

Vol 24 Issue 03 2016-01-22

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Examining the Exam Rooms

Comparing AU's Exam Facilities

Course Exam

Religious Studies 211

*Plus:
The Travelling Student
Council Connection
and much more!*



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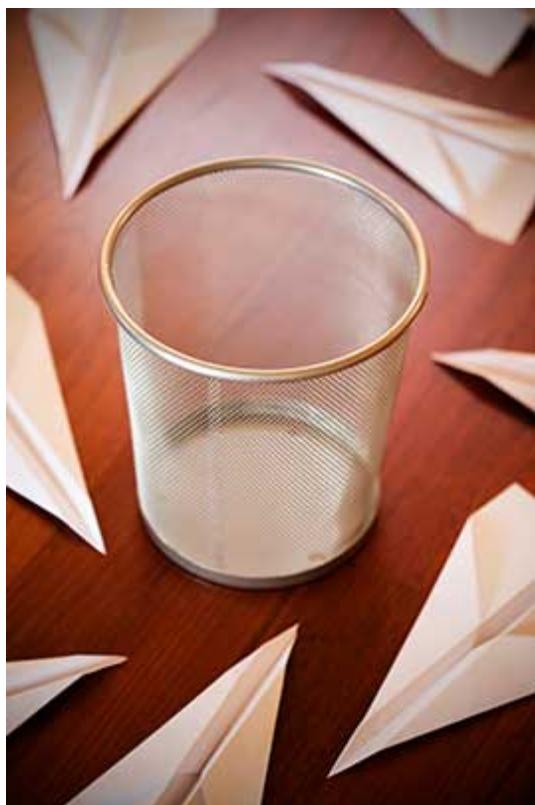
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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**Karl Low****The World's Fastest Editorial**

Why do I keep doing this to myself?

This week, we have some 35 pages of content in *The Voice Magazine*. It could have been shorter, I technically could have left out one or two of the regular columns that arrived late, but it was just good stuff and I always feel like I should try to give you as much as I possibly can. Besides, I've already got three articles on deck for next week, so that is already shaping up to be a large one.

Unfortunately, it means I end up in situations like this, where getting the layout to gel seems to take an endless amount of time, and so I end up rushing through an editorial right at the deadline. Not that anybody who knows me is terribly surprised. I'll admit, I have a horrible track record of leaving the things that are solely my responsibility to the last minute. Given the nature of Athabasca University, I'm probably not alone. Even that you're reading *The Voice Magazine* right now instead of hitting the books means your learning style may be closer to mine than you'd like. But if you are a chronic procrastinator, take heart, you're among your peers here.

At any rate, one of the things keeping me busy this week was a report on the most recent public council meeting, that happened on January 14th. You can find it in this week's Council Connection, including a call for volunteers for AUSU's new Executive Compensation Review Committee. Since then, AUSU has also had one of their discussion meetings, and I've been told that one resolution that came from it was "BIRT AUSU develop a goal for the AUSU Goals 2015-2016 to support *The Voice Magazine* as an important member service and communication forum of AUSU." When you remember that as recently as the by-election, council members were raising the question of whether *The Voice Magazine* should be supported at all, this seems to signal a significant change of heart.

Also this week, I have a new instalment of Course Exam, and this week we're looking at the new Religious Studies course, Death and Dying in World Religions, with an interview with the Course designer. Carla Knipe has also completed her look at one of the issues specific to Athabasca University, the different ways that students take their exams. From the exam centers in AU Calgary and Edmonton, to the invigilation network, she's talked to students from all three to give us a comparison. So now you'll know what you're missing out on, and whether you should be happy about that or not.

I can't forget our Feature article this week, Minds We Meet brings us student Amanda Gillis. For her, AU is a way that allows her to manage her long-distance relationship, and her even longer-distance trips to Hawaii between her leading Girl Guide groups and finishing her degree.

Plus, a new instalment of The Travelling Student, a look at what your personal library might be missing, and music as health care are all just some of the things you'll get in this issue of *The Voice Magazine*.

Enjoy the read!

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

MINDS WE MEET



Amanda Gillis is an AU student and a life-long resident of Calgary AB. She is in the Bachelor of Arts program at AU with a double major in History and Anthropology. Ultimately, Amanda plans to be an elementary school teacher.

The Voice Magazine recently interviewed Amanda, and here's what she had to say about school, Brownies, and Jane Austen.

Besides school, what do you do?

I'm a Brownie leader. I've been in Guiding since I was young and I've received my 20-year pin. I took a break from Guiding for a while, but got back in around five years ago. When a new Brownie unit was formed in my area, I jumped at the chance to be a Brownie leader. I'm looking forward to leading our pack on a camping trip in five weeks.

Why did you choose AU for your studies?

Mainly for the flexibility, which allows me to take temporary work assignments. It also gives me the opportunity to participate in extra Girl Guide activities, and visit my fiancé at his farm in Minnesota. Also, I'm due for some knee surgery soon so I can't take regular classes and chance that I'll need surgery in the middle of a semester.

When I began my program at AU, I was originally majoring in History. I began filling up the blank spots in my course requirements with Anthropology courses. After a few anthropology courses, I looked into it and realized I could add Anthropology to History as a double major.

What do you do like to do when you're not studying?

In addition to Guiding, I like geo-caching, and I take my dog, Sprocket, along. I do cross-stitching and crochet. I also participate in Postcrossing, which involves sending postcards to people all over the world, and receiving postcards back. On the Postcrossing.com site, people register and then are assigned five random addresses to send postcards to. You mail those out and the receivers register them on the Postcrossing site. As each card is registered, random participants worldwide are assigned to send postcards to you, and you can receive more addresses to send cards to. The number of cards you can send and receive increases once you become a regular postcarder. Since I registered to participate five or six years ago, I've received about 700 postcards from all over; the most unusual place was Uzbekistan.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

My Dad. He went back to school when I was eight years old. He got a degree in History, then a teaching degree. Even after that he was always learning. Recently, he went to AU to get his Master of Distance Education. Although our programs and courses are quite different, we have a friendly competition to see who gets the higher marks on assignments.

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

Jane Austen. I am completely obsessed with her. I have all her books. I have to keep buying copies of Pride and Prejudice because I re-read the book so often the spine cracks and the pages fall out. My fiancé bought me a beautiful hardcover copy, but I'm afraid to open it—I don't want to damage it.

My second choice for lunch would be Lucy Maud Montgomery. As with Jane Austen, I have all her books and the movies based on the books. I re-read the books and re-watch the movies often. When I'm studying, I sometimes put one of the movies on. I find having it playing in the background has a calming effect.

Describe your experience with online learning. What do you like? Dislike?

I love the freedom. If I have an appointment, or if something is going on in Girl Guides, it's easy to get away from school work. And I can study anywhere: I've even studied on a beach in Hawaii. What I don't like is e-texts, especially since I've already paid for a full text in my course fees. I'm a tactile learner and I prefer a physical textbook. Reading an e-text makes it so easy to get distracted online, too.

*The results of Postcrossing***Have you had a time when you wavered about your education?**

Yeah, when I was at SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.) I couldn't decide what I wanted to take. I switched focus four times before deciding what I really wanted to do. I started in the hotel restaurant management program at SAIT, then later switched to business administration. I liked business but I knew I didn't want to be behind a desk all the time. I took a break from school, and when I decided to return I was accepted into the library tech studies. Ultimately I decided to focus on history and anthropology.

It was Brownies that helped me to decide. Leading the younger girls—seven-to-eight year olds—I could see that they really wanted to learn. It's been fun watching them go from where they were at the beginning of the year to now; they've really grown in confidence. Leading Brownies really got me thinking about being a teacher because I can apply my Brownie experience to teaching.

What was your most memorable AU course?

History 215, which I'm working on now. I'm just finishing the unit on Ancient Greece and it's been fascinating. There's just so much I didn't know. For example, the Greeks had an atomic theory in 450 BC!

If you won \$20 million in a lottery, what would you do with it?

I'd move to Hawaii and say goodbye to snow-shoveling. I'd finish my AU degree, then get my Masters in Anthropology and Archaeology. Conveniently, the University of Hawaii has that program (and AU doesn't.)

What have you given up to go to AU that you regret the most? Was it worth it?

I don't think I've given up anything. Maybe some cross-stitching time.

If you were the new president of AU, what would be your first project?

Get rid of e-texts! That would be job number one. Then I'd develop a Masters program in Anthropology and Archaeology.

