

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

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Meeting The Minds

The Personal Dr. Jon Dron, Part II

The "Go West" Relationship Test, II

End of the Road

Vitamin Hobby

A Fun Pill

*Plus:
Vote Anyway
I Am a Fraud
and much more!*



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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**Vote Anyway****Karl Low**

This issue of *The Voice Magazine* is a little bit thinner than normal. Columnists S.D. Livingston and Christina Frey are taking a break for a while to recharge the writing batteries and concentrate on some other projects. So while I wish them success, I selfishly hope for not too much success. I still want them to have the time and inclination to write for the magazine, after all.

However, aside from that bit of news, things are back to normal now. If you don't follow the [AUSUVoice](#) Facebook page, you probably don't know about how we managed to hack ourselves here at the Voice Magazine, and what problems that lead to. Let's just say that there were some red faces all around.

Readers from last issue will be wondering about the surprise I hinted at. Would it count as surprising for me to say it's not happening yet? Probably not. Dealing with the website issues kind of blew some other plans out of the water, but rest assured, I do plan to get back on it over the next week and should have it out. If you want a clue, I'll just remind people to [sign up](#) to our subscription/reminder email list because that's where secret contests and surveys get announced.

Of course the big news this week is that the long-running, never-ending federal campaign is finally coming to a close. Advance polls are open now throughout this Thanksgiving weekend, and if you know that then you likely already know who you plan to vote for. If you're still waiting, wondering which way you should go, I'm trying to get some coverage of the educational stances of all the parties put together for next week.

Until then, I know you've probably already heard how important it is to go vote, how your vote is important and can change things, but, let's be honest, most of us know that the election won't be won by a single vote. That if you don't vote for the winning candidate in your riding, your vote will essentially be thrown away. That, in our first-past-the-post system, the majority of all votes will have no effect on who we have governing us, and that can be not only disheartening, but discouraging. I understand why people don't vote. Even if the effort is minimal, voting implies an act of hopefulness, and if you live in a riding like I do, where the same candidate seems to have a lock on the seat, it can seem like all a vote is saying is that you're naïve.

Vote anyway. If not this weekend, then next Monday. If you don't like any of the major parties, vote for a fringe party, a fringe candidate, or even just spoil your ballot. But get in there and vote.

Why? Because the best way to effect the change we want is to convince the politicians, the government, that we're watching. If we want good governance, we have to show the political parties that we're paying attention. After all, the temptation to do the wrong thing is easier to fight if you feel someone is paying attention. I don't subscribe to the notion that politicians are evil, but they are human. And humans are prone to taking short cuts if they can get away with it. Convince them that we're watching—even if we're not.

Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl".

MEETING THE MINDS

INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



Back in February, The Voice Magazine interviewed Dr. Jon Dron about his approach to teaching. Marie Well has since conducted a follow-up interview that looks more at exactly who Dr. Dron is beyond just the academic work. If you're curious about what type of person becomes a course designer and wins a National Teaching Fellowship from the UK, you may want to read the [first part](#) of the interview first.

Marie: What is your strategy for tackling a writing assignment?

Dr. Dron: Writing is in part a continuous process for me. I make copious notes all the time, and quite often share those as blog posts and so on, so I never really *stop* writing. However, once I have a serious paper, chapter, book, report or course to write, I tend to run at it very hard and try to get rid of all distractions. In the past, I've gone so far as to escape to a hotel room for a few days, though, nowadays, it mostly works fine just to sit in my boat and do it. I can generally churn out a paper or a chapter in a day because by the time I get started I usually have flocks of ideas flying round in my head

bursting to get out and lots of references and notes to fall back on. The hard work really starts *after* that though. I usually spend *far* longer unwriting than I do writing. I can easily write 10,000 words in a day, but it can often take days or sometimes weeks to put those words in the right order and to get rid of the ones that shouldn't be there. I love doing it though. Writing for me is a means of discovery, not just a way of writing down what I think.

Marie: What is your favorite possession?

Dr. Dron: Probably my battered old Hofner President guitar. It is older than I am and has been with me for about 35 years. It is, and always has been, a complete pig to play, and it has suffered greatly over a decade or two of serious gigging, children climbing on it, and general wear and tear, but it still gives me immense joy. It almost feels a part of me when I play it. Similarly, I also love my much-repaired folding Brompton bike. That's been with me for nearly 20 years and we have travelled a long way together. I am growing quite attached to my little old ramshackle leaky sailboat on which I'm sitting now too, for similar reasons, though I've not had it for long. There's a theme here. I tend to grow attached to quirky, awkward, unusual, history-rich objects that demand as much of me as I do of them.

