

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 49 2012-12-20

Oh Joyful Night

No more merry

Art vs. Greed

Story of Film

Book List

2012's top reads

*Plus:
Health Matters
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



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***The Voice
Magazine***

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

For weekly email reminders as each issue is posted, fill out the subscription form [here](#).

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

**Joy to the World**

Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays. The debate still plays out bitterly, with people in both camps grumbling Grinchily about the supposed ill intentions of the other.

But they're missing the point. Increasingly I've realized that what we should be paying attention to instead is something different: the *other* word in the greeting, the feeling we're urging rather than the event itself. In today's world, we need something a lot deeper than merely "merry" and "happy."

"Merry" connotes a festive atmosphere: parties, lights, decorations, brightly wrapped gifts. But for some who have experienced tragedy recently--serious illness, the death of a family member, mental health problems--it feels forced. And in the light of some of the horrific news stories crossing our radar, can we legitimately act "merry" and pretend everything is fine when it's not?

Even "happy" is inadequate. Unfortunately, "happy," once a reference to something deep and interior, has been skewed by pop psychobabble and ill-informed self-help books. We're all on a quest for happiness, we like to say, but very few can put a finger on what this golden grail actually is. In a stroke of irony, "happy" now seems to mean the same thing as "merry"--the very fate the happiness obsession sought to avoid.

Greetings like "Merry Christmas" and "Happy Holidays" are like a set of bells, but bells, as Poe taught us, form a wide spectrum of feeling and emotion. Sometimes the bells ring out, filling the world with a breathlessness of anticipation; but sometimes the ringing is tinny, repetitive, devoid of feeling or meaning, even telling a "tale of turbulency" amid their brassy falsity.

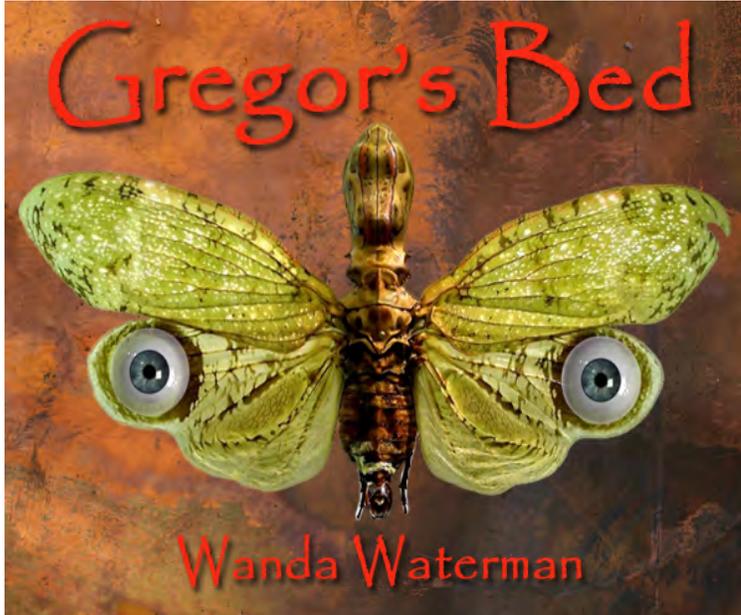
I think a better wish, especially this holiday season, would be for "joy." Joy is hard to see, hard to express, and hard even to explain; it's not something we can seek or find or even be gifted. It's more of a fruit than a tree, a result of careful planting and tending by practicing contentment, acceptance, love, peacefulness, tolerance, and generosity. All of them things we like, but don't really talk much about--because they're hard to practice.

But practice we must. Joy is like a mirror, reflecting only what we put into it. It's like the man in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Great Stone Face"; eventually, spending his life imitating the qualities of that structure, he began to resemble it (or it him). By working on attaining joy, we too will be filled with the real thing. It's only then that we can begin manifesting it to others.

For me, for you, for the whole world: *joy* is my deepest wish for the coming new year.

