer from Queen to King we may conclude that our personal realm can shift focus just as quickly. There is never, and I do mean never, a wrong time to conduct our studies. Except, perhaps, if we are in the minds of another beloved commitment. Candles lit, wine poured, and dinner about to be served with the love of your life? Not the time to bring a textbook to the table or scrawl a few epiphanies onto a sheet of paper stashed under the tablecloth. Protocol can make life smoother, and transitions can as well; having our weeks and hours outlined with some sort of agenda can help ourselves and our families understand what our goals are.

Likewise, to avoid any conflict over who is next to wear the royal garb, monarchies like to have a swift shift so as to get on with their work, but, equally important, to avoid averting conflict that could become an existential threat to their institution itself. Like falling behind in our coursework and clawing our way back over week after stressful week, the best defence against difficulty is a good offence and a good plan. And hey, if the news cycle can teach us one thing, it's that the moment an event happens it is already almost old news; remember the day before the Queen died and almost a dozen innocent civilians in Saskatchewan were stabbed to death by deranged maniacs?

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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.

[Each week brings us a new Fly on the Wall column. So if I'm going to be presenting the Best Of, there's no way it could be done without one of these. These are a love-it or hate-it type of column, it's generally not a light read, but it almost always connects with an exploration of what it is to be a student, and an AU student in particular. Some of the best ones also reach out to connect with what's going on at the time, such as this one which came out in mid-September, shortly after Queen Elizabeth II's death (and it still feels weird to not simply write "the Queen" there), in issue 3036. Sometimes the connection is a stretch, sometimes it's insightful, other times inciteful. This time? It just kind of fit—at least for me. Which is why I chose this one out of those nominated for the Best Of edition.]



Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of The Voice Magazine

You might be too full from holiday goodies to even think about celebrating National Shortbread Day on January 6, but on the other hand yum-nyum-nyum.

Have your cookies, and diet too. Katie D'Souza presents some strategies for enjoying treats while keeping to a diet. "Guilt sets in—I never, ever should have even touched one!—and then overflows: *I've completely ruined this dieting day.*" Health Matters – Just One More Christmas Cookie, December 24, 2010.

A tall tree-tale. Bill Pollett's midnight drive through the forest passes through moments of terror before ending with cookies and beer. "I find myself half-running down the icy road, trying to keep down a rising sensation of panic, my boots nearly slipping out from under me with every step." Lost & Found – A Christmas Tale



How to Handle Criticism

Marie Well



No one loves criticism. But criticism has its place—at least, self-criticism does when done right. But criticizing others is often a futile effort. Often, complaints lead to hard feelings and struggling relationships. But how do you correct someone who's gone off course?

Doling out criticism. How do you best criticize someone? By saying nothing and refusing to dwell on the complaint. That's the best solution. You can't change others, but you can change yourself. In other words, the person criticized may neither be "ready" to change nor know how to operationalize the change according to how you may envision it.

So, leave others to work on themselves. But be sure to work on your own self. Self-criticism, when done right, has benefits.

Managing criticisms. If a friend, by chance, says to you, "You're not a good role model for your teenage kids," instead of feeling defensive, you can take one of three actions.

The first is to say to yourself, "Maybe I could be a better role model. Heck, I could go to the gym five days a week. And I can take the kids with me." That kind of self-talk turns criticism into a growth opportunity.

The second option is to let the criticism fade before you, acknowledging it as "Not yours." In other words, you let the criticism go. There is freedom in not internalizing criticisms. After all, no one's perfect.

As a third option, you could let the criticism go but also say to yourself, "Jim has a bone to pick with me. So, I'll win him over by getting him his favorite Starbucks coffee first thing at lunch and by helping him clean out his garage this Sunday." This goodwill strategy embraces the criticizer as a valued friend.

Managing self-criticisms. The best self-criticisms don't make you feel bad. Instead, they fire you up to take positive action. For example, if you've gained ten pounds like I did during COVID, then engage in self-talk such as, "I'll cut out my large Tim's steamed almond milk at lunch and avoid buying mixed nuts for an evening snack." And reap the rewards!

Handling criticism at work. Work-related criticism is tricky, but the above rules apply. I know of one employee that a boss and team criticized endlessly. But something interesting happened. The loudest criticizer ended up receiving the brunt of criticisms. And then, the team all left the company, except the boss and the person first criticized. In the end, the first criticized employee was the only loyal one.