Marie: If you could take one holiday and spend in anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

Dr. Dron: Here. I set my heart on living here the first day I set foot in Vancouver. It's a wonderful place, full of a great diversity of caring, thoughtful, creative people, and diverse, beautiful spaces, both natural and man-

made. It is a city built by people that care, right down to the tiniest detail. So many cities and towns, especially here in North America where they have not had enough centuries to learn to live with their environment, seem to me like they are raping the land. In the case of Vancouver, it is more like consensual sex. And that is reflected in the attitudes of the people. I have never been in any other city where so many people will fix things that are broken, tidy away other people's garbage, or go out of their way to help other people. There was a great story in the news a while back of an undercover cop that, in a sting operation, pretended to be disabled and made a point of trying to have his wallet stolen down in East Hastings, an area known for its many street dwellers, drug addicts and those with mental afflictions. But those street-dwellers would have none of it: they kept picking his wallet up for him, helping him across the road, and looking after him. It is not perfect. Sometimes I slightly miss the old country (I come from the UK) with its cantankerous population, its ribald dark humour, its endemic pessimism, its aggressive but competent drivers who know how to park in tight spaces, and its blatant rebellion against almost all rules except queuing but, on the whole, Vancouver is pretty wonderful. I travel more than is good for me, or the planet, but I never feel happier than when I return.

Marie: You just won a prestigious teaching award that you humbly accepted. What do you feel is the value of a humble attitude in light of all of your accolades?

Dr. Dron: I am not at all humble: I am a very arrogant person. But pretty much all the awards I have ever received have only been possible thanks to a vastly greater contribution by other people, so I don't see them as personal accolades and none of them mean I am a better person as a result. I do like getting awards, but I try never to fool myself that it's a result of me being particularly special, apart from that I am lucky enough to have wonderful people around me and we get to do some good things together.

Marie: If you could scrap grading student work altogether, what kind of system would you have in its place?

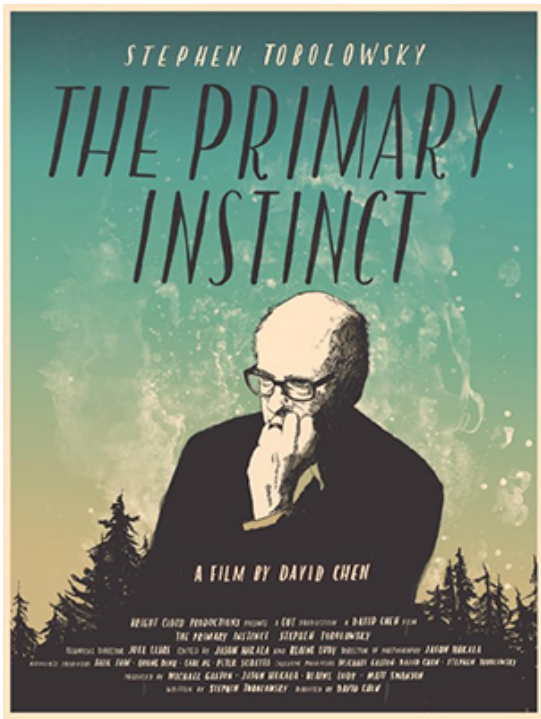
Dr. Dron: On the whole, I would prefer to ignore the whole issue of accreditation altogether but there are ways to handle it that work pretty well, even within our existing system, without messing with the learning process. Certification can either be left to an entirely separate process or one in which learners (in consultation with tutors) determine what they wish to learn and what constitutes evidence of success. Either approach works. We already have a means to separate the learning from the accreditation at Athabasca (it's called PLAR) where candidates can provide portfolios of evidence that they are competent in whatever field they seek credits, drawing that evidence from their workplace, their hobbies, their publications, their social networks or whatever, as well as from academic work, perhaps taking parts of it from many courses. We don't take it far enough by accrediting whole degrees that way, but it's a good start. We also have challenge assessments for many courses where, if they are already competent, students can just do the assessment to gain the credit. That's not too bad at all, though I am not a fan of the over-common use of exams for it, which are extraordinarily bad ways to assess learning in almost every way - unreliable, inauthentic, unfair, indiscriminate and inefficient. For some courses – projects, theses, dissertations, essays, etc – we largely let learners identify what they wish to learn and how they wish to measure that, which is good. A few academic centres have open-ended courses that work in roughly the same way. At my former institution we had a whole MSc/MA by Learning Objectives, in which students worked with a supervisory team to come up with a set of outcomes and a plan of work to achieve them, and carved their own paths, usually to fit with projects or roles in the workplace. Similarly, the traditional Ph.D. process in the UK has no courses and nothing like grades at all. It is just a team of supervisors and a student working together for a few years, with a flexible, lightweight but rigorous process for ensuring progress is being made and to allow peer review (including an oral defence) at the end. There is no notion of grades – you either get the Ph.D. or you don't. An even more open process is used for Ph.Ds. by publication, where you just gather up your published work, write a few thousand words to bind it together (much like a portfolio) and defend it in an oral defence. The trouble with most of these methods is that they are not cheap and they are hard to scale. But it is worth trying to do so, as the cost to benefit ratio is very high.

Marie: If you won the Lotto Max, what would you spend it on?

Dr. Dron: Covering up the fact that I have never bought a ticket, so it would clearly have been fraudulently obtained.

Marie: If you could instantly learn one thing in its entirety with no obstacles and no time constraints, what would that one thing be?

Dr. Dron: To dance like Fred Astaire. I am a hopeless dancer – can't do it at all.



The Mindful Bard The Primary Instinct

Wanda Waterman

Film: *The Primary Instinct*

Director: David Chen

"If the realm of pure invention is what we call God, then the realm of reinvention is what we call man, and the marriage between the two is prayer."

