



THE VOICE

Vol 32 Issue 35 - 2024-09-06

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You

Cities in Six

Luxembourg City

Multi-Cultural Celebrations

Actions around the Globe

Plus:

DIY Fancy Appetizer

*Unemployment Opens Opportunities
and much more!*



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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

Philosophical Differences

Karl Low



This week's issue was a bit challenging for me, as a couple of the articles this week are about not accepting prevailing wisdom and always being willing to challenge orthodoxy, whether it be in cultural or scientific norms. And while I agree to some extent, my own experience has me rather acutely aware of the dangers behind the attitude of "challenge everything" or "reject all changes." It's these exact attitudes that have led to fairly widespread rejection of vaccination, and not just COVID-19 vaccination, but even to such vaccinations such as polio, thus leading to a resurgence of the disease in the US.

It's this idea that we should "challenge everything" that leads to stories told by my mother and associated family about a school losing a court case for refusing to have a cat litter box available to "accommodate" a child that identified as a cat. The story is obviously false, as any such case would lead to news in pretty much every outlet in Western society, especially given the 24 hour news-cycle. Plus, you can look for any such court case in the public records and you won't find any. Most tellingly, however, is that there are no TikToks or Instagrams that show any litter pan ever, and given how much access school-age teens have to the internet, does anybody really think such a thing wouldn't have been photo-documented thousands of times by now? Still, that didn't stop the gleeful retelling at a recent gathering, with appropriate tut-tutting about the state of our school system and the problems of wokeness. Perhaps it would have been better had I stayed and insisted on the truth, but I've enough problems with family that I didn't think it worth it. I just stayed long enough for it to be considered social and got the hell out.

Still, it's all the fashion these days saying that we should be willing to challenge authority, with some pointing to figures like Gallileo or Semmelweis who challenged the status quo and were derided for it, even though they eventually turned out to be correct. Or they argue that the experts or even the entirety of academia is biased and unwilling to consider theories too far beyond the accepted norms. And there's some truth to both of these. But far more often, the person who's yelling on the street corner isn't a prophet—just some distressed person who's suffering some sort of chemical imbalance in the brain.

Of course, this doesn't mean accept everything the consensus offers blindly. At one time that would mean accepting slavery as reasonable, or that biological sex should trump the gender experience. But it does mean we shouldn't be willing to take up something that challenges what is "known" without first applying significant critical thought. We may be each our own person, but what makes all of us stronger and has enabled our society to advance so far is, well, all of us and our society. We discard that at our own peril. One of the worst problems of the concept of individualism, to my mind, is that so many people believe it is the opposite of conformity. But I believe it's valid for an individual to choose to conform. What makes an individual isn't whether they conform with society or not, but simply whether they thoughtfully chose to do so. Blindly rejecting conformity is, in essence, just as conformist as one who blindly accepts it, it's just the other side of the coin. Or at least, that's what I think. You'll have to make up your own mind—just don't take my word for it.

Meanwhile, student interviews, scholarships, party-hosting, festival hosting, recipes, events, thoughtful articles (even if I don't agree), and more await you in this week's issue of The Voice Magazine! Enjoy the read!

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

MINDS WE MEET



The Voice Magazine recently had a chance to chat with Alaa (she/they), a student living in British Columbia who is currently enrolled in PSYC 289: Psychology as a Natural Science. (She recently completed PSYC 402: Biological Psychology).

Alaa mentioned, “I am so grateful to be studying, working, and living on the traditional unceded lands of the Tla’amin Nation, Homalco and Klahoose Peoples. So grateful for the Indigenous teaching to decolonize our thinking and start a kinship relationship with the land which will help all of us heal together. Grateful for the Indigenous inspiration to keep learning and build the village.”

She came to Canada from Syria with her husband in 2019 and is a “mother to a 4-year beautiful child.” As a side note, she credits her child with having had the greatest influence on her desire to learn.

Alaa had some great study advice for fellow students. “It’s a tricky question as it is dependent on my mood.” She explained that while, at times, she likes to go “to the library, socialize, and have a study buddy,” she also likes staying home and doing the work in “hermit mode.” She continued, “Setting a goal and being passionate about it is what makes me feel motivated. Study tips? I need to learn more about this. I would say being myself and

listening to my needs is the most important thing to effectively study, and always seeking knowledge with curiosity and eagerness, reach out to folks and listen thoroughly.”

She also had some advice for new students and/or prospective students. “Make sure that you have deep passion about what you are about to do.” Such as when she is not studying, she enjoys “arts, calligraphy, and soccer.”

Like many students, she mentioned that while online learning is beneficial to her life, it also has its challenges. “To me, the online method is so helpful as I am a mother, full time employee, and in a small city. Online learning has challenges like feeling really isolated and not connected.”

As for communication with her course tutors? She considers them “responsive, supportive, and knowledgeable.”

The Voice Magazine asked Alaa what her first project would be if she were the new president of AU. She stated, “I would update the structure of courses,” by including optional (and flexible) quiz and assignment deadlines, which would also be free of fees.

On a final note, we asked, which famous person, past or present, she would like to have lunch with, and why, and she chose professor and author Brené Brown. She explained, “I love how her brain works.” She feels inspired by “her words and perspective.” Alaa also mentioned Iren Lyon, an “amazing somatic mentor.” She continued, “Watching Iren’s *YouTube* video and doing her 21 Days Nervous System Tune Up had a positive significant impact on my life.” Best of luck, Alaa!

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!

Nat Writes is an AU graduate who enjoys writing about literature, student concerns, and education.