What is your favourite sound?

My Brownies having the time of their lives. We recently arranged a "lateover" (at which the girls stay late but they don't sleep over) and we took the pack out for pizza and then to Build-a-Bear. They had the best time ever, building teddy bears and showing each other their creations. The laughter was incredible.



Amanda's Blanket of Badges

What is your most prized possession?

My Guiding camp blanket. It has 20 years of crests on it—all hand sewn on. The crests on my blanket are from different camps and events I've attended. Some were my mother's when she was in Guiding and some I've traded with other Guiders or had given to me when they went on trips or as a thank you. I've got about 130 crests on the blanket and 10 more waiting to be sewn on. My blanket is a treasure and I'd be heartbroken if anything happened to it.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

Don't take yourself too seriously. Laugh at your mistakes. Don't care too much what others think about you.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

Overall the experience has been pretty good. I've only had to switch tutors once. I'm quite independent but I try to stay in contact with my tutor throughout the course. It helps keep me accountable.

Where has life taken you so far, besides Hawaii?

I spent five weeks at Laval University in Quebec in the French language program, which I needed for work. I spent two glorious weeks in Italy where I traveled around the whole "boot." I've been to Paris, and I spent twelve weeks in Prague—I have family there. I visit Minnesota often to see my fiancé, and I make quick trips to Iowa to visit a cross-stitch store there.

What (non-AU) book are you reading now?

I just finished *The 5th Wave*, by Richard Yancey, a teen book. Next I'll read the second book of that series, *The Infinite Sea*.

The Travelling Student

A Night on the Town

Philip Kirkbride



Update: It's been a while since I've sent in a travelling student article as my schedule got a bit hectic. A lot has happened since and I've had the chance to continue my travels in Thailand, Alaska, Quebec for a French immersion program, and Newfoundland where I recently finished a semester as a visiting student. I now have an apartment just outside Montreal and look forward to telling these stories of the course of 2016.

My name is Philip Kirkbride. I'm a college graduate from Ontario studying at AU. I've always wanted to do an exchange program or study abroad but never found the right time to do so. This is the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program. In the last

instalment we stopped in Byron Bay, Australia, for the night, making our way to the main street for a night on the town.

Both being exhausted from our travels, and excited for a cold beer, Dylan and I headed into the first bar from the beach: a large patio bar—half indoor, half outdoors. After grabbing a beer we went to the outdoor half to enjoy the combination of music, beer, and beautiful scenery. With the Australian summer starting we weren't the only ones, though in Byron Bay the difference between summer and winter is just the difference between 'the water is perfect' and 'the water is almost perfect'.

By our second round we had joined three Australians, Jen, Sarah, and Kyle, at their table. Kyle and Sarah were a couple from Sydney who were meeting up with their friend, Jen, who'd moved to northern Australia. Dylan and I told our rag tag story of joining forces to get my rental RV and ourselves across the country. While Kyle told us of his experience taking a working Holiday in Canada living it up at Whistler and flying back to Sydney broke.

As we finished the last drops of our drinks it was decided we'd head to our new friends' hotel room for another round—or two. It was a nice place only a block behind Main Street. We sat up on the balcony drinking rum and laughing at anything and everything. At some point I agreed to get an Australian flag temporary tattoo. For the rest of the night we forgot of the journey ahead and the many hours of driving we'd have to do the next morning.

After we finished the rum we found ourselves with our new friends at Byron Bay's self-proclaimed backpacker bar, Cheeky Money. The bar is far from classy, as the 2.2 star rating on Google maps will tell you. Despite this, having the cheapest beers on the strip keeps it packed with young people from around the world. Playing a game of giant Jenga I even ran into the two German girls I had met in Sydney.

As the night went on the hours blurred until closing time, when the bouncers started kicking us out. It was only walking back to the RV ready to get some sleep that I remembered the distance we still had to drive (not to mention the mounting deadlines for class assignments). I jumped into the top bunk of the RV dreading the early morning ahead.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to write up the snappiest thing someone you interviewed ever said.

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.

This week's Study Dude article takes on part two of the look at William Zinsser's iconic book *On Writing Well*. He shows you the ropes of writing, of making science accessible, and of interviewing.

Writing Advice

The best piece of writing advice came to me from my editor. Write like you would speak in everyday conversation, he said. I've read tons of books on writing for these Study Dude articles. Many books hint at that piece of advice; few come out and state it.

The next best writing advice came from Dr. Helen Sword's book *Stylish Academic Writing*. She reveals everything you need to know about how to write clear and elegant prose. She even makes light of nominalizations by calling them "zombie nouns." Her book focuses on fit writing versus flabby writing, with a tongue-in-cheek way of pointing out writing errors.

William Zinsser outlines writing errors similar to those discussed by Helen Sword, but Zinsser likes to use excerpts to illustrate his points. In his book *On Writing Well*, he uncovers, in the scope of a single chapter, multiple rules for writing that you shouldn't take lightly:

- Use active verbs at every opportunity. Avoid passive verbs as they weaken the writing.
- Use no more than two syllable words. Short words are punchier and livelier.
- Use words that convey imagery or sound: "glitter, dazzle, twirl, beguile, scatter, swagger, poke, pamper, vex" (p. 68)
- Try not to use verbs that rely on a preposition such as "turn off".
- When choosing adverbs, make sure they don't just repeat the verb's meaning. Try to get a surprising contrast with the adverb and verb combinations wherever fitting. Otherwise, your adverb is likely redundant.
- Similarly, don't use adjectives that repeat the meaning of the noun. Everyone knows a sunset is beautiful, but few think of the sunset as death. [Sometimes, writers attribute adjectives to things that reflect a mood of a character. A person who just witnessed a crime, for instance, might see the sunset as deathly red.]
- Don't use too many qualifiers like "sort of", "somewhat", "rather". Just come out and boldly say what you want to say.
- Make two or three short sentences out of a long one. Write short sentences.
- Don't use exclamation points. Use your word order to create emphasis, where important words come at the very end of a sentence or paragraph.

- Use dashes and periods instead of semi-colons, generally.
- Put words like "however" in the middle of a sentence, not at the very beginning or very end.
- If you have a choice between a noun or a verb, use a verb.
- Avoid multiple nouns. Rely instead on a single noun or verb.
- Make your paragraphs short. Long paragraphs discourage readers.
- Whenever there is a shift in time, place, or mood, signal these changes with a transitional word.
- Don't use "there was" or "it is". Just get to the point.
- Write about things that inspire your passions, such as your hobbies, work, or discipline.

Make Science Writing Understandable

Once, a math professor showed me his academic research. His paper looked like a mumbo-jumbo of symbols, numbers, and equations. Nothing on that page looked coherent to me in spite of my years in the math department. I think he was trying to impress me with the foreignness of it all. Needless to say, I felt ill-suited for tapping into an NSERC grant to be his research student. If I couldn't understand the end product, what help could I be along the way?

Zinsser and others show that writing science isn't about making things less transparent. Writing science isn't about hiding behind jargon. Writing science is about clarity, simplicity, and elegance. Jargon-like writing reminds me of medical students passing off poor medical knowledge with sloppy, unreadable writing. If your writing looks more like Hebrew than English, then med school is a sure thing.

Zinsser wants you to write personably when you talk about science:

- Pretend your reader has no clue about the science you discuss. Write so clearly that the most dumbfounded reader can easily grasp your scientific discussion.
- Start with a single scientific fact and branch out from there.
- Try to use visuals in your scientific writing to simplify complex topics.
- Write personably, not scientifically.
- Don't write about science. Put the human in it; write about people doing science.
- Restrict your technical words to a handful.

Interviewing and Writing About Others

This segment of the Study Dude article does look at a more journalistic style of interviewing and writing about people. However, these journalistic principles could be applied to reporting on any subjects you interview for your thesis or papers.

Recently, I wrote an article in a print magazine that required me to interview a subject for forty-five minutes. He said some rather off-the-wall and telling comments, and these made excellent fodder for a story. I tried to take his most unusual anecdotes and weave them into a narrative. I saved the funniest quote for the end, foreshadowing it in my first sentence. It made for a cute cover story.

Whether you work on your thesis or do actual interviews in a research design course, ensure that you create compelling quotes to weave into your writing. Sometimes the unusual comments make for the most interesting discussion. Similarly, common patterns and themes that run through your interviews expose the backbone of your findings.

Zinsser presents some interview tips that hold mostly for journalists, but can work nicely for academics interviewing people or writing up the interviews.