- Stephen Tobolowsky

At a pivotal point in his stage monologue career a small boy in the audience asked Stephen Tobolowsky why he tells stories. This film is, in part, an attempt to answer that question, resulting in a broad but colourful spectrum of answers. We tell stories, according to Tobolowsky, to see ourselves. A science enthusiast, he points out that eyes haven't evolved much, and most creatures, notably human ones, need stories to be able to see themselves.

Another of his theories about the purpose of stories is that, like deeply rooted ice cores found in the Greenland and South Pole, stories plumb the depths of our realities and bring up valuable information about the things that matter to us.

Does this sound a little like the guys on *The Big Bang Theory*? Yes, there are times during this monologue when you feel like you're on a long school trip, stuck on a bus beside the nerdy guy who can't shut up. You want to gossip about the popular kids while he talks about how things work until it makes your brain hurt.

But there's nothing painful about this. Hopefully you've had the pleasure of watching an engaging stage monologue and been surprised at how easily you could be mesmerised by someone who just keeps on talking. Being captivated by Stephen Tobolowsky is even more of a surprise; a character actor who's played supporting roles in more Hollywood blockbusters than you can shake a clapstick at, he's not what you'd call a star, and his face is about as nondescript as a rice cake. The private details of his life are of no great concern to the gossipmongers. But it's their loss, because the details—and his personal interpretations of them—are a source of wonder and delight.

To reiterate, Tobolowsky clearly didn't enter acting because he was too gorgeous to stay hidden. Acting was a real

calling for him, not a ticket to a world of glamour and naughtiness (although he's had his share of that), so his take on Hollywood Babylon is refreshingly honest and insightful.

Tobolowsky mostly paces back and forth on stage while talking animatedly to an audience, but at the start and end of the film he's talking before the camera about what it's like to be a supporting character actor in Hollywood. There's a hierarchy of importance to the roles, he says, which can be discerned from the *dramatis personae*. The less important your role, the more anonymous you become; first you lose the last name, then the first name, then you're simply an occupation (e.g. "plumber"), and then a laughingstock (e.g. "buttcrack plumber").

Tobolowsky's characters somehow ended up near or at the bottoms of most of these lists, but what he lacked in quality of opportunity he gained in quantity. He always managed to keep working, even after a near-fatal accident with a horse. Near an active volcano. In Iceland. And when he wasn't working he was telling stories. Now he works by telling stories.

His stories don't tie up easily. They end with epiphany, not resolution. The spiritual character of the film doesn't end there; he eventually touches on the issue of sacredness in everyday life, pointing out that Biblical Hebrew has no tenses, and that the *kadosh* are the things holy and "set apart." Things *kadosh* aren't connected to the flow of time—they transcend it.

"How does a moment get cut off from time?" Tobolowsky asks. "The easiest answer that I have is 'surprise.' Maybe the holy always works by ambush."

Another question the film poses is this: *What is the primary instinct?* His mother, whom he calls a kind of Delphic Oracle, always taught him that self-preservation was the primary instinct. This made sense to him, but later in life he felt compelled to expand on her dictum by expressing what it is that preserves us:

"The secular is important," Tobolowsky says. "It's where we live every day. It's the sacred that sustains us."

The Primary Instinct manifests seven of The Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It provides respite from a sick world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It encourages empathy, enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

Many thanks for the research assistance of Bill Waterman.

Wanda also writes the blog [The Mindful Bard: The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self](#).

I Am A Fraud

Deanna Roney



I'm not a real English Major; I love to read and write, but I am a fraud. I am a punctuation nerd, but still use it incorrectly—this makes me a fake English Major, doesn't it?

According to English Major themed memes and common belief in society *all* English majors are "grammar Nazis". It seems in order to be a real English Major you must, not only know everything about punctuation and grammar, but share it with the world: whether asked for or not. However, it is not being particular about

proper punctuation use, or grammar, or how loudly you shout this knowledge to the world that makes an English major. Rather, an English major is anyone who loves to read literature, loves to write, and analyze significant novels. I know many who stalk social media commenting and correcting people's use of apostrophes, commas, word choice, etc. but *they* are not English majors (because they are not enrolled in school as English majors.)

I love reading, I love tearing apart a novel, and I love to write about them, but even after years of being an "official" English Major, I make simple punctuation errors. My tutors, and The Voice editor, all note the same mistake and, while I take the time to learn how to fix it, I constantly lapse back—this lapse is usually coupled with how excited I am about a piece. Making these simple errors makes me feel like I am a fraud, surely a true English Major would not make these simple mistakes. Despite wonderful comments about my in-depth analysis of a novel the punctuation comments haunt me.

This fraudulent feeling is a direct result from the persuasion of social media. The standard for what makes an English major is not how much we know about punctuation. It is not what defines an English Major, what defines an English major is a love for the written word, a love for seeing beyond the face-value of a novel. At least, that is the definition for me. This is why I became an English major. What defines an English major is different for each person who, when enrolling in university, makes the conscious choice to declare their major as English. What is my definition of an English major may not be another's definition. While I love to dive into a novel and read between the lines, others may not. Others may find that the best part of being an English major is perfecting their use of punctuation, grammar, and their writing skills; they may wish to learn how to pass this knowledge onto others while only taking small parts from the literature side.