Multicultural Festivals and Celebrations

Alek Golijanin



Canada is home to over 200 different ethnic groups and 200 different spoken languages, and there are over 60 different Indigenous languages that are spoken across the country. Diversity is a part of every city across Canada, big and small. One of the advantages of living in Canada's biggest and most populated cities is that they tend to offer the greatest exposure to getting a taste of the "world". So, big cities like Toronto (and the GTA) and Vancouver are most likely to provide an authentic international experience when it comes to authentic cuisine and dress, but capital cities will beat out big cities in terms of cultural exchange.

What makes cities like Ottawa and D.C. so interesting is that they host a countless number of foreign missions and international organizations, and they often offer a more informative glimpse into the world. But as tasty as ethnic recipes can be, as cool as ethnic wardrobes may look, and as informative as cultural seminars can be, fun is what makes for an unforgettable time. And for the longest time, Greek-Canadians have been the rulers of fun.

Back when ethnic festivals started to become a thing, the first real festival in Ottawa was the Greek Fest back in the 1970s, and nobody has managed to reach the heights that the Greeks did with their festival. The OGs of Ottawa gave Ottawa an authentic experience of Greece, one which used to go well past midnight, with Greek music pulsing through the city and into the early morning hours. Then there was how the Greek Fest offered great deals on alcohol because of great hook ups, which eventually dried up after festivals started asking for Greek benefits without being "Greek". Seriously, it was one of the best festivals ever, but if one really wanted to nitpick and find a flaw, it was that their festival never found a way to recreate the Mykonos vibe.

Fast forward to 2024, while the Greek-Canadians will forever hold the title as the festival OGs of Ottawa, rumor has it that there is a group of "new-school" cool kids on the block, the Serbian-Canadians. These hot shots are doing things quite different, breaking the glass ceiling, because the Greek-Canadians have broken all the plates (Zorba).

Welcome/Bienvenue/Marhaba/Bienvenido/Wilkommen/Huanying/Svaagat to the Serb Fest.

The Serbian community, a much smaller and less rooted community in Ottawa, recently celebrated the 17th annual Serbian Festival over Labor Day Weekend. The festival grounds feature a recently built Church, activities for children, snacks and goodies not found in stores, savory cuisine and pastry delicacies, and great music and dance.

Parents with children can bring their children to learn how to write in Cyrillic, to dress up in ethnic wardrobe, and to get their face painted. The kitchen chef creates an assortment of traditional dishes, guaranteeing to meet various foodie diets. The pastry options feature a variety of sweet styles from creamy pastries to layered pastries. What makes the dance portion of the festival quite cool is that each night of the three-day festival features a competition for the best male and female kolo dancer, with the winners receiving a silver coin.

As someone who remembers the humble beginnings of the first Serbian Church in Ottawa, a single-story “bungalow”, where my parents and I attended long before the new Church was built, today’s Church would be unimaginable back then. Then, as someone who has had the opportunity to experience the festival as an attendee, as a MC host, and as a guest greater and candle seller inside the Church, the most fun has been as the latter.

Disclaimer: The “Number-1 Ranked” beeswax candles are only available at the Serb Fest in Ottawa.

Since the Serbian Church is the front facing entry point to the Serbian Festival, which takes place at the back of the community hall, festival goers love to walk inside to get a glimpse of the structure. Although the exterior is finished and the inside has weekly masses, there are still some interior touch ups remaining like the painting of Byzantine-style frescas and a few other things. The short info tour I give visitors, in addition to selling candles, starts with, “Is this your first Serbian Fest?” Depending on the answers, it then incorporates geo-history facts like highlighting how the stones above the Church entrance were procured from Italy, how the floors are going to be made with marble and most likely procured from Greece and how there are plans for an eight-meter-wide chandelier that would likely be procured from either from Serbia or Russia. And that is how an info tour goes, but an Alek-led “info tour” takes info tours to a whole other level.

My 2024 info tour was styled in the spirit of *Saturday Night Live (1975-Present)*, *Mad TV (1995-2009)* and *Whose Line Is It Anyway (1998-2007)*, with remarks like how nobody will catch me standing underneath the future eight-meter-wide chandelier because of my luck. How Serbs do not have a confessional booth, meaning one of two things; we never sin, or we hide our sins better than the rest. How the concept known as “work-life balance” is to blame for anything that gets delayed. How the “Death Row” chain that Snoop Dogg gifted me this past June had saved me from a major burn while I was removing a burnt-out candle, by absorbing 99% of fire flame. And there was a lot more improvising, and all of it in good spirits.

On at least 100 of those info tours, people were laughing out loud and failing to respect the “quiet rules”, before telling me that my tour was the best thing ever, and unlike anything they have experience at any festival elsewhere. Although I always make sure to let the visitors know that I forgive them for their hooting and hollering laughs, I also like to suggest the best way to repent is by purchasing a beeswax candle, ranging from \$1 to \$25, and lighting it at the altar. Additionally, I also make sure to mention how festival goers can win silver coins on each night of the festival by answering the call to dance the kolo. However, I slightly exaggerate the truth by saying the judging criteria is based on 90% enthusiasm and 10% skill and encourage them to be as lively as humanely possible. It sets the tone for the rest of their festival experience, and at the end of each night visitors return to tell me how the food and pastries are just as good as my jokes – my jokes are worthy of a Netflix special.

There were chats with Lebanese-Canadians, Portuguese-Canadians, Nigerian-Canadians, Indian-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians, and countless other ethnic Canadian communities. The two most memorable chats this year were with a mixed marriage couple, a Serbian-Canadian and a Irish-Canadian, and two Italian-Canadian families. What started out as an info tour of the Church and history of Serbian-Canadians in Ottawa for the mixed marriage couple somehow segued into a conversation about baseball and a shared similarity for our love for our favourite baseball

player, Mark McGwire (I also like Barry Bonds), our hate for Jose Conseco, and we both came clean about being steroid era kind of guys.