GREGOR'S BED

Wanda Waterman



Recent Discoveries From the Realm of the Experimental and Avant-Garde

Film: *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* (2012)

Interviews featuring the following: Bernardo Bertolucci, Charles Burnett, Jane Campion, Claudia Cardinale, Youssef Chahine, Terence Davies, Claire Denis, Stanley Donen, Kyoko Kagawa, Abbas Kiarostami, Baz Luhrmann, Paul Schrader, Alexander Sokurov, Robert Towne, Gus Van Sant, Sharmila Tagore, Lars Von Trier, Wim Wenders, Haskell Wexler, Yuen Woo-Ping

Director: Mark Cousins**Genre:** British documentary TV series

“Modernity is not a primordial model; it’s two opposite sides struggling and putting me in an uncomfortable position as to what to choose. Film provides a wonderful answer: choose both.

The twentieth century gave us almost impossible situations as a kind of challenge, situations in which we had to choose between things like freedom and duty. Film was the only art of the twentieth century that tried to find a compromise, a good compromise, between the two sides of the riddle.”

Francesco Casetti

Film History through an Idiosyncratic Lens

Can a film documentary on the subject of film be called avant-garde? Yes, if the vision it presents is at the vanguard of our cultural awareness. *The Story of Film* presents a remarkably erudite, even eccentric, view, one shared by a number of notable film scholars--and it uses numerous carefully chosen vignettes to express it. The result is an incredible *bricolage* of cinematic excellence and forward thinking that makes a great story in itself.

The 15-part series begins with the invention of film in the 1900s and moves on to show how Hollywood slowly became the center of the global industry. In the 15th episode we take a look at the



Director Mark Cousins, Bruce Lee statue in THE STORY OF FILM.

themes and the impact of new digital technology of the 21st century. But in between, Cousins explores notable developments the world over.

Part of the essence of film as art is that it's a way of wrestling with the divide between reality and fantasy, between waking and dreaming. But the film industry is where art most dramatically locks horns with capitalistic greed. Henry Miller was right: Hollywood is where artists go to be silenced, but in spite of that a meaningful voice slowly comes to the fore.

“Henry Miller was right: Hollywood is where artists go to be silenced, but in spite of that a meaningful voice slowly comes to the fore.”

Director and film historian Mark Cousins narrates, in an Irish accent that adds a slight dissonance to the film by rising slightly in pitch at the end of every sentence (which makes each statement sound like a question), but after a while this becomes metaphorical, giving the sense that everything about film is open-ended, its message always in flux.

One of Francesco Casetti's great contributions to film scholarship is his assertion that while negotiating reality for a society film also makes cogent statements *about itself*. For example, *King Kong* is about the struggle of nature versus industry, or, more precisely, about film's imperative to somehow express truth with technological tools paid for by those who silence the truthful.

A case in point: there's a scene in the 1928 silent film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* in which Joan of Arc weeps while expressing profound remorse for having denied her God just to remain alive. No sound, black and white, and severe limitations compared to today, but nonetheless this is a pinnacle of cinematography, expressing a sentiment so profoundly human that it provokes emotional responses from all who view it. Since then technology has made astounding advances while not adding a speck of superiority to films as works of art.

In Casetti's view, she would have been expressing the remorse, the regret, the shame of film itself, a remorse that may be part of film's essence and the very thing that comprises its genius.

Despite a terrible struggle and myriad knockdowns, ultimately, art manages to win out over greed.



Jane Campion in *THE STORY OF FILM*.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book *They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.*

HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

**Healthy Holidays**

The holiday spirit is everywhere: bows and wrapping, lights galore, and seasonal music piped into malls. The topic of health doesn't come up too often, unless we're joking about how many cookies we ate at the party. It may come as a surprise, then, that several holiday traditions have a connection to the world of natural healing.