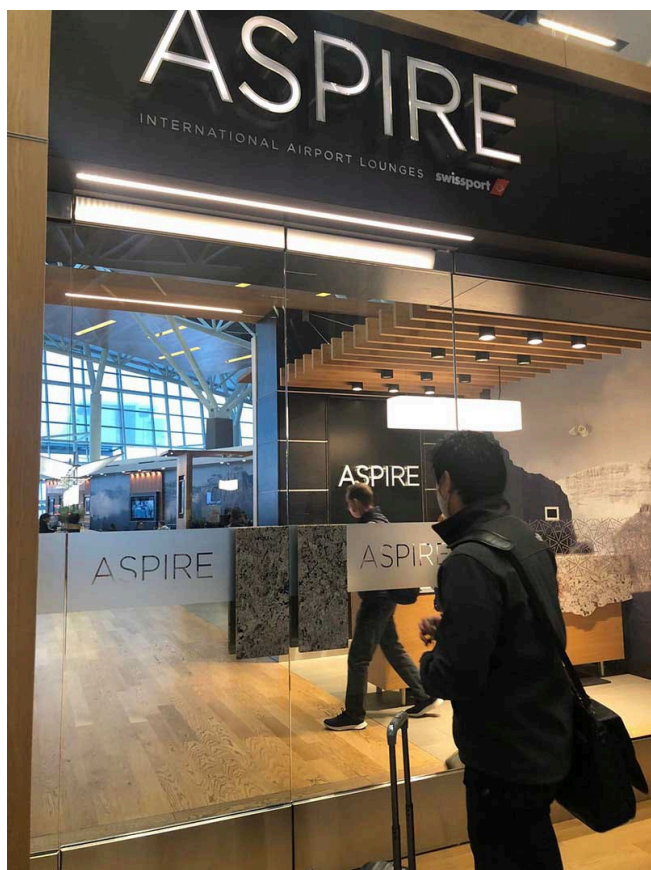
It's best to avoid criticism and instead embrace others' strengths. And it's best to receive complaints with a growth mindset. Taking both these actions leads to greater happiness, from my point of view.

[From issue 3024 at the end of June, this recommendation noted 'would love to see it featured in the New Years best of 2022.' It's an interesting one because it doesn't just address how to handle when other's criticize you, but also addresses our biggest critic, ourselves.]



What It is Like Traveling During COVID

Xine Xu



Travelling during COVID is rough but stay within the recommended travel guidelines and you can have fun while staying healthy.

One of the most stressful, but also fascinating, experiences in 2021 was traveling amidst the pandemic. I know I might get a lot of hate for this post, but I wanted to share what some of my experiences have been like. I also know that while avoiding travel is highly recommended at this time, there are still some people who have booked tickets beforehand or, if you're like me, have airline credits about to expire before year end, so you might want to know my experiences. But please note that these are purely my own experiences and may not be exactly what everyone will face. It is highly dependent on the country you're visiting and where you're venturing.

My story started about 1.5 years ago when I pre-booked a ticket to see my aging grandmother in Shanghai, China. Her health was deteriorating, and I planned a summer trip that was, of course, canceled without notice. I had my credits returned to me for the airline that I had booked, but one and a half years later, the airline called me saying that the credits would not be transferable to the following year. Hearing that nearly a thousand dollars' worth of credits was going to waste, I quickly booked a ticket to the United States. This was before the omicron variant and, at the time, COVID looked as if it

was waning and people were slowly returning to the office and to normal life. The border rules were also growing more lenient. I only booked to the U.S. because I feared traveling further than our adjacent country given the complexities overseas and in other non-English speaking regions.

So, a few weeks before Christmas, I packed my suitcase and was ready for a one-week adventure in Los Angeles and San Diego.

Xu2:

This adventure started in Calgary, where I had to get my rapid antigen test for travel. The rapid antigen test involved a nasal swab in which my nose was intensely swabbed in circles multiple times. For those of you who have tried the take home antigen kits, this is very similar.

However, when it comes to swabbing my nose, having another human being swabbing the nose was a lot more painful and stressful than swabbing myself at home. I would say this is one of the most uncomfortable and irritating parts of my travel.



My partner and I stuck to outdoor activities to reduce contact with people.

Furthermore, I knew that before I left the U.S. I would have to undergo another round of antigen testing.