When the two Italian-Canadian families came into the Church, what started as an info tour also transitioned to a conversation about Christmas and the Italian delicacy, panettone. The two Italian-Canadian families were “old school” Italians when it came to panettone, panettone with raisins or other dried fruits. Whereas, I raved about a fancy pistachio cream panettone that I bought my “nonna” for Christmas. Although there was that shared similarity for our love towards panettone, the two Italian-Canadian families could never imagine eating 97% of a panettone that they might gift their “nonnas”, like I had done.

Near the end of our chat, the two Italian-Canadian families reference the NBC sitcom, *Seinfeld* (1989-1998). They mentioned how in the episode “The Conversion”, George converted to Orthodoxy, but his relationship to his Latvian girlfriend still fell through. Then I built upon that by suggesting a few other episodes “The Chaperone” and “The Abstinence”, that involved baseball and a Miss America pageant queen. Explaining how I still struggle to understand how it was George, a home-run machine himself, who taught New York Yankee legend, Derek Jeter, how to hit home runs, and how he always happened to strike out when it came to the ladies. None of us could make sense of it.

By the end of the three-day festival, hundreds of new friendships were made, but most exciting was how so many visitors were excited about next year’s Serb Fest. About the food, pastries and festivities, but also for part two of my “Netflix” special, and how the Guinness Book of World Records confirmed that the “Number-1 Ranked” beeswax candles are only available for lighting at the Serb Fest in Ottawa. So, anyone who finds themselves in Ottawa for Labour Day weekend in 2025, visiting the Serb Fest in Ottawa is a must, because there is nothing quite like it!

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



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: AES Engineering Scholarships

Sponsored by: AES Engineering

Deadline: October 8, 2024

Potential payout: \$500

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be either high school seniors or students attending a post-secondary education facility, in any field of study.

What's required: An email with contact and academic info, along with a an essay of 500 to 1000 words answering the question: "When you look back on your life in 30 years, what would it take for you to consider your life successful? What relationships or accomplishments will be important on this journey?"

Tips: Read the How to Apply section for info on what to include in your email.

Where to get info: aesengineers.com/scholarships.php



Cities in Six: Luxembourg City, Luxembourg

Visual, virtual visiting—six photos at a time

Barbara Lehtiniemi

Luxembourg is the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, a small country wedged between Belgium, France, and Germany. The city is in the south of the country, at the confluence of the Alzette and Pétrusse rivers.

Luxembourg's site on a plateau has given it strategic importance since Roman times. The city has, at times, fallen under the control of the Spanish, the French, the Austrians, the Prussians, the Burgundians, the Dutch, and the Germans. We invaded the city ourselves on a pleasant morning in August 2019.



Castles in the sky. Much of Luxembourg is perched on a plateau high above the two rivers that have cut deep gorges through the area. Here, the Adolphe Bridge spans the Pétrusse River. The castle-like buildings on the far side of the gorge are both banks—Luxembourg is a noted centre of banking in Europe.



The Grund. Nestled along the banks of the Alzette River, the Grund quarter sits around 70 metres below the upper level of the city. The Grund area is accessed via a few steep roads; pedestrians can take the Plateau St Esprit Grund elevator, which descends through the rock from the terrace of the cité judiciaire complex.



Bock casemates. The rocky sheer-sided cliffs above the Alzette River were once riddled with tunnels and defensive fortifications. From many places in the old Grund district you can still see openings from where the barrels of cannon formerly poked out. Most of the fortifications were removed in the late 1800s.



Greenery and gardens. Luxembourg's population is only around 140,000. Its low population density leaves plenty of space for parks, paths, and gardens. This is Nation Square, which is adjacent to extensive park areas along the Pétrusse River.



Cité judiciaire. A complex of judicial buildings on a promontory overlooking the Grund quarter. Luxembourg is also home to several institutions of the European Union.



Old is new again. The cornerstone for what became the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Luxembourg was laid in 1613. The west tower, on the left of this photo, dates to the 1600s and is the oldest of the three towers. The west tower was heavily damaged by fire in early 1985 but was quickly repaired.

Travel note: The Luxembourg Airport is 6 kilometres from the city centre, and is accessible by bus and tram. Frequent train service runs between Luxembourg and cities in France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland. Public transportation in Luxembourg City, including rail, bus, and tram, is free.



A Theory on How to Become CMO Leadership Material Overnight Marie Well



W How do we go from no experience leading people to idealized leaders on the first day of the job? I have an idea of how to achieve this. But first, what is an ideal leader? It's someone who loves the people they serve, is visionary and inspirational, and elevates the bottom line. And I have a role model in mind. She worked in a managerial role at a Chapters bookstore. To me, she was the epitome of successful leadership. She adored her staff, treating them like her dearest children, sacrificing her time and resources to bring them joy. She was a leader who looked at her employees with the soft glitter of adoration in her eyes and the gentlest of voices. If they needed a day off, she was sure to work their shifts.

But first, I want to share with us how I went from being a mediocre cook with little experience to a phenomenal cook overnight, as it gives insight into how to go from a C to an A in no time. The overnight success was outstanding, but it took me hours and hours every day to cook up a masterpiece. The kitchen was like a mad science experiment, and cleaning the dishes overloaded the dishwasher, eventually breaking it and resulting in hours of handwashing, but it was fun. And the food was tasty.

So, here is how I became a great cook overnight, at least in terms of the taste of the food, not in terms of efficiency. I took what I learned in psychology class about cooking to an extreme. In Psychology, I learned that the sense of smell and various colors and textures could create a memorable dining experience, so all my plates were richly colored; I chose spiky vegetables to go with smooth foods and adorned the plates with colorful embellishments, such as fruits and salads. For the main course, I'd combine the critical ingredients in quantities that optimized their scent. So, my sniffer was constantly active. Then, I took all the spices and secondary ingredients from the three best recipes, experimenting with each spice and ingredient by bringing each one close to the key ingredients and sniffing for the optimal scent. So, like a mad scientist, I created original, aromatic, and delicious recipes. So, that was how to become a great cook overnight.