Christmas Trees

It's possible that one of the most popular holiday traditions is the Christmas tree, breaking cultural boundaries and inspiring songs describing the wonder and excitement of this light-studded greenery.

But did you know that the aroma of fresh pine needles has medicinal benefits? Pine oil, responsible for the characteristic scent, is composed of medicinally beneficial chemical compounds called phenols. In aromatherapy, a volatile oil offers therapeutic potential in the air it disperses into, and phenols are no exception. The scent from a pine tree is antibacterial, antiviral, and antiseptic. For this reason, the "old wives'" prescription for lung patients was to spend time living in a pine-dominated forest.

If your Christmas tree isn't pine, don't worry; other coniferous trees, like spruce, have similar medicinal benefits!

Holly and Berries

Another popular Christmas emblem is the holly plant, with its sharply indented, shiny green leaves and clusters of bright berries. What's so healthy about holly? Medicinally, holly has been used in indigenous cultures for a variety of purposes, including reducing persistent water retention and lowering high fevers. Although holly is rarely used now medicinally due to its potentially toxic side effects, its vivid colours have a healing component in themselves. In Chinese medicine, certain colours are considered to be energetically positive, which means the green of the holly is soothing as well as energetically beneficial for the liver. Red, like the holly's berries, is traditionally thought to be energetically healing for heart conditions.

Apple Cider

It's hard to top the taste of a glass of hot apple cider mulled with spices, especially on a cold winter evening. Apple cider can offer a vitamin-packed way to celebrate the holidays, boosting levels of vitamins C, A, and K in your body. Additionally, the spices it's paired with—cinnamon and cloves—have warming

properties, promoting healthy blood circulation (vital in cold weather!). Additionally, cinnamon has blood sugar balancing properties, which tempers the effect of the apples' sweetness.

Wishing all my readers a peaceful, relaxing holiday season--and the very best of health in the New Year!

Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices in Ontario.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

One House to Rule Them All

There's no place like home for the holidays--especially if that holiday, if you can call it that, is the release of the first film in the *Hobbit* trilogy. This week's links take a peek into hobbit holes real and pretend.

Built My House of Bricks

While LEGO has released many cool sets as tie-ins to the movie, the best project of them all isn't for sale. At LEGO headquarters, a group of designers spent 3,000 hours creating a life-sized Bag End out of two million LEGO bricks. Take a look at the photos of this masterpiece--the chimney even smokes!

Be My Guest

If you're not merely content to look at hobbit-sized dwellings, consider staying in replicas like the Hobbit House of Montana, which "incorporates the mystique and caricature of a cozy Hobbit House from the mind of J.R.R. Tolkien."

Ballooning

Move over, traditional building materials; this artist created a replica of Bilbo Baggins' house out of 2,600 balloons--a task so monumental that his fingers grew swollen. The time-lapse video is particularly mind-blowing.

Hobbit Cave

A cave in Indonesia might give clues to a real "hobbit" house--it's the site of the discovery of an ancient hominid who's been nicknamed the "hobbit" due to his physical characteristics. *Discovery* has the details.



COMPLIANT NEGOTIATION TACTICS

Wanda Waterman

ANTBOY IN: COMPLIANT NEGOTIATION TACTICS



WOW! WHAT A NICE PLACE!



IT'S A PIGSTY.



I MADE YOU SOME COOKIES.



I'M
GLUTEN-
INTOLERANT.



CAN WE BE BEST FRIENDS AND GO
EVERYWHERE AND DO EVERYTHING
TOGETHER?

LOOK, DOLL, DON'T TAKE
THIS PERSONALLY. I KNOW
I'M AN ANT, BUT I'M
BASICALLY SOLITARY.



BUT— I DON'T UNDERSTAND! YOU
NEED ME!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



*From
Where
I Sit*

Hazel Anaka

Look Up

Despite being bombarded with advice on how to save our sanity during the holidays, most of us still get caught up in the madness.