- When interviewing others, try to get them to speak about their passions, their interests, their joys and fears.
- Nonfiction writing, such as journalistic writing, requires a large number of interesting quotes.
- Interview people with fires in their bellies.
- Practice interviewing people at any opportunity. Like anything, the more you do it, the better you get.
- Interview someone who has an unusual, fascinating, or relevant story.
- Interview feminists.
- When interviewing people, don't hold back. They tend to love the spotlight and want your questions.
- Create a list of potential interview questions before the interview takes place.
- Isolate the punchiest responses.
- Be respectful of your interview subject. Don't fudge his or her quote. Add two at most words to clarify meaning when the quote needs work.
- Keep your best quote for the end of your write-up.
- Your first paragraph (or lead) should reveal why your subject is worthy of a write-up.
- In journalist writing, just say *so-and-so said*. Don't try to find synonyms for the word "said", although occasionally words like "he added" might be fitting.
- You can chop up and change your interviewees words, just as long you don't change the meaning.

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

Zinsser, William. (2006). *On Writing Well*. New York, NY: Collins.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group



Sandra is doing PLAR and asks other students' thoughts on the process. Casey inquires about a place to write her exams in Toronto. Ashley offers to sell her *Management of Human Resources* textbook.

Other posts include citing your own work, how to find a course coordinator, and courses ACCT 245, ADMN 404, BIOL 235, CMIS 351, PHIL 333, and POLI 350.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "The case for #OnlineEducation from @HuffPostEdu <http://goo.gl/LrKEeW>."

@AU_Business tweets: "Grand Challenges Canada is looking for students & grads for their summer work program. Apply by Jan 22! [@gchallenges](http://goo.gl/73PUch)."

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "We have a new poll on our website! <http://www.ausu.org> (bottom right). Check back every 2 weeks for a new one!"

Youtube

Lewis Beck posts a video tour of the halls of Athabasca University.

Reading Globally

Barbara Lehtiniemi



When writer Ann Morgan examined the contents of her bookshelf a few years ago, she made what she calls an "alarming discovery." The books on her shelves were mostly English works written by British and North American authors. Considering that Morgan is British and English is her mother tongue, her reading material isn't that surprising. But Morgan realized that, by limiting her reading selections to English works by British and North American authors, she was missing out on a large part of the world.

To overcome this "massive cultural blindspot" in her reading, Morgan decided to "prescribe herself an intensive course of global reading." Morgan challenged herself to read one book—a novel, short story collection, or memoir—from every country in the

world. Each book had to be written originally in that country's language; Morgan would read the book's English translation. She gave herself one year to complete the project.

After watching Morgan's TED video, [*My Year Reading a Book From Every Country in the World*](#), in which she describes her year-long project, I carefully examined the contents of my bookshelves. Since I regularly borrow books from the library, I checked my reading history there too. My reading material survey revealed results similar to Morgan's: I primarily read British and North American authors who are writing in English.

There were a few exceptions. I have read a handful of translated classics, including *Don Quixote* (Spanish), *Anna Karenina* (Russian), *Madame Bovary* (French), *The Prince* (Italian), *The Iliad* (Greek), and a few Icelandic Sagas. As a nod to my husband's Finnish heritage, I've read the English translations of *The Unknown Soldier*, *Seven Brothers*, and the *Lapp King's Daughter*. And I've read a few contemporary novels: *The Snowman* by Jo Nesbø (Norwegian), *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon (Spanish), and *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* by Gil Courtemanche (French, but set in Rwanda.)

I'm tempted to include *I am Malala*, by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb, even though it was written in English. What I found particularly interesting, beyond that book's primary subject matter, were the details of Malala's day-to-day life growing up in Pakistan: the domestic arrangements of her family's home, the cultural values of the wider community, and how leisure time, education, transportation, and extended family arrangements were dealt with. Reading *I am Malala* was a global learning experience for me.

Disappointingly, my list excluded most of the world. Like Morgan, I resolved to do better at reading globally. Unlike Morgan, who sometimes recruited volunteers to help source and translate books, my job finding books will be easier. Morgan's blog contains a [list](#) of every book she read during her year of reading the world. Since completing her project in 2012, she has updated the list to include more books from each country.

You can watch the [TED Talks](#) video of Morgan's experience and read her blog, [*A Year of Reading the World*](#) for inspiration. While Morgan completed her goal of reading a book from each of 196 countries in the space of one year—about four books a week—you need not emulate her ambitious pace.

However quickly you read, each book will allow you, as Morgan says, to "look at the world through different eyes." Each global book is one step to discovering the "richness, diversity, and complexity of our remarkable planet", from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

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



The Fit Student

Combat Anxiety: Detoxify, Sleep, Take Supplements and Medicine

Marie Well

Herbs. Medicine. Detoxifications. If anxiety keeping you awake at night, these items can help dispel your anxious feelings. Edmund J. Bourne in his book *The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook* provides insights into how to combat insomnia and toxicity, and what medicines or herbs to take to relieve your stress. I have personal experience with some of the herbs and medicines, so I can provide a case study (of sample size one) for you to consider.

While the following information is gleaned from a credible book, none of the advice is meant to be a substitute for a doctor's recommendation. Please contact a physician or psychiatrist if you wish to explore any of the following options in more detail.

I must add here, however, that I used to experience severe panic attacks every three days. While working in an office scenario, I had panic attacks daily. But, since reading Bourne's book, I haven't had a panic attack in over seventy days. I thought I would never find a cure. I didn't use any medications, either. Dedicating the hours reading Bourne's book can change your experience of stress, too.

How to Counter Insomnia to Relieve Anxiety

I would stay wide awake for hours at night when I worked at one particular job. I fretted about job tasks from the time I went to bed until hours later, when my overactive mind would finally settle down and I would fall asleep. Generally, I just laid in bed, staring at the ceiling, panicked, worrying about my job. I fretted painstakingly over little details--whether I contacted so-and-so or made the proper entries. When I woke up, tired and groggy, I would dismay over my lack of sleep. The following night, the cycle of sleeplessness would continue, this time with the added worry that I hadn't slept. Day after day, I slogged through work, half awake and distressed. I worried like I had just spawned a wart.

Edmund J. Bourne gives much advice, from herbal remedies to strategies, all for falling asleep easily and soundly. One of his strategies that I find most poignant is to not stay in bed after twenty to thirty minutes of wakefulness. Instead, he advises to get up and do something relaxing, such as watching television or read some light-content books.

Also, avoid caffeine at all costs, have a hot shower or bath before bed, and get plenty of aerobic exercise—but not within three hours of your bedtime. Watch comforting television programs before bed, but nothing violent or overly charged. Don't view the Web or engage in anything mentally or physically challenging before bed.

Also, don't drink alcohol or have a heavy meal before bed. Don't nap for more than 20 minutes during the daytime. These little decisions can make the difference between a peaceful night's sleep and hours of tossing and turning.

If you can't sleep, let it go. Don't worry. Instead, listen to gentle music, meditate, do muscle relaxation techniques, or imagine beautiful sceneries. Prescription tryptophan may help you sleep as well, especially when taken with a carbohydrate, such as milk. Melatonin may also curtail sleepless nights. Consult a doctor when taking any supplements though, as they can lead to addiction.

How to Prevent Body Toxicity to Prevent Anxiety

The Western diet is plagued with toxic substances such as processed meats, refined wheat, candies, and caffeine. All of these substances can contribute to anxiety by making the body more toxic.

When I learned of the benefits of going caffeine- and sugar free, I reduced my caffeinated tea consumption to, at most, one a day. I also reduced my usage of sugar in tea beverages. Before this initiative, I drank five caffeinated beverages and consumed fifteen packets of sugar a day. Of course, this intake of toxins resulted in frequent panic attacks. Since reducing these intakes, my incidence of panic attack has reduced significantly.

Wisely, Edmund J. Bourne advises his readership on ways to detoxify the body for better anxiety management. Eating too much, consuming alcohol, poor diets, drugs—all of these things contribute to toxicity in the body. To overcome them, avoid meat products, especially red meat. Don't smoke. Don't drink alcohol. Don't intake caffeine or sugar. Avoid sweets. Avoid refined flour. Avoid fried foods. Avoid anything that makes you salivate, in other words.

Instead, eat lots of fresh fruits and raw vegetables, bran, whole grains, green veggies, garlic, nuts, and seeds. After a while of eating healthy foods, you will acquire a taste for them. Take a multivitamin and drink lots of water everyday.