So, how do we become a great leader overnight? Here is my theory:

1. Subscribe to Headway book summaries and speed-read through all their leadership books. Knowledge is power, and the books demystify our apprehensions about leading without significant prior experience. They will teach us the importance of a big, exciting vision; big, hairy, audacious goals; and an agile approach to solving problems.
2. Consider the types of job categories of people we will lead and the employee backgrounds and roles.
3. Associate each individual with someone or something we love dearly or who inspires us unbelievably.
4. Transfer that sentiment of love and inspiration into our discussions with the person under our leadership.

It starts us off on an incredibly great foot. It's an acting technique I just learned: even if we have no chemistry with a co-actor, think of someone with whom we felt incredible affection, nurturing, empathy, or any other positive traits, and bring that sentiment to our report.

That acting course got me thinking. We may get a job offer if we go into an interview and associate profoundly positive memories with the interviewee and company. So, when I go into my interviews, I will imagine every detail of someone or something that stimulated and inspired me, from when I recorded my first song in a studio to when I won the silver medallion to when I was featured on national television. And then, we can transfer our excitement to the interview scenario. We can also transfer our love for our most cherished people to the interviewees. Those interviewees will become the lights of our universe, where we momentarily experience the privilege of savoring their divine presence. And indeed, everyone is sacred.

But take caution: to be a CMO or CEO of a public company, we need an MBA, or we will be disadvantaged. I see the statistics on LinkedIn, and I'm competing with many people who have MBAs. My communications master's degree is less desirable than an MBA, reducing my probability of success. But, hey, we can be in the game and still win gold medals, even if at a disadvantage. That's the beauty of risk-taking—we always stand a chance!

A strategy for getting management or other skills is to look at all the courses required for an MBA or other desired program and then get an Audible.ca textbook on each topic, one at a time, and listen while we work. It also gives us a sense of what we like and don't like; for instance, I'm presently listening to a textbook on Organizational Behavior and am enamored with it. So, get a mini MBA while we work, and then when it comes time to get the actual MBA, we can skyrocket to a perfect GPA. I plan to start an evening or executive MBA in about three years. I recommend that those who want a high income through leadership do the same. After all, we were born for big-ticket salaries and prominent roles, and nothing can truly stop us when we're gunning for the win!



Hosting Your Dream Party: Part II [blue rare]

Oliver-Moorcraft Sykes



I As alluded to in last week's column, planning and hosting a party in real life can be an onerous undertaking: exhausting, time-consuming, prohibitively expensive, and usually disappointing. In contrast, putting together a celebratory event solely on the plane of the imagination is a more or less stress-free affair - especially if you follow my carefully thought-out guidelines for laying on the perfect dream bash. In this week's column, I will be providing helpful hacks related to choosing a suitable fantasy venue, as well as suggestions about the sorts of food to serve your guests.

Location, location, location: it's every bit as relevant to entertaining as it is to real estate. Providing a venue that is both comfortable and elegant is of paramount importance when I am drawing up my plans for a truly first-class fantasy fête. The advantage of inviting my imaginary friends across the threshold of my figmental environs, as opposed to my somewhat squalid real life digs, cannot be overstated. Just imagine the look of delight on the faces of my illusory acquaintances as they find themselves dancing beneath lavish chandeliers in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, for example. Or sipping 1959 Dom Perignon from crystal flutes aboard the Orient Express or the Concorde. And, obviously, you are not stuck with the same old place for each and every get-together.

Nor do you have to worry at all about booking in advance. It could be the Taj Mahal one weekend, and Graceland the next. The Sydney Opera and the Pantheon; Buckingham Palace and the penthouse of the Burj Khalifa: all are available at the drop of a hat, no reservation or deposit required. (If, like me, you are already thinking about hosting a phantasmal Halloween extravaganza, I would suggest, as an offbeat suggestion, a masked costume ball in Area 51.)

Then, once you have selected the setting for your special gala, it is time to think about the sorts of nibblies you might serve. Unlike in real life, where budget constraints mean one is sometimes tempted to serve Whiskas cat food and pass it off as tuna tartare, you can really splash out on dream canapes. Remember, too, that, like cost, environmental sustainability and dietary restrictions need not be factored in. In stark contrast to my friends on the quotidian, mortal plane, none of my chimerical comrades has an aversion to seafood, is gluten or lactose intolerant, or is allergic to seafood. They will, with enthusiasm, eat whatever illusory fare is put before them, with no threat of legal reprisals.

My suggestion is to look beyond the obvious, here. Sure, lobster and beluga caviar are delicious, but (take my word for it) so are filet of snow leopard and mermaid ears in aspi. When in season (which is whenever you want) Atlantean scallops are a rare treat, as are Venusian truffles.

Hopefully, these little tips have already got you mulling over some ideas for your own bacchanals in the future (or in the past, if that's what you prefer). I would advise you to hold off just a little bit longer, though, as next week I will be offering up some more sensible suggestions for the perfect dream do, including who to invite, what music to choose, and even what to talk about.

Until then, bottoms up!



Fly on the Wall: Social Animal Humans Or is That Smoke and Mirrors

Jason Sullivan



As a child on a farm, I enjoyed bringing treats to the chickens, cows, and sheep. On occasion, during a humid summer, caterpillars would bloom freely on feral apple trees in our pasture. I'd climb up and tear down some branches infested with pulsing hordes of caterpillar nests. Then I'd drop the branches amidst our flock of sheep who were clamouring for a snack other than grass. On espying the caterpillar condiments, the sheep often would avert their gaze, like a vegan strolling past a Steakhouse. Occasionally, though, leafy greens tempted them beyond the reproach of squirmy fuzz-worms, and my woolly sheep below would munch down furry caterpillars along with the foliage. In such childhood moments it occurred to me that terms like herbivore were by no means as cut and dried and absolute as one might think. Even sheep-brained creatures functioning on instinct are not fully wedded to their given identity; even herbivores could make an exception.