The mall shopping crowds seem well, “crowdier,” and the list of needed gifts continues to grow. The November credit card statements confirm we are part of the growing debt load problem. And that was before the shopping machine got warmed up! The tree, if it’s up at all, sits cockeyed and doesn’t glow quite as brightly as other years. If we like to bake, we’re afraid to break out the sugar and butter because of high cholesterol, diabetes, and pants that are already too tight.

Maybe we’re embarrassed by our behaviour at the company Christmas party. Who knew that lampshade clashed with the purple sequined dress? Maybe we’re still bitter because the world is intent on changing our beloved “Merry Christmas” greeting into the more inclusive and politically correct “Happy Holidays.”

We’re embarrassed that for the 23rd consecutive Christmas, our house and yard looks like the Grinch lives here. A puny string of lights on an easy-to-reach shrub could dispel the talk once and for all, yet there is none. We haven’t actually mailed a Christmas--er, holiday--card since God invented email, but can’t resist buying more gorgeous half-priced cards on Boxing Day.

We don’t know what to buy for people who have everything, yet are loath to stop giving altogether. Some of us have opted out of the whole Christmas thing and will proclaim our reasons to anyone who’ll listen. Others take it as the latest excuse to go overboard with excess. Some of us try to walk the line of common sense, hanging onto meaningful traditions without killing ourselves with self-induced stress and out-of-control spending.

But all of this seems totally insignificant and meaningless when we watch the news. How can we bitch and moan about our teeny-tiny irritations when 26 families will be making funeral arrangements for their loved ones just before Christmas? The anguish and horror caused by the latest shooting rampage in the United States puts into stark perspective what is important in life.

If we let it, that is. It’s easy to say “Thank God I don’t live in a country where guns are prized possessions and unstable people lurk.” It’s easy to believe that “things like that don’t happen here.” It’s easy to dismiss the story altogether because we’re busy.

But that misses the point. Like Barack Obama urged, we need to hold close those we love. We also need to look up from our own little lives and notice those around us who are suffering and troubled. We need to have the courage to get involved and intervene.

This season all around us there are those with a new diagnosis, pain, and worries we can only imagine. Loving compassion will help all of us, from where I sit.



Best wishes for a blessed Christmas and incredible 2013!

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

DID YOU KNOW?

AU Holiday Exam Procedures



If you have undergraduate courses ending December 31, 2012, you'll want to note the University's special holiday exam procedures—and order your final examinations as soon as possible.

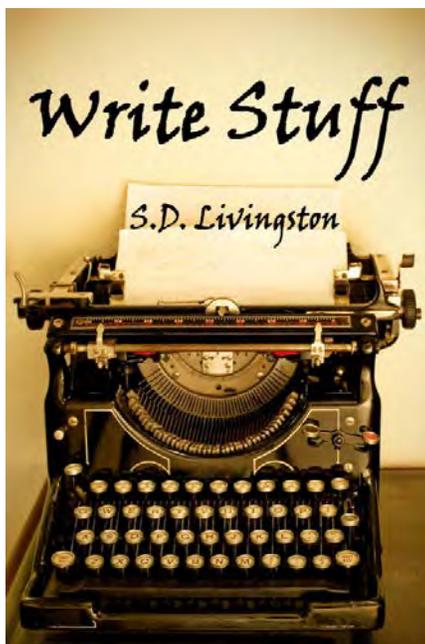
If your course contract date is December 31, you must submit your exam requests before the University closes for the holidays. Athabasca University will be closed from December 24, 2012, at 4:30 pm MST until January 2, 2013, 8:30 am MST. No examinations will be shipped during that period.

Exam requests received after the close of business on December 24 will be treated as Late Examination Requests, and the Late Examination Request Fee will be assessed.

However, if you submit your exam request before the holiday closure, you will have until January 15, 2013, to take your exam. This is not a course extension; all other course components, including essays, projects, and quizzes, are due by the December 31 course contract date.