What has been culturally defined to be an English major is only a small portion of what it takes to be one—what makes one. Like anything else, other majors, cultures as a whole, or society, they all take one small idea, one concept, and run with it, defining an entire diverse body of people as the same. It can be hard not to take these caricatures to heart, to compare your worth to that definition. But, it is simply that, a caricature, a brief sketch of what makes an English major an English major. I am an English major, and I am not a fraud: but I am not a "grammar Nazi". I do not consistently place punctuation in the right place, and I do not want to proof read your paper to see if it is riddled with comma splices (because mine probably is too).

Deanna Roney is an AU student who loves adventure in life and literature

The "Go West" Relationship Test, Part II

Barbara Lehtiniemi



In Part One, I reluctantly follow my husband aboard a Greyhound bus in Ottawa, bound for Vancouver. Can I last four days on a bus? Can our relationship?

Our travels west from Ottawa to Vancouver by Greyhound bus were sadly disappointing. Not because there was anything wrong with the journey—it all went rather smoothly.

That's precisely why I found it disappointing.

Because I expected the trip to be a flop—uncomfortable at best and rife with disaster at worst—I was planning on gaining some relationship

currency from the whole sorry episode. You know, the "Remember the time you made me go to Vancouver by bus?" sort of guilt trip that allows me the right to be catered to. I planned to dine out on this trip until at least December.

I'm not sure how it all went wrong. Maybe having low expectations helped.

I was never worried about the physical journey. I love road trips! Whether I'm in a car, bus, or train, I can just gaze at the passing scenery contently for hours. Give me a window seat, and I'm a happy traveler.

Three anxieties plagued me going into this trip. First, I worried that, because seating isn't reserved, I would end up sitting next to some stranger instead of my traveling companion. Second, I worried that, with several consecutive bus journeys, we would miss a vital connection and experience inconvenient and expensive delays. Finally, I worried about being able to get adequate sleep on the bus, not to mention adequate food.

The first two worries were the big ones, and I was wrong on both counts. For the whole journey, we sat in the second row of seats—together. As for the connections, there was no problem. Since many passengers were continuing on to the next westbound bus, Greyhound would have held the next bus if necessary to ensure we all made our connection.

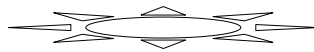
That leaves the justified worry about adequate sleep and food. However, on the overnight segments, fewer passengers meant that most people could stretch out across two seats to sleep. Armed with my airplane-grade blanket, eye mask, ear plugs, and inflatable neck pillow, I didn't get a great sleep, but it was good enough. For food, we left nothing to chance and brought two bags of non-perishable food with us. Between the packed food, and quick meals grabbed at the longer stops, we never went hungry. And with an overnight stay in a Winnipeg hotel, we got one fortifying meal—and one good sleep—halfway through the trip.

After four days and almost 5000 kilometres, I was glad to get off the bus—I felt like I didn't want to sit down for a week. But honestly the whole trip had gone amazingly well. I got to see a great deal of the country once again and absorb the incredible vastness of Canada. The trip was an opportunity to relive memories of other times and other trips.

As a relationship test, rather than being the wedge that drives us apart, the journey highlighted why we are together. We both possess a spirit of adventure and a zany sense of fun. (A 5000-kilometre bus journey is not the craziest thing we've done.) We both like to research and plan in order to reduce unpleasant surprises. Knowing where to find food and flush toilets are high priorities! We are indulgent of each other's foibles. He indulges my preference for the window seat so I can be the photographer, and I indulge his preference for the aisle seat so he can be the manly protector. (Okay, I admit it's probably more about my need for the window seat.) Before, during, and after the trip, we had fun in planning, experiencing, and reminiscing.

Would I do it again? Not often, and not soon, but I would definitely consider another Greyhound bus journey again. There's a lot of Canada east of Ottawa that I'd like to re-explore. And someday, I'll be heading west again when I attend my AU graduation ceremony. The bus is far and away the least expensive way to travel. And, don't forget, he owes me.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario. Follow Barbara on twitter @ThereGoesBarb.



Vitamin Hobby An Important Remedy for Stress Relief

Carla Knipe



So, what do you do in your spare time? If you find that question difficult to answer, you are not alone. The prevailing attitude in society seems to be that hobbies aren't worthy of a second thought, never mind the discipline required to dedicate precious time to one. But, ironically, giving ourselves permission for some quality leisure time may also provide a major antidote to stress.

The idea of hobbies seems a bit twee and counter-productive in trying to balance work, family commitments, and university studies. It certainly is a recent phenomenon in human civilization that people have the opportunity to pursue pastimes for no reason other than that they enjoy them. But the irony is that, even though our society now has the necessary means to pursue hobbies, it seems that less people than ever have at least one activity they enjoy just for the sake of doing it. The idea having free time creates a sense of guilt rather than excitement. We feel

that we should be trying to cram even more tasks into our already full schedules in order to be productive and successful, not dabbling in activities that don't serve an immediate, useful purpose.