Such tendency breaks in the raw reality of nature invariably find their cause in environmental conditions; by this token the nature of human nature clearly depends on the conditions of a given cultural climate. However, the basic assumption that we hominids are a social, rather than solitary, species remains. As a matter of emotional repast rather than literal diet, extrovert consensus seems to have fenced us in to assuming that to be well-adjusted one must be well-

socialized. One can imagine that the sheep felt a little guilty at breaking their plants-only taboo, comically anyway, but with humans, living up to who one *is* goes part and parcel with a packaged sense of confident affability. Being not oneself is a common method of explaining unsavory behavior, as though we can temporarily step out of our being rather than deign to include undesirable traits within the canon of our identity. Such denials conveniently sidestep analyzing one's core beliefs, and the consequences of one's political predilections and beliefs about human nature.

Social circumstances bring out the worst in participants, but they also say much about how we are made, not born, into our identities and our social relations. In his grim 16th century description of aristocratic enclosure and privatization of common grazing lands, as part of a slow grinding away of the traditional rights and freedoms of the rural peasantry, Thomas Moore of the wool barons wryly noted: "your sheep, that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I hear say, be become so great devourers, and so wild, that they eat up and swallow down the very men themselves!"

To this day our livelihoods, not to mention our emotional well-being, are daily lashed to external exigencies like usurious costs of food and housing such that the essence of who we are, meek or vengeful, often seems to be drawn out of us in a manner not befitting our inner countenance. Yet the belief remains that just as sheep eat grass and chickens eat bugs, and both flock together to dissuade predators, humans do best when they socialize with others. Inflammatory though a gathering can be it feels *good* to grouse in a group. Yet, consider literal wolves who join into packs to hunt but also as part of perpetual conflict with other wolf packs. Perhaps the social human myth isn't about demonstrating the possibility for people to join as a vast, universal, human family, but more about our ape-like tendency to be part of a troupe who is vigilant and vengeful against a perceived egregious Other.

Note, for instance, how even the most starry-eyed idealist gains a darker shadow over their visage when they discuss this or that corporate pariah, or bad actor, that has crossed the path of their cause. Indeed, the notion of a broad human family including every biped specimen always seems to contain a caveat whereby a dark figure is seen as the one barrier to the fulfillment of social utopia. For communists this Other is the capitalist ruling class who, by the laws of history, is destined to be replaced by the workers when the latter realize the irrationality of the profit system; for feminists the bad guy is the inveterate misogynistic, whose failure to attain a gendered slave mate leads him to lash out in every aspect of the culture and economy. Meanwhile, for the Woke activist, the Other is the first two and crucially the white colonizer, born into an eternal and unforgivable sin of historical ethnic association with slaveholding, wife-beating, land-stealing, white European ancestry.

Behind each ideology's purportedly glowing assessment of social humanity's hope and promise there lies a dark and tribal tendency to reduce us to a binary us and them mentality. One of the darkest days in such enlightenment's history, as illustration, was the Terror in France where bread-poor revolutionaries, as sure as sailors stranded in the Arctic and out of food, systematically killed and dismembered their brethren until everyone realized that there was no amount of cancelling, blaming, denouncing, or guillotines that could erase the fundamental viciousness unleashed by the human spirit when it feels righteous and justified. "Robespierre and his followers believed firmly that the Revolution's end goal was to obtain a republic governed virtuously by the general will. But there was a pressing danger that if certain bad actors were left to their devices, the general will would be corrupted, and the Republic would fail. To prevent this, the Robespierrists were intent on weeding out potential counter-revolutionaries and traitors. Therefore, a genuine Republic could not exist without a foundation of Terror, for in

Robespierre's own words, "terror without virtue is fatal, virtue without terror is impotent" (Robespierre, 21)." Crucially, with the incipient printing press providing an early taste of what was to become digital social media, throughout The Terror "inflammatory journalists and politicians kept citizens on their toes, insisting that their poverty and hunger was the fault of counter-revolutionary agents or foreign conspirators."

So maybe underpinning collective togetherness is not a bond of connection but an outward view of negativity towards an Other. Now consider the bison in days of yore; early Spanish explorers saw them in such multitudes that the bison herds seemed to manifest as an ocean. Coronado in 1542 stated: "There is such a quantity of them that I do not know what to compare them with, except with the fish of the sea...there were so many that many times when we started to pass through the midst of them and wanted to go through to the other side of them, we were not able to, because the country was covered with them." A massive number of bison naturally gathered like a vast bison brotherhood, the better to ward off predators of another species. Wolves, meanwhile, in their smaller packs, expressed wily lithe prowess at literally picking apart humongous bison hordes. Where do we humans fit on this spectrum? Well, consider what would happen if all humanity, bison-like, was taken as an expansive oceanic herd. Sooner than you can cause a stampede at the banging of a stick on a rock the whole herd would splinter as people came to disagree over this or that policy; indeed, tribal fragmentation seems part of how humans learn to belong, above all to their precious self-image. Every society has the concept of a family unit, for instance, and of ethnic connection over and against the Other of the rest of humanity. Many cultures, the Maori for instance, use a name for their cultural whole that literally translates as "the people" but such a definition ends with the cultural norms and bounds of the given ethnicity. In this sense, over and against modernist ethos, human splintering makes us more wolf-like than bison-like, particularly when pariah individuals break taboos. Like eating the proverbial caterpillars.