For further information, check out the holiday exam policy [here](#), or contact the Information Centre at 1.800.788.9041.

Happy holidays, and good luck as you finish up the semester!



Personal Best

Break out the eggnog and power up your tablets. It's time for that annual ritual: the flurry of lists that recommend the best books of the year. It's a fine tradition, but I say we start a new one for 2013. Let's make it the year to discover our own personal best.

I'm not sure why, but something about a huge smash hit makes me want to avoid it. While everyone's running for their *Fifty Shades of Casual Vacancy* (trust me, somebody will write it), I'd rather wait until the fuss has died down. That habit's led me to discover some wonderful books, and it might just do the same for you.

Sometimes, when a book becomes a runaway bestseller, it's because the writing is top-notch. Charming turns of phrase catch us unawares, making us stop to savour them. More often, though, a book becomes a hit in spite of the writing. It's the ideas that grab us, the storyline, the what-if plots, and millions of copies fly off the shelves even as professional reviewers tear the wooden prose apart.

That's not a complaint. I'll take a gripping story over dull perfection any day. Yet it always makes me wonder: What other equally captivating stories are waiting in the wings, stories that haven't quite caught the same lucky wave of promotion or zeitgeist?

When a *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* or a *Hunger Games* comes along, it's a good reminder to check out the hidden gems. There are the indies, of course, with something for every taste, from self-help to sci-fi. And then there are the small presses, the middle children of the book world. Too small to be corporate behemoths, too big to be indies, they tend to fly just under the radar.

They lean toward the literary and the poetic, as this [list](#) from the NewPages site reveals. But dozens more publish genre fiction, like the paranormal and fantasy over at [Crescent Moon Press](#), or the mystery and romance at Champagne Book Group (just a few hours away from the AU campus). The Coffee Time Press [site](#) has links to them and dozens of other small presses.

Eventually I get around to reading those bestsellers. Just like any book, sometimes they're worth it, other times not. But their popularity means there's no need to put them on my books-to-buy list. There always seems to be a copy of *The DaVinci Code* on display, or a rerun of *The Help* to remind me that I haven't read the book.

In the meantime, by browsing the small press catalogues and indies, I've found my own "best books of 2012"—books full of adventures I never would have enjoyed if I'd stuck blindly to the latest trendy reads.

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season. And whether it's books, films, or something else that brings you joy, may 2013 help you reach for your own personal best.

S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Album: Holly Cole, *Night* (2012)

“When a singer truly feels and experiences what the music is all about, the words will automatically ring true.”

Montserrat Caballé

This Songbird Built the Golden Cage and Comes and Goes at Will

I first heard of Holly Cole in the early '90s, when I saw a bit on the news about this young jazz songstress whose career was just taking off. Jazz

music and song stylists had long fallen from the upper echelons of mass popularity, but there were still some of us sufficiently devoted to the genre to patronize any new performers who stood out.

This one was the daughter of Leon Cole, a CBC Radio jazz program host whose shows I'd been glued to for years. She was singing Lyle Lovett's "God Will," frozen with concentration, her eyes locked with her pianist's, and I was not impressed. Her pitch was less than perfect, and she seemed overly contrived, almost stultified, in her delivery.

That was before I knew what it meant to be a great singer. (I didn't think much of Billie Holiday back then, either.) Still, I was curious enough to follow her career from the corner of one eye. When I did finally figure out what made a singer great, she became one of my favourite divas.

Cole's unique gifts? Her minimalist approach, for one. She carves out and sands away everything that sabotages the light a song throws off, and in doing so she's managed to reveal the merit of many songs that sound meaningless coming from the mouths of their original interpreters.

Her choice of repertoire is ingenious. There are recognizable patterns, most notably her special affinity for Tom Waits songs (or their affinity for her); otherwise her song choices can't be predicted, which makes each new album a delightful jack-in-the-box.