But there is a growing body of research by both psychologists and life coaches that suggests there is proof that taking some time off to do something enjoyable measurably boosts productivity and creativity instead of detracting from it. The first recognition of the value of hobbies began in 1975 when Dr. Herbert Benson published "The Relaxation Response", the first book that documented how hobbies were essential for mental health and physical wellbeing. In the forty years since the book was published, there are now many scientific

studies that back up Benson's initial research. Switching from must-do tasks to want-to-do tasks has a measurable effect on improved sleep, heart and digestive health, concentration and focus, and resiliency to stress. If GP's were to write out a prescription for hobbies, then perhaps people would take the value of them more seriously. The fact is that many people remain unconvinced that they have any positive value.

And there lies the problem. Leisure time seems like such a simplistic fix for the epidemic of modern stress, that the more correct solution would be to cure it with a prescription drug or vitamin supplement. So why are we so hesitant to take part in something that provides so many benefits and is also fun?

The biggest resistance to doing what we *like* rather what we *must* is that that we have become too used to being busy. Dropping some activities in our day planner to do something more pleasurable can be extremely difficult. We think that if we take time for ourselves either our career or family schedules or household chores—or all of the above—will suffer, or that we are acting selfish. But one solution might be to use our calendar as a tool to our advantage, to block off a chunk of time, even if it's just a half-hour, to pursue a pastime we enjoy. Booking this appointment serves as a powerful cue that this is time to be set aside specifically to have some personal time off from our normal routine. It may take a lot of willpower to not cancel this booked time and replace it with something else, but think of it as a prescription for wellness, that it should be given the same priority as booking a medical appointment.

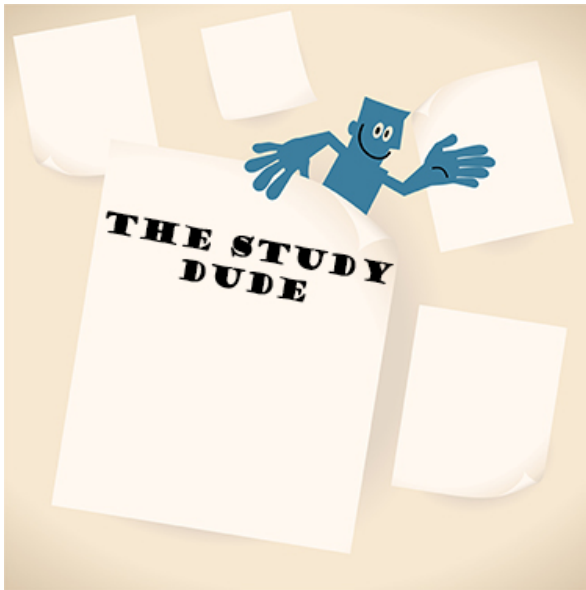
Once you make this commitment, however, it is important to resist the urge to use it for something non-productive such as flopping on the couch and watching television. The idea behind a hobby is to engage in something active. One idea that writing coach Julia Cameron urges everyone to do, whether or not they consider themselves an artist, is to take themselves out on what she calls an Artist Date, a periodic outing to explore something that interests them. As Cameron says, "the Artist Date need not be overtly 'artistic' — think mischief more than mastery. Artist Dates fire up the imagination. They encourage play. When choosing an Artist Date, it is good to ask yourself, 'what sounds fun?' — and then allow yourself to try it." Ideas for Artists' Dates can be as simple as doodling on a page or visiting a museum. This might be the gateway to opening up more options for pursuing a hobby in a deeper level.

And don't think that hobbies require a lot of money. This might be true of an activity like downhill skiing, but there are many options that involve little or no cost. The most important criteria of a hobby is that it is personal—if it is something that works for *you*, then it doesn't matter if anyone else understands or appreciates it. It should be an activity that brings you joy, refreshes you, and makes you look forward to the next session without the thought of an end goal in mind. In psychology, this is called "flow" or "the zone", where the person performing a pleasurable activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and complete absorption where time seems to stand still.

Finding a hobby that fits may not be easy, especially if you haven't been used to having free time. The important thing to remember is to try a variety of new experiences, give yourself time to form an opinion about them, and most importantly, give yourself permission to laugh.

In the next few weeks, I will be highlighting some ideas for hobbies you can try that are a bit out of the ordinary yet still accessible. Hopefully, this will help us busy university students find a bit more balance in our lives.

Carla is an AU student and a caffeinated beverage definitely keeps her going through her studies. However, her pet peeve is seeing people occupy the tables at Starbucks for long periods of time when she can't find a seat.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

How to Write Like a Philosopher

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to write like philosophers Roland Barthes and Ezra Pound.

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

The book *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* by Eric Hayot will open up a brand new style of writing for many. In short, he teaches you how to write like a philosopher.

Pay Attention to Your Paper's Readership

It's funny that the author, Eric Hayot, writes about gauging readership for your paper and book. It's worryingly hilarious because I almost tossed the book out after reading fifty pages. I'm the author's readership, and I couldn't bear the drudgery of reading yet another page. What possibly could he say of insight about readership when he failed horribly at capturing my attention? You see, I ferreted out the main idea of each of his paragraphs with painstaking care—even though there didn't seem to be a main idea in many of them. Combing through his paragraphs, I could find very little that was actually concrete, tangible, or practical to work with. It seemed like, paragraph after paragraph, my labouring to isolate one main idea was like trying to genetically engineer a flying pig. His arguments meandered all over the place. They weren't clear. They weren't continuous.