Herbal Supplements to Treat Anxiety

Herbal supplements for combating anxiety can offer a better alternative than medicines for mild to moderate anxiety.

When I experienced excessive workplace anxiety, I received an over the counter prescription for tryptophan that my work health plan covered. Tryptophan, a sedative, is an amino acid found in food items such as turkey and milk. The Tryptophan in turkey explains why you feel tired after a big Thanksgiving dinner. When I went on tryptophan, I received high dosages for the suppression of anxiety that I took nightly and occasionally during the day.

While it didn't combat my anxiety, I did experience vivid dreaming. I entered a new realm of existence every time I went to sleep. My dreams primarily consisted of nightmares at that time in my life, so I discontinued the herb.

Herbal remedies are one of the areas discussed by Edmund J. Bourne. Take vitamin B Complex and vitamin C. Calcium magnesium in liquid form serves as a tranquilizer to abate anxiety. Consume antioxidants from foods such as berries and apples.

Herbs you might consider include Kava, although this is not allowed to be sold within Canada due to some serious concerns about liver damage. Valerian is another natural tranquilizer which reduces anxiety symptoms and aids in sleeping. Saint-John's-wort treats depression and also anxiety, although it is less effective for dealing with panic attacks, PTSD, or OCD.

Other helpful herbs for dealing with anxiety include passionflower, gotu kola, and ginkgo biloba.

As for amino acids, tryptophan, theanine (found in green tea), GABA, and Tyrosine can also help mitigate anxiety symptoms.

Antidepressants or Tranquilizers to Treat Severe Anxiety

Edmund J. Bourne invites the reader to explore the possibility of medication. He suggests that medications, such as antidepressants or tranquilizers, should be considered only in situations where panic occurs once or more times daily or where significant distress results from anxiety attacks.

I never went on an antidepressant to treat severe anxiety, although the more I read about antidepressants, the more interested I become. I did, however, go on a tranquilizer, a benzodiazepine tranquilizer: Ativan. I took Ativan while at work, in spite of the drugs risk of dependency.

I found that the lower dosages of Ativan weren't effective in stopping the panic attacks. So, I took higher doses. But as a result, I stumbled around in the workplace, slurring my words like a drunkard. Fortunately, my colleagues and employers were all highly educated and no-one brought my bizarre behavior to my attention. In fact, my boss's wife, who is a dear friend to this day, knew about my intake of Ativan and expressed compassion. She prescribed herbal formulas that I took religiously. None of it really worked, however.

Every single day, the anxiety reappeared, which made it more likely that my next attack would last even longer. When I read that these tranquilizers can increase anxiety over time, particularly if dependency on the drug occurs, I quickly went off it. In retrospect, going off the Ativan may have saved me from extreme anxiety later on. It turns out that benzodiazepine tranquilizers, like Ativan, should only be used for six months to two years. But the more addicted you get to Ativan, the more anxiety you experience.

Tranquilizers can be effective for short term use, such as just before a high performance situation for people with performance anxiety. Beware, however. The benzodiazepine tranquilizers, in particular, are addictive and only suppress the anxiety while taking the medicine. These tranquilizers don't address the cause. Once you go off the tranquilizer, the anxiety symptoms may return or even grow worse than before, especially if you have developed an addiction.

Some people with social phobia respond well to SSRI antidepressants. These antidepressants are especially effective for treating panic attacks, agoraphobia, and obsessive compulsive disorder. But, be wary before jumping on the antidepressant bandwagon as it comes with a host of side effects, including nausea and sexual dysfunction. If you don't respond to SSRI antidepressants, there are many other types of antidepressants with which you can experiment.

If insomnia or severe anxiety is your problem, especially during exam time, then consider the above steps for helping you overcome the setback. But remember, there are a host of things you can do, such as meditate, practice muscle relaxation, produce positive self-talk, express feelings, and more, that can help you combat anxiety more naturally than any medication ever could.



Incredible

Faithful followers of this space know I love to read. In the absence of *intentional* reading material, I read product labels, signs, instruction manuals. Sick. Because reading is my default behaviour I've never resolved to encourage or improve my practice. Though I do have aspirational reading lists: The Top 50, The Master List, 501 Must-Read Books. But then I copied someone's resolution to read sixty books in 2016; only five books a month or slightly more than one a week. No problemo. Besides a girl needs a resolutions win whenever, however she can.

Today I finished my third book of the year. Elizabeth Gilbert's *Big Magic* is a single-sitting wonder. That is not to say it is fluffy. I had misgivings at the time of purchase; didn't know if it had enough substance to warrant my investment of time and money.

My doubts were unfounded. Gilbert's style is straightforward, conversational, funny. Her tone is that of a loving parent: wise advice delivered in either gentle encouragement or stark bluntness.

Here's how she breaks the Big Magic of creativity down:

Courage: The creative life is a bigger, brighter, happier, more interesting life. To live it fully requires courage. Don't fight to keep your fears or limitations alive. Do exactly what you most dread. Understand that Fear will be there when you and Creativity head off on your road trip. Fear can have a seat and a voice but it sure as hell can't touch the radio, make suggestions, or even think of driving.

Enchantment: According to Gilbert ideas are a life form with a consciousness and a will. However, the only way they can manifest is with an available, willing human partner. If you say no, it will find another who will say yes. Saying yes fully, humbly, and joyfully starts the adventure.

Permission: At heart (if not now, then certainly somewhere in our ancestry) we are all makers. We don't need anyone's permission. Live with "the arrogance of belonging" --the notion we are "allowed to have a voice and a vision of your own." Don't accumulate debt. Quit your bitching. Don't take you or your creativity too seriously.

Persistence: Commit to your creative pursuit without quitting your day job. Don't expect your art to support you, work to support your art. Do this creative thing because you love doing it. Not for fame or fortune or to save the world. Have an affair with your creativity. Forget perfectionism. Because no one is thinking about you and what you're doing, you are free to do as you wish. Finish.

Trust: Suffering for artistic authenticity is not part of the plan. Madness and the Tortured Artist are not part of the deal. "Work from a place of stubborn gladness."

Trust that inspiration works with you if you work with it. Work from a place of curiosity not passion. Put your work 'out there.'

Reading a good book is fine. Having it open your mind is incredible, from where I sit.

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

The Writer's Toolbox

Oh No!



Christina M. Frey

Sometimes the littlest things can drive a writer—and an editor—around the bend. You want to ensure the text is as readable as possible, and that means consistency and fluidity. But it's not always so easily achievable, is it? The other week I spent longer than I'd care to admit obsessing over whether to put a comma after "oh" in a particular expression. It's an issue that feels like it should be common sense, except when it isn't.

Ohs and Ahs

In general, the exclamatory *oh* and *ah* take a comma when they don't form a standalone sentence fragment:

Example A: Ah, that's more like it! Here, we follow the general rule and use a comma after *ah*.

Example B: Oh! I totally forgot about that. Here, *oh* forms a standalone sentence fragment and therefore takes an exclamation mark.

Incorrect Example C: Oh I thought you'd change your mind. This is incorrect because a comma after *oh* is required.

Corrected Example C: Oh, I thought you'd change your mind.

Note that I said "in general." There are a few expressions with *oh* and *ah* that have become so common that the comma's usually omitted for clarity and fluidity. "Oh no" and "Oh yeah" are two obvious examples; *The Chicago Manual of Style* also lists "ah yes" and "oh boy."

Incorrect Example D: Oh, no! I hate this weather!

Corrected Example D: Oh no! I hate this weather! Here, even though the general rule would dictate a comma, the expression is common enough that it's omitted.

Leave O Alone

Another exception is what's called the vocative *O*—as in "O happy dagger!" from *Romeo and Juliet*. While it may crop up in poetry or older literature, it's now considered obsolete in modern writing. On the rare occasion you do need to use and punctuate it, remember that *O* is not followed by a comma—and it's always capitalized.

Example E (from Wordsworth's "We Are Seven"):

*Quick was the little maid's reply,
O master! we are seven.*

Incorrect Example F: We sang "O, Canada" today.

Corrected Example F: We sang "O Canada" today.

Make the Call

When faced with *oh*, *ah*, or *O* in your own writing, follow the general rule and the obvious exceptions whenever you can. But recognize, too, that language is in a constant state of flux. Particularly in fiction writing, rules and guidelines might not always cover every single situation. There are gray areas, and sometimes you have to make the call whether to apply a rule or an exception.