Like Billie Holiday, Cole has a voice that's small, imperfect, and unobtrusive, but that conveys great depth and an amazing spectrum of emotional shading. Songs you always thought were mindless suddenly show themselves to be bursting with the secret sentiments we all share.

One example is her excellent delivery of “Viva Las Vegas” and the wonderful solos her band comes up with. She even takes a great tongue-in-cheek stab at the country classic “I Thought of You Again.”

Her bare-bones accompaniment and arrangements are amazing, superlatively appropriate to her aesthetic. She chooses musicians who are just like her, who use the same minimalist approach and the same extreme focus on delivering beauty at all costs. The result is restrained and yet able to blow you to the moon with improvisations.

“A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.”

Maya Angelou

An idea whose time has come: Rod McKuen’s “If You Go Away,” which slowly morphs into the French song it was based on, Jacques Brel’s much-loved “Ne me quitte pas.”

Cole also sings Gordon Lightfoot’s “If You Could Read My Mind.” If the sangfroid beginning to such a deeply emotional song puts you off, just keep listening—at the second verse, Cole makes the heavens open up. It’s not often that music makes me cry. Enough said.

Night manifests six of the Mindful Bard’s criteria for music well worth hearing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 3) it is about attainment of the true self; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 5) it makes me want to be a better artist; and 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM *THE VOICE*



It seems like just yesterday that we began our 20th year of publication, and now we’re wrapping up another great year and moving forward. *The Voice* has changed in format and style since those first issues, but one thing has remained the same: the wonderful writers, contributors, and readers who make doing what we do worthwhile. We’re grateful to all of you and look forward to bringing *The Voice Magazine* into its 21st year of serving AUSU members!

We will be on break for the holidays as of December 21, 5 pm MST. *The Voice* will be back in business in early 2013 with our annual “Best of *The Voice*” issue, which will showcase some of our top writing from 2012. This special issue will be published January 4, 2013, and our first regular issue of the year will appear on January 11, 2013.

Wishing you and your family and friends peace, joy, and happiness during the holiday season and success in the new year. See you in 2013!

AUSU UPDATE

Bethany Tynes



AUSU e-newsletters a success

AUSU has been piloting the use of e-newsletters to contact our student body over the last year. We began by sending these newsletters to students registered on our website, and after a very positive initial response, we are now sending e-newsletters to all students currently enrolled in any AU undergrad course, as well as all students registered on our site who wish to receive email. We're looking forward to keeping in closer touch with our members, and hope in future to be able to send regular monthly e-newsletters to all members (though we'll also respect your right to unsubscribe). If there's something you'd like to see included in our newsletters, please let us know!

Instructional model survey

Last June, AUSU learned that AU planned to move all undergraduate courses to a call centre model (like the one currently used in AU's Faculty of Business) beginning in September. We felt that this was a very major change, and was surprised that the university had not conducted consultation of AU's students or academics. AUSU drafted a survey and sent it to all our members via e-newsletter. Over 2,500 of you took the time to fill out this survey, giving us a wealth of information about what's important to AU's undergrad students. The AUSU Executive is now working to make sure that these important student perspectives are communicated to the university, and we have presented our survey results report to a number of AU community members and committees, including CUPE 3911 (the AU tutors' union) and the Board of Governors (AU's highest governing body).

DegreeWorks now available

We've been waiting for AU to roll out their new DegreeWorks system—and it's finally available to students! If you started an AU program after September 2010, you can now use DegreeWorks to see how your courses fulfill the requirements of your program. DegreeWorks is available online anytime, and can instantly help you see which courses you still need to complete on the way to your credential. Let us know what you think of DegreeWorks, and we'll make sure we let the university know how they're doing meeting student needs.

Get in touch with us

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany at president@ausu.org. You can also e-mail our office at ausu@ausu.org or call 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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www.voicemagazine.org

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

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