The antigen test was not excessively expensive, but it was not cheap either. This is a common consideration that travelers during COVID should be aware of. Funnily enough, however, when I passed the U.S. border, I was not asked to present my negative test results. In fact, nobody questioned me about symptoms or test results. So despite having paid for my antigen tests and following the travel advice, I was never asked to present this information.

My experience in Los Angeles and San Diego was strange, to say the least. From a COVID perspective, it felt like the pandemic was over in America. Not everyone was masked indoors. Even when signs were prevalent in elevators and indoor spaces, many people were seen unmasked. Costco gave out food samples, and many shoppers were unmasked and rolled their eyes when I reminded them to put on a mask. Perhaps in other countries, this may be different but from my experience, it felt like a crime to wear a mask when everyone around you was not.

After a relaxing vacation in California, I had to book for a rapid antigen test prior to departure. So 72 hours before departure, I found a pharmacy that would test foreign travelers free of charge. Unfortunately, their services were poor and slow, but I could have faced a \$2,000 penalty for not presenting a negative antigen test to the Canadian customs officials. So 24 hours before departure, I paid for a private lab to swab me and their test results were returned in less than two hours, with a very hefty cost associated with the swab, of course. Luckily, I was able to arrive safely in Canada free of symptoms and positive test results. Compared to the U.S. customs that never questioned my test results, the Canadian customs had multiple check points for negative antigen test results.

At the end of the day, my vacation was a much-needed break from my one and a half years of nearly total isolation. However, it did come with its own headaches and challenges. For anyone traveling during the pandemic, always check on [Travel.gc.ca](https://travel.gc.ca) for guidance for your destination of choice.



*Despite some of the influences from others, I stayed true to indoor masking policies
Matcha shortbread cookies make an excellent gift for friends and family*

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





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Studying Procrastination

Dear Barb:

Hi, I recently completed first year university and I did alright, but I must learn to manage my time better. I felt very scattered and barely completed my assignments in time. I ended up feeling stressed all the time.

It is not that I was partying a lot, I just couldn't seem to organize my time. Do you have some hints that would help me with that aspect of university life? I will watch your column for your response.

Thanks Jeremy.

Hi Jeremy:

Time management is a vital aspect of everyday life. If we want to accomplish anything we need to be able to **prioritize**. Simply stated, to prioritize means to organize tasks in order of importance. Decide which items you need to complete first. Do not leave things to the last minute. Too many people tell themselves they have lot of time to do something and the next thing you know the due date has arrived.

Learn to say no. It is great to get involved in extracurricular activities, but you need to spend time on your studies before anything else. So, **set a time for doing each activity**. For example, study psychology Monday nights, or work on essays Tuesdays. Look at your schedule and see when you can fit in the things you have to do. Also allow free time for

reading or hobbies. It is important to have this time to unwind.

Consider **writing a to-do list** for each day, either before you go to bed at night, or first thing in the morning. This way you will know what must be done in order of importance. In the planning process take into consideration that things may go wrong or the unexpected may arise. For example, make sure you plan for your essay to be completed a few days early, so you can accommodate these unexpected events. You know those difficult tasks that you like to avoid, plan to do them first. That will prevent the anxiety caused by procrastinating.

Study when you are most productive. Most people have a certain time of day whether it is the morning or later in the afternoon when they are more alert. Schedule your study time during these periods of the day. Frantic studying the night before an exam is not productive or efficient. **Allow so many hours a week for each course for review**, and make sure you have a good understanding of what you need to know. If you do not have a thorough understanding, seek further help from your professor. These are easy and necessary skills to implement and follow. It is all a matter of discipline. Remember "you got this."

Thanks for writing in Jeremy.