On top of that, I read in the author's book that he aims to make his readers undergo anxiety. He creates anxiety by starting with a topic and then by flipping to something seemingly unrelated, and then, lastly, by returning to the original idea to relieve the anxiety. I'm an anxiety-prone individual to begin with, and this tidbit on how he aims to induce anxiety in his readership disenchanted me.

Not only that, but he criticized some of my favourite authors on academic writing, calling them arrogant for condemning much academic writing as boring and turgid. Yet these authors are giants in the world of academic writing. I thought Hayot's criticisms broke his own code of conduct: thou shall not criticize other writers due to the anxiety writing induces in the first place. I resigned myself to dispose of his book, returning to it only if in dire need for more books on academic writing.

But then an epiphany occurred, a turning point. I returned to the title of the book and pondered its meaning. The book title *Writing for the Humanities* had me reconsider the author's meandering and highly abstract writing style. And then it dawned on me: He says he writes like philosopher Roland Barthes. Surely, someone who writes academically like a philosopher intends to teach the readership how to write in a similar vein. With this realization, I found myself entering a new paradigm of thought—a secret club, if you will. Eric Hayot was about to present the philosopher's stone, and I, the reader, was privy to it. All of my inhibitions fell to the wayside, and I eagerly read on. The toil of ploughing through his book turned into a labour of love. I, too, would learn how to write like a philosopher

In next week's forthcoming article, I will reveal many more gems from Eric Hayot's book on writing for the humanities. For now, let's look at what Hayot reveals about understanding and catering to your readership:

- On one hand, you come from a place of holistic knowledge on what you are about to write; on the other hand, the reader starts from a blank page. This can create a disjunction in thought between author and readership. Bear this in mind when you write your drafts.
- Further to that, your reader may not read with the attention span you might hope for. You also need to bear this in mind.
- Further still, the reader will likely read your work once and then set the book down never to read it again.
- To keep a continuity, isolate the keywords that you develop throughout your piece of writing, and if the keywords are particularly complex, sprinkle synonyms for them early on in your draft so that people can familiarize themselves with the direction you are taking.
- There should be a dependency among every sentence. No sentence should stand alone, completely independent of the prior or subsequent sentences.
- Write your introduction early on, and, later, go back and redo it. Just because you start with writing an introduction doesn't mean you can't change it later on. The dictates of the readership should help guide your tweaking of the introduction.
- Create what Hayot calls a "psychological arc", which isn't necessarily the same as your content arc. You can do this by creating anxiety, for instance, and then relieving it, creating an emotional, or psychological, tension. To create this anxiety, don't clarify a complex point with "that is to say...". No, don't create a clear and continuous explanation. Instead, create an emotional arc by juggling a second topic in the mix and then returning to that original topic, whereby the second topic and the original topic merge in a new, revelatory way.

How to Motivate Yourself to Write Your Paper

I read a book that advised the reader to sit down for five minute sessions to write. So, I did. I sat down for five minutes for about two months, yet writing daily never gelled into a habit. Finding the time slot for those full five minutes was a random activity. One day, I would write in the morning; the next, at night. The randomness of the writing time slots went against the grain of forming a habit.

I then discovered a temporary fix. If I could access feedback on a regular basis, that in itself would motivate me to write, like finding a writing group of competent academics. So, I began this habit of writing a quota and soliciting feedback, and it worked like a charm, but the feedback came at a price, at a time when the cash-well underwent a temporary drought. My writing stint halted. As a result, I am seeking new solutions for maintaining motivation for writing, although nothing beats feedback when it comes to carving out a piece of prose.

How do writers, like fiction's best-selling author James Patterson, find the impetus to keep writing? Maybe his motivation comes from the millions of dollars he makes per book. I'm sure a million dollar bonus would motivate most people. Or maybe his writing comes from his gift, his passion, his fixation, his obsession.

But what about finding motivation for academic writing? How can we find motivation for writing bland essays when the only reward is at best an A+—a letter of the alphabet that means little more than a pass or fail at the end of the day?

Eric Hayot states that good academic writing induces anxiety. The process of writing invokes fear. Eric provides a number of insightful suggestions on how to get motivated when faced with the daunting task of writing:

- Because writing produces so much anxiety, turn writing into a habit. By turning writing into a habit, you surely will relieve some of the tension of simply getting started.
- Building a habit can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days. Plan on two months to form your habit of writing.
- Plan to write an hour every single day. Hayot recommends morning sessions, as willpower depletes throughout the course of a day.