In next week's column we'll discuss what to do when you're faced with an *oh* or *ah* that doesn't fit neatly under the general rule or one of the exceptions. And then we'll take it further—using a few specific examples, we'll look at strategies for working your way through the gray area problems you're sure to hit if you write and edit for long enough.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor, literary coach, and lover of great writing. For more tips and techniques for your toolbox, follow her on Twitter (@turntopage2) or visit her [blog](#).



Council Connection



Karl Low

On January 14th at 4:30 p.m., council held its public meeting, but not a lot new happened in public. The big takeaway is that there is now a committee reviewing AUSU's executive compensation, and a seat is open for a student member. If you're interested in the position, write to executivedirector@ausu.org.

Also noteworthy, council had to authorize an expense of just under \$3,500.00 that had not been budgeted for. In the course of setting the last budget, a long-standing expense to pay for AUSU mail-outs to members was missed: as purchases were often made in large amounts to take advantage of bulk rates, there were no payments to the mail-out provider over the last year.

This year, as council increased the number of communications it sends to members, it quickly became apparent what had happened. Services manager Donette Kingyens has informed me that council expects that this purchase should again allow them to continue to send out e-mail newsletters to the membership for the next two to three years. She notes that by purchasing in such large quantities, as was done in the past, they have kept costs to approximately \$44 per mail-out to all 35,000 or so AUSU members.

Next, having provided the required notice for proposed changes to the elections policies last month, and having received no student concerns or suggestions, council quickly passed the four policies adjusting the AUSU elections procedures.

It was close to 5:00 p.m. when council voted to move in camera (which means that the public meeting becomes a private meeting to discuss confidential matters) for an item simply titled "Executive Honorarium." I, and the one other student present were politely asked to leave the meeting until we were contacted again.

The in camera discussion took just over an hour, and by the time I received the email that it was over, council had completed a short break and was discussing a motion from the private session to confirm the current levels of executive honoraria (currently near \$51,000 for the president and over \$43,000 for each of the vice presidents) to end of the current executive term. The motion carried with councillors Kim Newsome, Tamra Ross, and Philip Kirkbride voting against.

A second motion sought to strike a committee tasked with examining executive honoraria and providing a report with recommendations for revised wages by March 1, 2016. The motion also specified that if council fails to reach a decision, the *next* executive will have honoraria reset back to the levels before the approximate 30% raise given in October of 2014, and the additional CPI increase they received on October of 2015, taking them back to just over \$38,000 for the president and just under \$33,000 for the vice-presidents. This motion passed unanimously.

A terms of reference had been created for the new "Executive Compensation Review Committee" and after some discussion, it was decided that this would be an ad hoc committee, only meeting for a few months. The committee will have up to five voting members, a non-voting member of the AUSU Executive, and the Executive Director, also as a non-voting member. Four councillors—Philip Kirkbride, Pierre Plamondon, Tamra Ross, and Kim Newsome—volunteered to be on the committee, leaving one space vacant. Council has decided to open up that space to a student, but you'd best hurry, as the committee has begun work and scheduling meetings already. You can find more information as to what the committee is expected to do [here](#).

Following that came the information items and reports. It was reported that the AU Service and Response Times survey received some 900 responses, and they are now in the process of taking those results to the various faculty deans and university executives who have expressed interest in the results.

AUSU has also completed its annual consultation with the AU executive regarding tuition and other fee hikes. While the Alberta government has decreed that tuitions are to remain frozen this year, expenses for the university continue to grow, and the university has also noted a significant decrease in the amounts they're taking in for extensions or extra exam fees. President Wasylshyn noted that when the idea of new non-academic fees was floated, she spoke out strongly against raising any other student fees in any way, and the importance of finding other sources of revenue.

Finally, it was noted that AUSU has had, at this point, over 1,300 requests for the new planners, but had only ordered 500 with no plans to order any more (AUSU no longer produces the planner in-house, and must order the books from a supplier). Member suggestions from Facebook, such as setting up a pre-order form, are being looked at for next year.

The next meeting is now scheduled for February 11, at 4:30 p.m. MST. If you're a member, you're encouraged to attend by teleconference, listen in to the meeting, and have an opportunity at the end of the meeting to ask questions or get more information from your students' council.

Karl graduated from AU's Bachelor of Arts Program (with Great Distinction, he likes to brag) despite leaving most of his course work to the last month of his contract, every time. While not the most intelligent way to go about it, it did prepare him for the task of getting The Voice Magazine out every week.

Music Review

NJ Taylor



Samantha Stevens

Artist: NJ Taylor

Album: *NJ Taylor*

The pop music genre is notorious for music that has bland and uninspired lyrics that are combined with an upbeat tempo designed to mask the unoriginality of the music. Pop artists Taylor Swift and Ariana Grande have broken away from this curse, creating music that is both original, fun, and catchy. Montreal singer-songwriter NJ Taylor should be counted among such pop legends because of her inspiring lyrics, invigorating beats, and fantastic electronic accompaniment.

Released October 9th last year, NJ Taylor's self-titled debut EP features five fantastic tracks. As a child NJ played the violin for many years. While in high school, she traded the violin for singing and songwriting. After university, where she studied

Italian and Spanish, NJ decided that creating music was her passion and embarked on a music career. Inspired by various world issues and guided by pop music like that of ABBA and Michael Jackson, NJ collaborated with Adien Lewis, who wrote the song "Radar" on the EP, and together they created five amazing songs.

The first track "Pop Army" is dramatic and upbeat, and the tempo will catch your attention almost immediately. Listen closely to the lyrics and you can hear NJ sing of her passion about pop music, and through her lyrics she invites listeners to share her love of the genre. Having "Pop Army" as the first track on her EP is a brilliant way to engage listeners who may or may not be as devoted to the pop genre as she is. In fact, although I rarely enjoy pop music, I found myself moving to the rhythm and singing along. Apparently NJ's passion for this style of music is contagious!

"Radar" is the second track and is slightly more dramatic than the previous song. The tempo is somewhat less upbeat, but the electronic effects and striking piano and string accompaniment make this song a treat to the ears. NJ demonstrates that she isn't bound to working only with electronic effects, and she is willing to experiment with her music and push the boundaries of the genre.

"Right Here" is my favourite song on this album. It reminds me of the songs from Madonna's album *Ray of Light* from 1998. The electronic effects are layered in such a way that the music is almost organic, rising and falling with the mood and emotion of the lyrics. The tempo is fairly slow and steady, but it isn't boring. The lyrics command the attention of the listener, and the inspirational message is perfect for those days when you find yourself feeling lost and alone. The feeling that emanates from this song is as complex as the sound, but somehow NJ is able to touch into the very heart of the listener and give them the comfort they may need in difficult times.

So if you are in need of pop music that will not only get you moving but inspire you when you need it the most then check out NJ's debut EP.

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



Examining the AU Exam Experience

Carla Knipe



Writing a mid-term or final exam is a necessary though stressful aspect of any university experience, but for AU students, writing an exam requires a bit more effort than for students studying at traditional universities. AU students have several options when it comes to writing exams. Many students are able to write at one of AU's campuses, whether the main one in Athabasca, or, more commonly, the ones in Calgary or Edmonton. But most students can't travel that far for an exam. Instead, they must write their exam through an AU-approved invigilator.

A big change to how AU exams are written has been the shift away from writing paper-based exams to writing an

exam on a computer. While this has its advantages, computer or no, students are still required to write in the presence of an invigilator. But many AU students feel that more improvements can be made. A thread on the Athabasca University Facebook page on the topic of exams created a lot of energetic discussion by students who related their experiences.

The quality of the exam-writing experience seems to vary between the Calgary and Edmonton centres. Both the Calgary and Edmonton locations are in the city's downtown core, which theoretically makes the centres equally accessible, but this isn't necessarily the case. Many AU students in Calgary travel to the AU Calgary centre using the C-Train. There is a station close by that provides easy access to the AU offices which eliminates the need to pay for expensive downtown parking. In contrast, Edmonton transit is not as efficient for getting to the Edmonton centre, so Edmonton students find it more convenient to drive. However, several AU students noted that much of the public parking close by has a two-hour limit, which is a problem when AU exams often take the full three hours to write. There is currently no provision for AU to provide a parking pass in order to exempt students from parking costs, so many students risk getting a fine to write an AU exam.