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

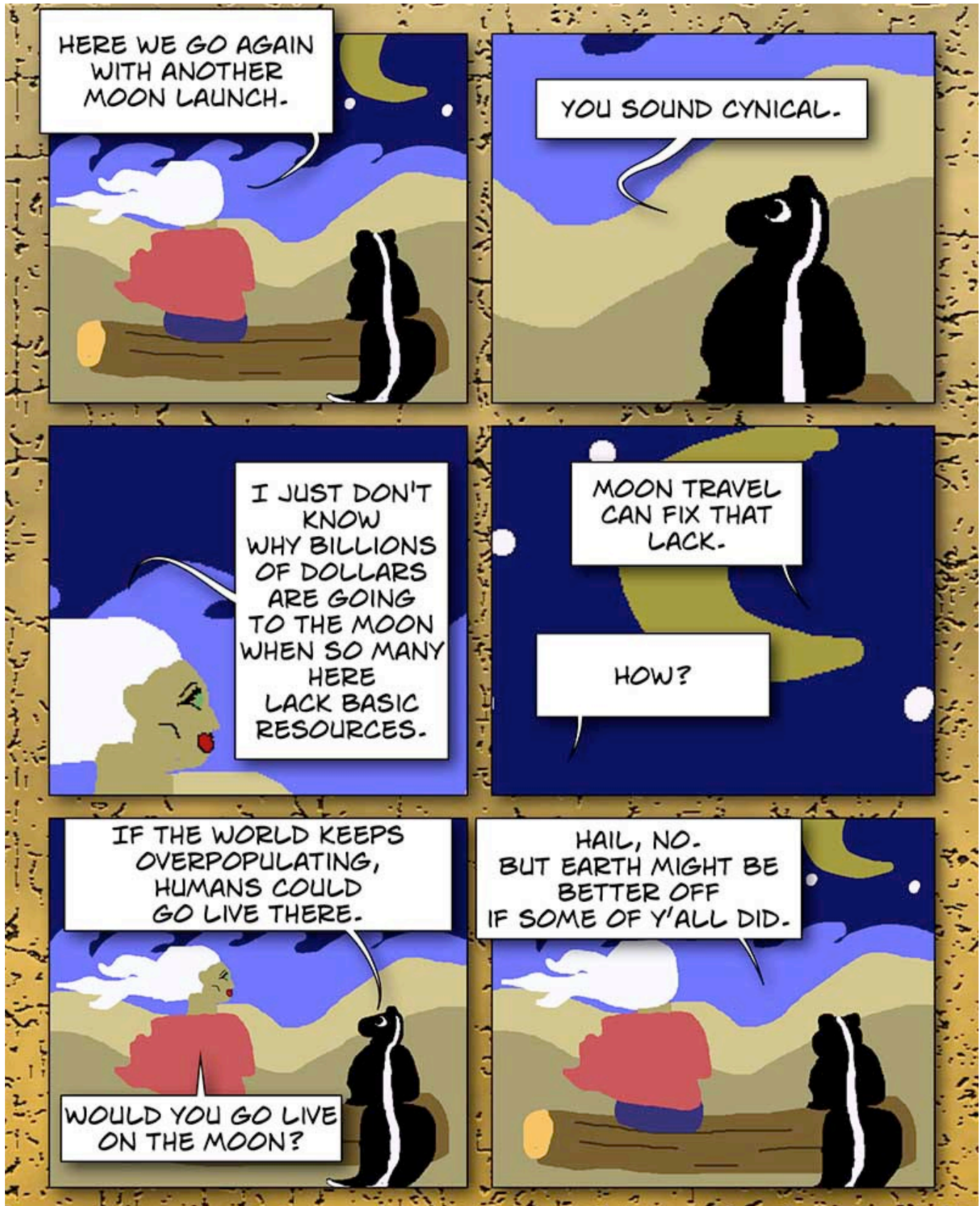


Poet Maeve

Reflecting on the Moon

[Wanda's been giving us comics and columns for years, since before I was editing the Voice Magazine. Like many of our regulars, I couldn't really call something the Best of The Voice Magazine if I didn't have at least one of her submissions in here. From issue 3035 in early September, this was the winner of a close fight between two particular comics of hers, but this one seemed to get the pacing just right and manages a few levels of insight into humanity all at once. Wrapping it up with some cynicism is just bonus, in my books.]

Wanda Waterman





UPDATE

COMMUNITY. RESOURCES . SERVICES



The AU Students' Union would like to wish you a happy New Year and all the best in 2023! Pursuing an education can be challenging so it's important to celebrate milestones, big or small, and you did it—you made it another year! Not only did you make it, but you're bettering yourself through post-secondary studies and we couldn't be more proud to represent you.

Enjoy a safe long weekend and check out ausu.org for the latest in AUSU [News](#), [Events](#), and [Services](#). We're here to help members have an exceptional student experience in 2023 and beyond. Questions or concerns for your Athabasca University Students' Union? Email ausu@ausu.org.



Have you wondered how cutting-edge academic research is done? Have you thought about broadening your experience with a research assistant role? Join us Jan. 23-27, 2023, for [Research Week](#) and learn how undergraduate research at AU can strengthen any CV!



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