- If you are teaching or have other big demands, try writing for at least thirty minutes a day. If your schedule is free, try writing for three to four-and-a-half hours a day, taking a rest every 90 minutes.
- Hayot tries to write two pages a day when his schedule is freed up.
- Try chewing gum to aid in concentration.
- If you aim to write two pages a day while your schedule is open, you'll have written a full dissertation within one hundred days. Within two years, you'll have written the dissertation, addressed errors, performed some rewriting, and spent nearly 3/4 a year researching. All done.
- Make your goals small so that you don't get overly disappointed and discouraged when they aren't met. If you don't reach your goal one day, don't pile on the remaining work onto next day's goal. That will only discourage you in the long run. Start each day fresh.
- Build in rewards for goals met.
- If you are stuck, do some freewriting, where you write nonstop for a set period of time. If the sticking point in your writing seems too great to overcome with freewriting, try making an outline of what you wrote, describing each component and how each part fits in the whole. If still stuck, have a colleague or friend read your writing and comment on your work. Hayot recommends sharing your work with a single person, as more than one person makes for too many formalities and airs and trivialities.
- If you face anxiety while writing, question what exactly it is that frightens you and turn it into a research question to solve.
- Hayot likes to write without a clear conclusion in mind as something surprising and enlightening may arise from the research and writing processes.
- Revise as you go. Don't just revise at the very end. It's okay to do some research in between writing stints, but Hayot advises to not let further research endeavours result in procrastination.
- Once you develop the habit of writing daily, don't stop. Hayot stopped at one point and found it immeasurably difficult to get back into the habit of writing daily.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

Hayot, Eric. 2014. *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities*. NY, New York: Columbia University Press.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.

So long, AUSU Forums! With the rollout of AUSU's new website last week, the student discussion forums disappeared.



AthaU Facebook Group

Jodi questions why there is a penalty for requesting online exams less than 30 days before the exam date. Davis wonders if it's possible to complete a course in under a month. Vicki seeks input on what kind of reader to buy for e-texts.

Other posts include feelings of failure, prerequisites, writers' block, and courses CMNS 333, EDUC 201, FNCE 371, FREN 375, MATH 215, and PSYC 375.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Scholarship and award deadline is October 15! Check which #scholarships you're eligible for! <http://ow.ly/T36EJ>."

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "Our new website is now live! It has course evals, online awards apps, blog, and more! <http://www.ausu.org/> #AthaU."

Music Review

Luke Underhill

Samantha Stevens



Artist: Luke Underhill

EP: *Atlas Unplugged*

I am always amazed when a young person exhibits such phenomenal talent and chooses to share their talent with the world. Luke Underhill is one such musician. Blessed with an amazing voice, a gift for writing, an uncanny ability to play various instrument masterfully, and a wisdom well beyond his years, one that shines through every lyric he sings, Luke Underhill is a musician to watch. Even more startling is that this young man is only 19-years-old, yet I believe his music outshines anything on the radio today.

From a town near Chicago, Luke's interest in music began at an early age. *Atlas Unplugged* is his third EP, with his first EP, *Back to November*, released in 2013. Luke also plays live with his

band The Voyage, and has performed at many venues and festivals around Chicago.

Often compared to a young John Mayer, Luke's music also reminds me of Train, Bryan Adams, George Michael, and Rob Thomas. *Atlas Unplugged* features acoustic versions of the songs from Luke's other EPs, *Atlas* and *Back to November*, which had been released only a week earlier. Luke wanted to offer fans a version of his songs that is stripped down and full of raw emotions. He stated that "I feel like the unplugged versions are more intimate and emotional than my full band recordings. What you hear on these is essentially what you would be hearing if you were listening from outside my bedroom door." The results are simple sounds driven by deep and passionate lyrics.

I usually do not enjoy the acoustic versions of songs because they often sound unpolished, with little care given to balancing the singing and music. However, this is not the case on *Atlas Unplugged*.

My favourite song on the eight track EP is "Stars (Acoustic)", which is from Luke's first EP, *Back to November*. The original reminds me of "Freedom" by George Michael (one of my favourite songs). The original is fairly upbeat with a steady rhythm, but the music has a tendency at times to overpower Luke's vocals. However, the acoustic version of the song features only Luke's vocals and a beautifully played piano. The tempo is slightly slower, and the result is a song that I feel is a million times better than the original, despite my love for the original song. Luke's willingness to share his raw music with listeners was a wise decision, since both his raw and processed music are so different. This allows listeners to appreciate the extent of Luke's talents.

The remainder of the EP is equally as amazing, and I highly recommend checking it out as well as Luke's other EPs. All of Luke's music can be previewed and purchased on iTunes.

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.



That's A Plan

Before long I'll begin packing for my Canmore getaway. Checking the reminders from past trips should ensure I don't forget anything I need or bring anything I don't. Bring peanut butter; don't bring sugar. Bring scissors, a surge protector, a reading light; don't bring Kleenex, shampoo, or a hair dryer.

Typically I shop Safeway when I hit town and buy the yogurt, fruits, and veggies I'll need during the week. I bring miniature containers of condiments and spices to jazz up whatever I cook. I treat myself to a lovely Thai meal at least once.

I try very hard to let my body guide my actions during the week. Eat when I'm hungry, sleep when I'm tired. Rather than letting the clock or someone else dictate when it's mealtime or bedtime. There's a freedom that comes with making decisions for yourself and not worrying about compromise. Would I ever get Roy to eat Thai? Nope. How many times has he growled at me to turn off the light, put away my book, and go to sleep? Too many to count.

Now that I know that reading fiction is not a sin I will bring some recreational reading. But I'll also use this chunk of time to do some interior work. I'm inviting Julia Cameron (of *The Artist's Way* fame) to join me. By following her techniques and using a couple of workbooks I have, I can inch closer to self-actualization and a life of happy ever after. Or not. Maybe I'll reread Joan Anderson's *A Weekend to Change Your Life*. Hell, I'd have leftover time to spare.