But the biggest concerns of AU students with their exams, at both the Calgary and Edmonton centres, were with conditions in the exam rooms, particularly at the Calgary centre. Many students voiced their displeasure with the strictness of the exam room environment. Tamra Ross finds the exam room at AU Calgary "not really conducive to doing well ... the cardlock doors, no option to go to the bathroom ever, no water, no hats, you can't even wear a removable sweater or jacket unless you promise not to remove it during the exam." Other AU Calgary students echoed this sentiment, and wondered whether writing an exam during the summer in a room with windows that do not open, with a lack of water and no option to use the washroom facilities if needed, is a health concern that needed to be addressed. Another criticism of AU Calgary is that students must store all belongings into an outside locker and must provide their own lock; there is no option to place their belongings

up against the exam room wall if they forgot to bring one. Also, the AU Calgary office seems to enforce a policy that dictates only a minimum of writing materials brought into an exam. These policies leave AU students wondering why they have been put in place, especially for students who are adult learners and "beyond high school." Several AU students theorized that perhaps these policies were adopted because of one incident of cheating on an exam. They expressed resentment that this has "ruined it for everyone." While students conceded there will always be an element of possibility for cheating on exams no matter the environment, one AU student said that "we seem to be treated like kids."

While similar policies are in place at AU Edmonton, this exam centre seems to be less strict. Many students have had a more pleasant experience writing exams. Washroom breaks are allowed if needed, but students are not allowed to bring a beverage into the exam room.

Aside from the exam room conditions, the biggest complaint of AU students, whether or not they write at AU centres or with invigilators, are regarding the computer keyboards used for the exam. Manuela Demian Roy's experience is typical of many students. She says, "For the last exam, for which I had a lot of typing to do, I had to use a stupid little laptop/tablet. 15 percent of the time I spent only pressing the 'backspace' and 'delete' keys, to correct typos due to the keyboard, and on rewriting. I badly ran out of time, of course. Although my grade wasn't too bad, it *greatly* impacted it, my mental state, and the time I had to work on the exam. I was close to tears by the end of that exam." Students say that the keyboards at the AU Calgary and Edmonton centres leave a lot to be desired, but some computer terminals are worse than others in the same exam room. Several students said that the clunky and loud keyboards create a lot of noise, and when the room is full with no barriers such as study carrels to separate students who are all writing different exams, this can be detrimental to the concentration necessary for a successful exam. Students say that noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs would help, but they hesitate bringing them from home because they are unsure whether these would be allowed under the strict exam room policies. One student commented that he wishes he could have the choice to write a paper exam instead of a computer-based one because the paper room is so much quieter.

For those AU students who wrote with an invigilator, they said that their exam experiences were pleasant, but trying to book a slot at a mutually convenient time for both themselves and the invigilator was often problematic, especially when it came to finding childcare or getting time off work. Many students did say that their invigilation centre did their best to accommodate them and to provide the best exam experience possible, though. Deanna Roney says her exam invigilator "is so awesome. If the school is going to be busier than normal the day I am looking to book they tell me, and ask if I would prefer a quieter day so I can concentrate better. I also get my choice in offices; whichever is quieter they will set aside for me. I think I should get them a thank you." Stephanie Winger has also had very positive experiences. "I love where I write my exams. It's at a local small college here in town, but so far for my exams I get a huge classroom all to myself and they check on me to see if I need anything. Not to mention they have Kleenex etc. in the classroom. And the ladies are so friendly ..." However, this experience is by no means universal. Amanda Smith said that she has formally complained to her particular invigilation centre for the poor quality of the exam room. "It is no bigger than the size of a small walk in closet, zero ventilation, while the incredibly outdated computer is left running all day [which] makes for a very hot little room. The lighting was so extreme in this particular circumstance I had a terrible migraine after my three-hour online exam. I made the comment to them 'Do you guys work for the FBI? Talk about a pressure cooker situation' " She said that her complaints were well received with assurance that they would be sent to the director of the department, and hopefully improvements will be made.

The biggest complaint by AU students who have had to write an exam with an invigilator is that the cost for doing so is not covered by the AU course fee and there is wide variation in those additional costs. In an informal

poll on the AU Facebook page, most respondents said that the cost was less than \$50, with some public libraries charging an average of \$30. Grace Makusu said that for her exams, she pays \$131 per exam at the community college because the public library does not have a certified person to invigilate. If her course has a mid-term as well as a final exam, the cost per course is an additional \$260. Some students even pay for a private, in-home invigilator to minimize the hassle of seeking out an invigilator in a public building, and some invigilators charge by the hour for their services rather than a flat rate. AU students who study outside of Canada may have the steepest invigilator fees and also the most limited locations to write their exams. Overseas students say that their invigilation cost per exam is between 120-150 Canadian dollars.

All students who pay the extra fees say that while they understand the additional charges, they feel that it is a bit unfair that these costs are not included in their tuition, especially when writing the final exam is not optional. They said that, in this regard, AU students are not all equal and there is a glaring discrepancy between the students who study within Alberta and those who are based elsewhere. Several students said that wherever possible, they pick courses that do not require a final exam just to save a bit on their course costs. When students must also pay for parking, childcare and time off work in addition to invigilation fees, the cost of writing exams over the course of a degree becomes significant.

Finding a solution that accommodates all concerns of AU students may not be easy, and no exam situation is perfect, but it would be wise for the AU administration to compare exam policies at bricks-and-mortar universities and adapt them to the AU experience. For example, the SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology) exam invigilation policy has two governing principles: First, the school recognizes that the examination process is inherently stressful and should be managed to minimize confusion and uncertainty and second, the examination environment should enable students to concentrate and demonstrate what they have learned. Their testing centre web page recognizes that: "We do our best to maintain proper testing conditions as well as provide earplugs on request. There is also access to water fountains and restrooms if required." SAIT makes its policies regarding cheating on exams clear, but it seems to give its students a bit more benefit of the doubt when it comes to its exam policies. In contrast, the AU examination policy manual makes no mention of facilitating positive student exam experiences. (The current exam policies can be found at <http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/registry/ugexamrequest.pdf>)

However, there is a positive AU policy regarding nursing mothers who write exams. According to the guidelines, which can be found at <http://examservices.athabascau.ca/nursing/index.php>, AU "will provide a private examination writing room for exam completion/nursing requirements, provide additional time to the student that examination completion and nursing may require, ensure the appropriate adjustments to online exams to accommodate nursing time." This policy is welcomed and many AU students complimented the university in its accommodation of nursing mothers.

The AU Registrar's office has not responded to a request for comment on the current exam experience, but AUSU President Shawna Wasylshyn says that AU is working on a new pilot exam project, which AUSU is currently involved in. While she is unable to give any details at the moment, students are encouraged to contact her at president@ausu.org with any specific concerns, so she can raise them in future meetings with AU.

Carla is an AU student majoring in English. She welcomes comments and discussion on her Twitter feed, @LunchBuster.



One of the newest courses at Athabasca University is Religious Studies 211 – Death and Dying in World Religions. Marie Well spoke with the course designer to get a little more insight into this course for students who might be considering taking it.

The course designer, Dr. Shandip Saha, completed his master's degree at Harvard University, and his Ph.D. in Religious Studies, as well as some post-doctorate work in the subject, at the University of Ottawa. Dr. Saha is now with AU's Centre for Humanities as an assistant professor in Religious Studies and the course co-ordinator of AU's Religious Studies courses.

What is the course Religious Studies 211—Death and Dying in World Religions about?

Dr. Saha: Religious Studies 211 is a course about how different religious traditions, in this case Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam look at death and the afterlife. The course also takes a look at the cultural and religious practices around dying. So, we look at death rituals and mourning rituals in different religions. We also look at how death rituals have been adapted to a North American context and hospices for palliative care.

There is one unit on near death experiences (NDE) which I thought was kind of important to include because, for many people it's a deeply spiritual and religious experience of God or a higher power. There are those, however, who believe that NDE's are largely chemical reactions in the brain. I'm not taking any particular side on the issue. Students can decide for themselves.

What inspired you to make this course?

Dr. Saha: I noticed in my course called Introduction to World Religions (RELS 204), that I had a lot of nursing students taking the course for cultural sensitivity training. RELS 204 can provide some of that understanding, but I decided to do something a little more in-depth that may address the needs of nursing students by focusing on different mourning traditions and the connection between religion and palliative care. The course, however, is not directly squared at nursing students or people in the medical profession. The course is open to anybody and one does not need prior knowledge of world religions.