So if humans are social more in the manner of a wolf pack, bound largely through family and cultural ties and ever-ready to fight tooth and nail with neighbours and those who differ from themselves, then what gives with the desire to *erase* this essential tribal tendency? Remember, the sheep generally went to significant pains to eat around the caterpillars – had they opposable thumbs they'd have doubtless separated the leaves from the worms before diving in with those cud-chewing molars of theirs. Our tendency as animals is to stay in our identity lanes; perhaps

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

Library Chat

Tues, Sep 10, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MDT
Online

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

AU Has a Library? Navigating the Library Website and Search Tools

Tues, Sep 10, 1:00 to 1:30 pm MDT
Online via MS Teams

Hosted by AU Library
www.athabascau.ca/news/events/au-has-a-library-navigating-the-library-website-and-search-tools-2
Register through above link

CIDER Session

Empowering Micro-credentials using Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence

Wed, Sep 11, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm MDT
Online via MS Teams

Hosted by IRRODL and AU
www.cideresearch.ca/session/mcgreal-2024

No pre-registration required; access presentation through above link

Library Chat

Thur, Sep 12, 10:30 am to 2:30 pm MDT
Online

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

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

togetherness also depends on an external threat of an Other. The boy who cried wolf, that beloved Teutonic tale of yore, says much about the wall separating the village from the Other while also reminding us that our basic bonds are external and insular, not expansive and global. The boy breaks the bond of truth with his brethren and such puts everyone at risk; the wall between village and wolf itself is taken as vital and necessary.

What's certain is that human society implies complexity and contradiction within a tendency to enforce conformity among its adherents. The moral of this story, then, is that to break the bonds of normalcy within a social setting one has to, as it were, have a peek at your neighbour to ensure that she, too, is likewise eating those caterpillars! Critical thinking provided by university studies can only further our progress when we remember that we, too, are susceptible to group think pressures present in each and every place where two or more humans socialize.

Finally, a little hard science is in order. We humans think of ourselves as social animals, and tend to be described that way, yet the raw dental reality of our bodies reveals another truth: We have incisors not for nonchalantly chewing on a salad or mindfully swishing a wheat grass milk shake around our palette. Incisors, be they a baboon's a bonobo's or barber in Balzac, Alberta, are for rending and tearing meat off of a bone. Sometimes, if you're one of the first two on that list, it's the meat of a species peer. No wonder politics can be so vicious and cut-throat! Maybe next time you face an especially aggrieved political animal you can recall that laughing hyenas express themselves in part to deny their opposition from the pleasure of feeling power. Give a chortle, a guffaw! "Laughter, according to Bakhtin, is a powerful response to official culture and to the truth that officialdom tries to cultivate." Indeed, when we consider the nature of the social as a whole it does seem a lot more like a cult writ large than a true emboldening process of the individual. If you've ever ventured to express a contrary, dubious in terms of political correctness, classroom opinion you'll see what sort of gentle herd specimens your fellow pupils are.

All that being said, it is quite a testament to humanity's relative peacefulness that we manage to abide with so very many of us on such a very small planet! So, let's learn to forgive those who offend our sensibilities and recall that, even as we dish out humble pie to our peers, it never hurts to cut a slice for ourselves. Next time you wonder about not only how you will accomplish your school-work but also who you are as you do the hard toil of learning, remember that you're engaging in the great "mystery surrounding the notion of essence itself" one noted for the "sheer difficulty of developing a plausible epistemology" by which to accomplish some meaning (Makvotsev, online). As hunters of truth, rather than foragers waiting to be ambushed by life, we truly can channel our most primal impulses towards intellectual betterment.

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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.

Beyond Literary Landscapes

Jorge Luis Borges

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 week, we take a look at Argentine “poet, essayist, and short-story writer” Jorge Luis Borges.

Borges was born on August 24, 1899, in Buenos Aires, Argentina and died on June 14, 1986, in Geneva, Switzerland.

What

Some of Borges’s notable works include *The Aleph and Other Stories* (*El Aleph*), *Ficciones*, and *Labrynth* (*Labertintos*).

Where

These works are set throughout a variety of geographical (and, often, fantastical) locations.

When

These works are set in a variety of eras and times, as Borges’s works often deal with the theme of non-linear time.

Why

The works of Borges may be of interest to AU learners who enjoy themes of time, culture, and dreams, as well as those who enjoy modernism, philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, and science fiction.

How

AU’s wide range of diverse courses make it easy to study this topic in depth. Courses related to the works of Jorge Luis Borges are available in a variety of disciplines, including those that may fit into your Degree Works. (Always check with an AU counsellor to see if these particular courses fulfill your personal graduation requirements!)

AU students interested in learning more about this topic may enroll in ENGL 458: The Latin American Novel, a senior-level, three-credit course, which “is a concentrated study of the Latin

American novel, focusing on fiction and memoir written in the context of history, politics, culture, identity, and genre.” (Please note that this course requires ENGL 211: Prose Forms and ENGL 212: Poetry and Prose as prerequisites).

In addition, student may be interested in PHIL 342: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Philosophy, a senior-level, three-credit course, which “provides an in-depth and comprehensive overview of the major figures in the Western tradition of early modern thought, focusing primarily on questions about reality and knowledge.” (This course requires a junior level philosophy course as a prerequisite). Happy reading!

Nat Writes is an AU graduate who enjoys writing about literature, student concerns, and education.



Hong Kong Pork Floss Buns Recipe

Xine Wang



Among some of my favorite breakfast items from Chinese bakeries include these pork floss buns. You might be wondering, “what the heck is pork floss?” Pork floss, also known as “rousong” in Chinese, is a dried, fluffy, and flavorful shredded pork product that is commonly used in East Asian cuisine. It is made by stewing pork in a mixture of soy sauce, sugar, and other spices until tender, then shredding the meat and cooking it further until it becomes dry and fluffy. The result is a light, airy texture with a savory, salty, and slightly sweet flavor. Although I enjoy pork floss in a variety of different ways such as toppings for congee or rice, when used as a filling in Asian pastries it carries a special taste profile that is unlike any other.