Of course, I'll bring my crystals. I also have a couple (okay, closer to forty) sketchbooks and gorgeous journals just waiting for someone, anyone to finally make a mark. Maybe I'll banish my critic by colouring in my new Mandala Magic book. The twenty-four luscious Crayola fine line markers appeal to the artist in me.

I just found three books (*Love Yourself, Live Your Spirit; A Life in Hand*~~*Creating the Illuminated Journal* and *Writing Life Stories*) on my night table that should also make the trip. Or perhaps it's time to read all of Sark's books. Or complete Sarah Ban Breathnach's *Simple Abundance Companion*. And I better take my tarot cards and learn how to use them.

Do you see the dilemma? Everywhere I turn there are books, ideas, explorations calling out to me. I get excited. Wonder how I will choose what to take, what to do. Yet I know in my heart of hearts that I can't possibly do all I want in a week (or even a lifetime).

But as I tell you this, I see a solution. If I schedule one hour every morning to work on one of these interests I'd be living mindfully, in the moment, and not waiting for one perfect week out of the year. Morning would be perfect because that's when I'm sharpest, because it could affect the outcome of the day, because it isn't likely to get bumped at the end of a tiring day. Now that's a plan, from where I sit.

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



Cheated in the Past

Dear Barb:

I am just finishing my last course at AU. My boyfriend and I have been dating for almost a year and we get along great. I wasn't aware of any problems between us; however I just found out that my boyfriend slept with someone else. Last Saturday night he went to a party with some friends, while I went home to visit my parents for the weekend. One of my friends who was at the party told me my boyfriend got really drunk and ended up having sex with a girl at the party. My friend didn't know who she was. I am totally devastated and don't know what to do. I haven't mentioned it to my boyfriend and he hasn't said anything, although he has been acting pretty sheepishly. Not sure if I should bring it up, or wait for him to mention it. I'm really not even sure I want to continue in this relationship. I don't think I will ever be able to trust him again. Looking for some direction. Thanks Tammy.

Hi Tammy;

Before you make any decisions you and your boyfriend need to have a serious discussion about what exactly happened and why. At that point you will be able to decide for yourself how you feel about your boyfriend's explanation. You have to decide if you believe this was a onetime event or if there is a good possibility it will happen again. If you are unable to let this go and move on with your relationship it will never work. Every time you have a disagreement this will be brought up and rehashed. Perhaps before you actually make the final decision you may want to go for some

couple counseling, it will be beneficial to you both. Best of luck Tammy.

Dear Barb:

I am a forty-year-old mother of three. I had a rough upbringing as my mother was very neglectful and gave me away to relatives to be raised. I haven't seen her for years and now she wants to become a part of my life and see her grandchildren. I don't know if I can forgive her, however my children want to meet their grandmother. I have never talked about my mom to my kids, so they don't know a lot about her, as they are still quite young. I am happy now and I'm scared to allow her back into my life, as I don't want to be hurt again. What do you think? Help, Hanna!

Hi Hanna:

You seemed to have gotten over your dysfunctional upbringing and have found happiness in your life, a feat that many people are not able to accomplish that. I think you owe it to yourself, your children, and your mother to give your mother a second chance. She may have worked through a lot of the issues that caused her to do the things she did to you and now wants an opportunity to make it up to you and her grandchildren. If you try and you are not able to let the past go, at least you will know that you have tried and have also given your children an opportunity to meet their grandmother. Thanks for your question Hanna.

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.

5 MEANINGLESS FRENCH PHRASES THAT MAKE YOU LOOK SMART



HERE'S YOUR ALL-PURPOSE ARSENAL OF CLEVERNESS FOR WHEN SOMEONE ASKS YOUR OPINION ON SOMETHING YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT.

1 Je ne sais pas le mot juste.

"I DON'T KNOW THE RIGHT WORD."
(SAID WITH A SHRUG AND A DISTANT STARE.)

2 Cela va sans dire.

"IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING."

3 Alors!

(NOT EVEN THE FRENCH KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS.)

4 On n'a pas gardé les cochons ensemble.

"WE HAVEN'T GUARDED PIGS TOGETHER." (IN OTHER WORDS, YOU DON'T KNOW ME WELL ENOUGH TO ASK.)

DIDEROT N'A PAS RÉPONDU À CETTE QUESTION LE MIEUX?

5 "DIDN'T DIDEROT SAY IT BEST?" (IF THEY ASK YOU WHAT DIDEROT SAID, LOOK SHOCKED AND ANSWER WITH #3.)



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IMPORTANT DATES

- **Oct 10:** Last day to register in courses starting Nov 1
- **Oct 13:** Council Meeting @3:30pm MDT
- **Oct 15:** Deadline to complete degree requirements for graduation in November
- **Oct 19:** Federal Election – [GET OUT AND VOTE!](#)
- **Oct 31:** Deadline to apply for course extension for courses ending Nov 30

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Note, in order to qualify, you must be an AUSU or AUGSA member, and you must fill out the pledge form completely so we can verify your membership using the information provided. Winners will be randomly selected after October 19.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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