I'll emphasize that RELS 211 is not a course on morality and ethics. Even though issues of euthanasia or abortion are in a way related to how religions look at death, that's really not a part of what I want to look at. I want students to think deeply about how cultural and religious beliefs shape our views on mortality and how we prepare for death.

When was this course created?

Dr. Saha: I've been working on it for a long while and I was able to put the course through the development process at AU last year. The course opened in January 2016 so, this is an absolutely brand new course offering.

What was the process for getting the course made?

Dr. Saha: Although I do teach general introductory courses on world religions, I by no means consider myself to be an expert on what world religions say about everything. I read a lot and think about appropriate and accessible readings before I write the study guide which contains the different units of the course. I also had to develop the assignments and exam that will help to evaluate how well students have mastered the course material.

Once all that is done, the course materials are sent to the team assigned to my course in the Center for Learning Design and Development (CLDD). They are a very crucial part of the course development process because they not only do the visual design of the course and produce the final product students see online, but they do crucial editorial work, deal with copyright issues, look at potential library resources, and play an important role in helping to develop novel ways of creating assignments that will help students meet their learning objectives.

Is this an e-text course? And have you heard of any issues with the e-text that students might want to be prepared for?

Dr. Saha: The core textbook is not an e-text. In the case of the other readings, I have tried to ensure that they can be found online through the Athabasca University Library. There are also two DVDs included with the textbook and one documentary that students can watch as streaming video on the course website.

About how many students do you anticipate will take this course?

Dr. Saha: I hate answering questions like that. Let's just say I hope for lots and lots and lots of students.

What kind of learning style is it? For instance, is it very open ended or does it give fairly detailed instructions?

Dr. Saha: It's kind of a disciplined course, the way that I wrote it. As much as possible, every unit will build on the one that proceeds it. That's the first part. So, in that way there is a logical progression for how the course works from a structural point-of-view. The second thing about the course is that you can't get away with just reading either the additional readings or just the units on the course Website. In order to get the full picture, you need to do both. So, again, that's just a way of helping students fully engage with the material so they have that sort of full perspective.

In terms of the essay for the course, part of the component is that students have two meetings with me on the phone or in some shape or form or by email—at least twice. One is to provide me with an outline—to discuss their topic with me and give me an idea of where they are going, to give me a tentative bibliography and a kind of an outline of where they are going with the essay.

That's done to make sure students are on the right track and to make sure they get their thoughts sort of organized and together, and hopefully give them a sort of scheduling framework as well.

There is a suggested study guide for the course, and the reason for having the students do the outline part of the essay is to make sure they are on the right track. I know this is going to be really, really different for everybody in many ways, and I want to make sure they got the right sources and they are understanding the basic concepts that they are working with before they go out and write the paper.

If this course isn't a requirement of their program, why should students take it as an elective?

Dr. Saha: The point of an education is to expand your mind and not shrink it to the size of a pea. Diversity, as one my professors in graduate school said, is meant to be embraced and not rejected. So, whether a student is in the humanities or the sciences or whatever, it's important to have a well-rounded perspective on life by having an understanding of different cultural and intellectual perspectives. I hope this course will help students to achieve that by exploring the religious and cultural beliefs that shape what is truly a universal part of the human experience.

What part or concept in the course do you think the students will have the most trouble with?

Dr. Saha: I think probably the first half of the course might be a little bit difficult because that is the stage at which students are being introduced to the basic beliefs of world religions and how they view the afterlife.

Students will feel a little bit more at ease with the three western monotheistic religions, but once we get into the Sanskrit terms associated with Buddhism and Hinduism, it will become a bit more challenging. If students need help or have questions, all they have to do is call or email me. Once students get that foundational knowledge down, the rest of the course will become a lot easier.

Are the assignments fairly similar in the amount of work required, or are some of them much larger?

Dr. Saha: The assignments consist, in part, of quizzes to ensure that student's have their basic vocabulary down. There is also an essay which the students will work on after consulting with me. There is also a final exam which is three hours.

Is there a part of the course you think students will really enjoy? What is it?

Dr. Saha: Well, I hope they enjoy the entire course--not just a part of it. I think, however, that students will have a little fun pondering near death experiences and understanding the cultural concepts about death that have now made it into the popular imagination. If you look at the new Bond movie, SPECTRE, for example, the opening shot of the movie takes place in the middle of a Mexican *Day of the Dead* celebration. Many people have heard of this festival, but not many understand what it is about and why it is practiced.

Is there an exam? And what is it like?

Dr. Saha: The exam is three hours, cumulative for the entire course. It will be a combination of short answers and long essays. There aren't any multiple choice or true and false type of questions.

What would you change to make the course even better if you could?

Dr. Saha: Do a really amazing party trick where I resurrect someone from the dead on You Tube? Honestly, I really do not know yet because the course just opened up in January. Right now, I just want to see how students respond to the material.

In your opinion, do you think this course is a harder one or an easier one than the average at AU?

Dr. Saha: I cannot speak to whether it is harder or easier than the average course. I like to think that it is a fair course. The reading amount is suitable for a 3-credit course and if students are able to follow the suggested study schedule and they are able to discipline themselves, they will be fine.

Room 217

Creating Music Resources For Use in Health Care



Samantha Stevens

Last November, *The Voice Magazine* was invited to Room 217 Foundation's Music Care Conference in Mississauga, Ontario. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend, but intrigued by the subject matter of the conference, I contacted the Revenue Development Coordinator at Room 217, Deb Bartlett.

In 2014, I took Athabasca University's course HLST 301: Complementary and Alternative Therapies. In that course I learned about Medical Art Therapy and the term "designer music" which is a "new genre of music designed to affect the listener in specific ways" (Lippin and Micozzi 173). There is evidence to support

the effect that music has on the brain, and specifically "the connection between music and health is likely to have a mechanism involving a 'neural' hypothalamic frontal limbic loop and a neuroendocrine hypothalamic-immunological loop" (Lippin and Micozzi 174). HLST 301 peaked my interest in music therapy and the role that music, and art, can play in health care, health management, and recovery.

So when I heard about Room 217, a not for profit organization that creates music and provides resources for those who wish to use music to help people, I was excited to learn more about the organization and their work.

I got in touch with Deb Bartlett and asked her some questions about Room 217 and the work that they do. Please note that Room 217 does not deal specifically with music therapists (which is a professional practice) and training music therapists. Instead, Room 217 creates resources for use by health care professionals, family caregivers, volunteers, and anyone looking to add music to their health and self-care regime.

What are the aims and goals of your organization?

Deb: Our goal - to care for people through music!

We want to help improve quality of life by producing and delivering music care resources to vulnerable populations. We want to help improve quality of care by training caregivers to integrate music into their regular practice. We want to optimize music as a means of care in various settings through innovative and collaborative research.

What is music care?

Deb: Music care is an approach to caregiving which allows the healing principles of sound and musical effect inform our caring practices. Music care is not a specific practice, but rather a paradigm within which music is inherently understood to be part of life, playing an integral role in all aspects of caregiving and care settings. Music care is intended to be person-centered and improve quality of care, thus contributing to overall culture change in health care.

What are the resources available, and who are they available to?

Deb: It's quite extensive:

CDs: 12 albums, each of a different type of music (country, Broadway, love songs, spiritual, Celtic, etc.) There are no more than three instruments (including voice) on each track.

DVDs: three, each is the music of one of the CDs with beautiful photos that accompany the music. Multi-sensory, great for an alternative to TV, waiting rooms, lobbies, LTC rec rooms, etc.

Pathways: our first full program, it's a singing program that engages people with dementia through song. It's designed to encourage singing, reminiscence and discussion.

Music Care Certificate Program: a three-level program designed to increase caregiver confidence in using music in their caregiving. These are held around the country, wherever there has been an interest in the program. We have trained people to lead the sessions locally. Most sessions are held in Ontario, although we have held several in Calgary (quite an active learning community there), as well as in Fredericton, Charlottetown and one is scheduled in Saint John in May 2016.

Music Care Conference: we've just held our eighth national, one-day conference. They're usually held in the Greater Toronto Area, but there was a Calgary conference in the fall of 2014, and there will be a Fredericton conference June 3, 2016. The conference presents research relating to music and health, as well as sessions that would be pertinent to front line staff. (PDF attached of the Nov. 7 conference, to give you an idea of what's offered). There are also performances and keynote speakers.

Webinars: from September through June, we run a one-hour webinar (3:30-4:30 EST) with a number of hosts on a number of music care topics.