Recently I started making these from scratch, which is perfect as a breakfast or afternoon snack. Here's a recipe to make them at home:

Ingredients

For the Dough:

- 2 ½ cups (320g) bread flour
- 2 tbsp (15g) powdered milk
- 2 tbsp (30g) sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp instant yeast
- ¾ cup (180ml) warm milk
- 1 large egg
- 3 tbsp (45g) unsalted butter, softened

**For the Filling:**

- 1 cup pork floss

For the Topping:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise
- 1-2 tbsp sweetened condensed milk (to taste)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pork floss

Instructions**1. Prepare the Dough**

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the bread flour, powdered milk, sugar, salt, and instant yeast.
2. Add the warm milk and egg to the dry ingredients and mix until a dough forms.
3. Knead the dough for about 5-10 minutes until it becomes smooth and elastic. You can do this by hand or with a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook.
4. Add the softened butter and continue kneading until the butter is fully incorporated and the dough is smooth and elastic.

5. Shape the dough into a ball, place it in a greased bowl, cover it with a cloth, and let it rise in a warm place for about 1-2 hours, or until it doubles in size.

2. Assemble the Buns

1. Once the dough has risen, punch it down to release the air and divide it into 8-10 equal portions.
2. Flatten each portion into a small disc and place about a tablespoon of pork floss in the center.
3. Gather the edges of the dough around the filling, pinch to seal, and shape into a ball.
4. Place the buns on a baking tray lined with parchment paper, cover with a cloth, and let them rise for another 30-45 minutes, or until puffy.

3. Bake the Buns

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Brush the tops of the buns with a little egg wash (beaten egg with a splash of water or milk) for a shiny finish.
3. Bake the buns for 15-20 minutes or until they are golden brown.

4. Topping

1. In a small bowl, mix the mayonnaise and sweetened condensed milk until well combined. Adjust the sweetness to taste.
2. Once the buns are baked and slightly cooled, spread a thin layer of the mayonnaise mixture on top of each bun.
3. Dip the tops of the buns into the pork floss or sprinkle the pork floss over the mayonnaise layer.

5. Serve

- Enjoy the buns warm or at room temperature. They can be stored in an airtight container for a day or two.



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



My Experience with Wikipedia

Marie Well



My experience with Wikipedia has been a source of frustration. I shared The Marriage Foundation's unconventional views on unconditional love, which lasted a day or two. And then it was promptly deleted. Then, I attempted to contribute to a page on AI and consciousness, citing a large-scale longitudinal study, only to have my comments dismissed due to the discrediting of the journal that published an article about the study. This individual who deleted my excerpts indicated that the scientific community did not widely accept the research. He then referenced the media's discrediting of the journal.

We bantered back and forth, and I advised that technicalities could discredit research for otherwise meritorious findings, primarily when the discrediting is based on corporate interests, funded biases, or mere resistance to change. The fellow indicated that Wikipedia is closed to original theories. The "old and boring" are part of its mandate. However,

Harper Collins, a respectable publisher, published the book that documents the research I cited, and the study was also published in an academic journal. Still, these factors were not enough to merit the ideas as "widely accepted by the scientific community." It's hard to fathom the long-term viability of a platform that attempts to expand knowledge through adherence to "commonly" accepted precedent.

Academia is a part of the problem. It allows us to explore ideas, but only if they align, it seems, with commonly accepted notions and fit within the boundaries of the discipline or with what gets funded by the gatekeepers of the day. Suppose we're passionate about a topic outside our department, such as a unique physics concept, but are in a communications graduate program. In that case, advancing that knowledge in our thesis work or within our disciplines is nearly impossible, barring acceptance in interdisciplinary studies. But even interdisciplinary studies come with gatekeepers.

I know a researcher whose thesis was about an alternative approach to cancer therapy, a view entrenched neither in pharmaceuticals, invasive surgeries, nor chemo practices, and she was placed on the "fringe," ordered to revise her thesis to accommodate the "commonly" accepted approaches to cancer therapy. Also, long ago, the fellow who proposed that handwashing could prevent the spread of bacteria and disease was blackballed, too. His life ended as one of humility, but today, handwashing to prevent the spread of bacteria is common knowledge. So, ultimately, the guy was right, and the academic community was wrong.

Reflecting on these experiences, I see a pressing need for a new platform—a platform that encourages original theories otherwise blackballed by the materialist paradigm that prevails in academia. I think we need a platform that values all forms of knowledge, not just those that conform to the precedent in academia.

So, ChatGPT said I'd need to invest \$15,000 to \$60,000 yearly in legal, marketing, web hosting, and other fees to sustain what I call a "wiki-original" platform. Wiki-original would allow for unconventional, original theories that don't necessarily conform to academic precedent or the biases of the gatekeepers of the day. It would allow for publication of those theories that are outcasted from academia due to non-compliance to the prevailing epistemological foundation, especially when this new research addresses anomalies otherwise swept under the carpet. A crowdfunding campaign may help generate the investment for a wiki-original platform, although angel investors and other monetization strategies might work, too, as long as the platform isn't politicized or bought by commercial or political interests.

I have this spectacular former colleague who started a wiki for my former company, and this fellow is a lightning bolt when it comes to problem-solving IT issues, so I asked him for his views on how to set up the wiki-original platform. I'm still waiting, but I'll let us know. And if any of us Comp Sci students want to research the viability of a wiki-original platform, please do. The world needs it for rapid progress, especially in a humanitarian/spiritual direction.

Knowledge gaps can stem from subjective consensus and assumptions that fail to explain anomalies, such as near-death experience accounts. So, if new knowledge arises that's miles removed from common knowledge, it gets overshadowed and discredited if it doesn't firmly attach to the pre-existing heap. However, knowledge is more pervasive than the present piles, which occupy only a limited scope of the entire terrain of possibilities, which may be infinite. There is so much more than what we allow through the gates. And what we allow through the gates may not be idealized progress, but both somewhat progressive and regressive to varying degrees. Perhaps the concept of "idealization" should be built into wiki-original's quest for original knowledge. That epitome of idealization, in my mind, is unconditional love for everyone and everything.

Someone who temporarily goes through insanity or near-death experiences, both anomalous experiences, can yield new knowledge strictly based on observation or experience or both. But good luck with having these ideas integrated into a scientific paradigm. The secular scientific paradigm (emphasizing reductionism) requires adherence to material precedent, even if the insane observations are, in fact, measurable and as plain as day to anyone willing to perceive the world with keener eyes. I have a theory on motion parallax that I'd like to establish as knowledge, as I believe my basic assumptions can leverage a new scientific perspective. However, I'm a Communications master's holder with a top prior performance in math, but without a science degree. So, my views may die at the grave unless there is a forum to report them. And that's where a wiki-original comes into play.

How many original ideas have been formulated by people in the "wrong" department or parts of the world without access to education or with ideas that go against the grain of assumptions that bind and limit what is construed as knowledge? And if we are nodding our heads in agreement, then we may have a calling to enter a philosophy department or philosophy minor degree. However, Athabasca doesn't appear to have a philosophy course on epistemology, which studies what makes "knowledge" justified instead of mere opinion. It's the study of what constitutes knowledge, which I'm challenging in this article.

We can barely get a rocket into outer space without fear of malfunction, never mind a ship traversing the edges of the universe or, God forbid, entering a new dimension. Those are limitations of our present knowledge. That may indicate scientific knowledge has its limitations. I could go on for days about the limitations of qualitative research and its emphasis on victim versus oppressor theories as opposed to unbiased, depoliticized unity models, which, to me, are the ideal, and the ideal should always be sought if the goal is actual progress.

We can stretch the limits of the walls of academia by introducing a wiki-original platform or entertaining original research. But that will make us lone rebels in an entrenched system founded on either status quo, precedent, or vested interests that get realized with financial backing. It's difficult for an individual to introduce a radically new concept, even if it's as observable to everyone as the sun and the moon. That's why I present the idea of wiki-original, which could launch a whole new world of possibilities if managed wisely, such as through an open-source platform not purchasable by vested interests nor subjected to politicized censorship. The potential impact of such a platform is immense. You've got my permission to steal all of my ideas, as my vision is for the ivory tower to allow piles of knowledge outside its moat.

Oh, and after I wrote the above article, I came up with the best conclusion. Here it is: The Wiki-original would have a mandatory field. It would require everyone who puts forth their theory to answer the following question. But first, as background, in academia, students are challenged to answer the "so what?" question concerning their research. In other words, why does this research matter? Who does it help? How does it benefit others in the bigger picture? So, the Wiki-original would ask the following question: how does the theory contribute to or advance unconditional love, not just for a particular community or sector, but for everyone, with no one harmed and no exceptions? The better the Wikipedia post answers this question, the more points and, thus, prominence it acquires.



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

Facebook:

What is the Write Site like? A student wonders if the Write Site offers feedback before completing an essay and what the best time to access it would be. They were informed that the Write Site was full and was advised to try again later. With another student suggesting checking back every two days, although they felt following the Write Site's advice resulted in a lower grade for a paper. Another student mentioned that the Write Site provides guidance on grammar errors, thesis, and paragraph clarity, and it can also offer feedback on specific areas of weakness for the student.

Reddit:

AU Reddit Student Peer Support Site. A student who views AU courses as "no joke" initiated creating a subreddit for students to receive peer support and feel connected. To join the Reddit forum, visit

https://www.reddit.com/r/AthabascaUniversity/comments/1f4e7ly/support_for_au_students/.

Twitter:

Age is no barrier! @AthabascaU reposted, "Mae Doran had no undergraduate degree when she went #backtoschool at age 63. Eight years later, at 71 years young, she earned a PhD @AthabascaU. Don't miss our discussion on the benefits of #lifelonglearning! FULL: <https://rtrj.info/082824AU>. FULL: <https://rtrj.info/082824>."



"Passing the Baton: Welcoming the 2024-2025 AUSU Executive Committee"

AUSU UPDATE

April 12, 2024



Passing the Baton:
Welcoming the 2024-2025 AUSU
Executive Committee

The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) would like to thank our outgoing 2023-2024 Executive Committee, including President Naju Syed, VP External Manmeet Kaur, VP Finance and Administration Chantel Groening (formerly Bradley), and VP Community and Wellness Natalia Iwanek. Their commitment and dedication to student success have helped guide our organization and enhance the student experience at Athabasca University (AU) over the past year. To celebrate and reflect with them, check out the latest AUSU Open Mic Podcast, "[Episode 86: AUSU Executives Wrap Up Their Term.](#)" This episode explores the wins and personal growth experienced

by your outgoing student executive leaders.

With the upcoming AUSU Council changeover meeting on April 18th, we are thrilled to [welcome the incoming 2024-2025 AUSU Executive Committee](#). Chantel Groening will be moving to the role of President, having served the past year as your VP Finance and Administration. Jan Lehmann will step into the role of VP External, eager to forge strong partnerships and advocate for our students on a provincial and federal level. Diana Ramirez, your new VP Finance and Administration, will help ensure the organization is fiscally responsible and managed effectively. And, Olivia Shepherd will take on the VP Community and Wellness role, committed to fostering a supportive and healthy learning environment for all AU students.

We are excited to see the new heights this dynamic team will reach and look forward to a year of growth, achievement, and student advocacy!

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