Speakers: both Bev and Sarah Pearson are available as speakers at events, conferences, in-service training, etc.

How do you choose the music to include on the albums available?

Deb: We choose the music through focus groups, surveys, musical experience and intuition.

How do the CDs work? Are they geared towards specific audiences?

Deb: The music is designed for vulnerable populations. The first albums were designed for use in palliative care. Bev (our ED, and founder) watched the effect of music and singing on her father, as he was dying (in Room 217 of Uxbridge Cottage Hospital, hence the name of the Foundation). She is a teacher, and a music teacher specifically, and began looking into music for that population, and finding none, started creating it. That's how the foundation got its start. The music is slowed to 60 beats per minute (the resting heart rate) and is designed to soothe the listeners by slowing respiration and providing calming music. The CDs are well known to hospice palliative care workers and volunteers, spiritual care providers, LTC staff and other health professionals. The Pathways Singing Program has been in development for four years. It's designed (the host, the dialogue, the music, the number of times it's repeated, etc.) specifically for people with dementia. Because music is stored in a different place than words, it's possible for people who aren't able to converse fluently to recall music and lyrics. Once the singing starts, some people with dementia will be able to continue verbalizing. The program offers a music making (as opposed to passive music listening) opportunity that is also enjoyable for the caregivers. Many of our beta testers said they learned things about their residents or family members through the program, because of the discussions that took place around the songs and the memories that surfaced. Here's a [link](#) to a sampler of an episode.

My Own Thoughts

What I like most about the availability of Room 217's resources is that they are available to anyone through Room 217's online store or on iTunes. Room 217 also provides music care education to anyone interested in the practical application of music. The list of applications for therapeutic music is extensive and includes:

- pain distraction or distraction during treatments
- background music – treatment, surgery, recovery and waiting rooms, passive therapy (Cerebral Palsy)
- tinnitus relief
- during and enroute to/from chemotherapy treatments
- convalescence and rehabilitation
- coma stimulation
- organ donation transition process
- psychotherapy – to access, reminisce, life review
- in burn units, oncology units, neonatal units, cardiac units, critical care units, Alzheimer's/dementia care units
- rejuvenation of health care professionals i.e. palliative care and ICU nurses
- destressing caregivers, Code Lavender (Cleveland Clinic)
- chaplains – visitation gift, quiet rooms, during services
- calming agitation - asthma attacks, primary students Alzheimer's, Acquired Brain Injury
- exercise instruction, yoga, pilates, stretching
- support with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, ALS, Acquired Brain Injury, Coma
- grief and bereavement
- pet companionship and pet bereavement
- meditation, contemplation
- spiritual support, worship

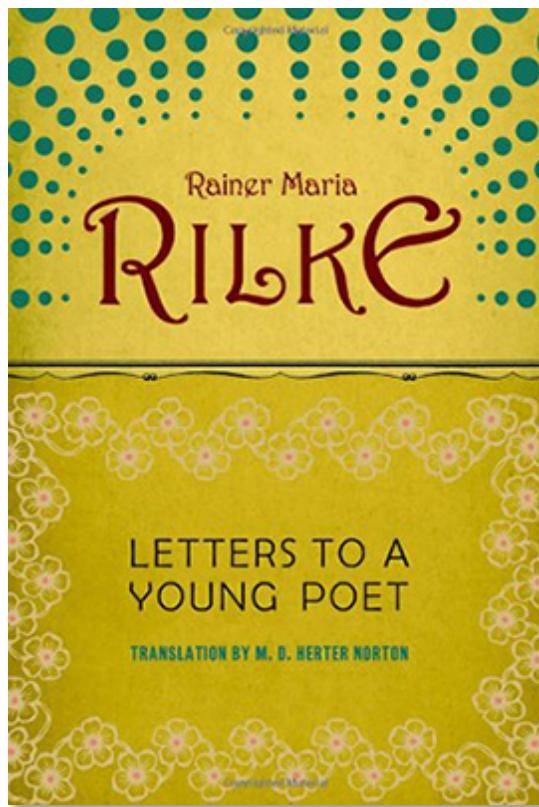
On a more personal note, I recently had a minor surgery before Christmas, and I noticed that while I was sitting on the table, waiting for the anesthesiologist to finish their preparations in the operating room, there was music playing softly in the background. I appreciated the distraction from my nervous tension, and I immediately felt relaxed while I allowed myself to focus on the music instead of the preparations going on around me. I believe that having music playing made a huge difference in easing my tension before and after the surgery.

So if you are a health care worker or simply looking for music resources to use for home or personal use, then I highly recommend checking out Room 217.

References

Lippin, Richard A., and Marc S. Micozzi. "The Arts in Medicine." *Fundamentals of Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. 4th ed. Ed. Marc S. Micozzi. Missouri: Saunders, Elsevier, Inc., 2011. 163-176. Print.

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



The Mindful Bard
Letters to a Young Poet

Wanda Waterman

Something Helpless That Wants Our Love

Book: *Letters to a Young Poet*

Author: Rainer Maria Rilke

"Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love."

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

"Therefore, dear Sir, love your solitude and try to sing out with the pain it causes you."

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

The young poet, Franz Xaver Kappus, has written to the master *dichter* Rainer Maria Rilke to ask him which books he keeps near to him for most frequent consultation. Rilke replies that the two books that he always keeps near for endless streams of inspiration are the

Holy Bible and a collected works of the Danish writer Jens Peter Jacobsen.

Having experienced *Letters to a Young Poet* as an utterly affirming battle cry to the authentic creative life, and having already read the Bible several times, I embarked on a search for English translations of Jacobsen. Until just recently I couldn't find an English translation of anything of his anywhere, although I did stumble on a few poems once.

Even after the internet had undertaken to publish everything ever written in digital form, Jacobsen was nowhere to be found, which was puzzling after considering that *Letters to a Young Poet* is one of the most popular books on creativity ever written.

What's immediately striking is that, in the dog-eat-dog competition of the literary, this great poet deigned to write to an amateur to encourage him and give him hints as to how to write better. I can't imagine a writer before or since who would have gotten down off the high horse long enough to provide a bit of counsel to a struggling beginner. It just shows what a remarkable person Rilke was.

But he'd come up in the school of hard knocks, a highly sensitive boy sent to a brutal and traumatising military school by parents who planned to have him enter law. Such an upbringing can be expected to lead to a life of self-destructive dissipation; in Rilke's it bore fruit in the form of a powerful existential courage. His pain was like an impossible mission handed to him—a mission to usher in a new and more truthful way of thinking and living to a world that probably wasn't ready. And he accepted.

His opinions on the sacred, nature, female emancipation, couplehood, and writing are deeply insightful, even groundbreaking, and way ahead of their time, but his great contribution to art has been his call to live authentically and, in Rodin's words, to simply get to work on making art, inextricably linking human virtue with the *virtu* of artistic toil.

Oh yes, and the good news is that last week I found the books of Jens Peter Jacobsen online. More to come about them in an upcoming article.

Letters to a Young Poet manifests eleven of the Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It stimulates my mind.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel 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 displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.
- It gives me artistic tools.
- It makes me want to be a better artist.
- It gives me tools of kindness, 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.

Wanda also writes the blog *The Mindful Bard: The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self*.

Women Of Interest



Kelly Williams: Born on August 19, 1971 in Val D'Or, Quebec, she began her career as a race car driver at the age of 17. After completing her university education and graduating as a teacher, Williams focused on stock car racing and began competing in the Canadian Association for Stock Car Racing, (CASCAR), where she was the only female to win a race. CASCAR has since become the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series.

Kelly has many accomplishments, including Pace Car Driver with the Champcar Series, an expert panelist on the TV series, Canada's Worst Driver, and she continues to host Car Care Clinics for women throughout many Canadian cities. Today Williams participates in public speaking engagements, trade shows and is the spokesperson for Canada's "Be Car Care Aware." Further information on Kelly Williams can be found at the following sites.

<https://www.becarcareaware.ca/about-us/>

<http://www.kellywilliamsracing.com/>

compiled by Barb Godin

Precious



Deanna Roney

I attended a bricks and mortar university directly out of high school. I was unsure of what I wanted to take and through the guidance (possibly misguidance) of an advisor I was taking predominately visual arts courses. I remember one lesson well, and I have tried to translate it into my current degree: into my life in general.

One of my professors told us the story of a famous painter (the name escapes me now) who struggled with a painting for days (or was it months?) There was only one small portion of the painting which he refused to change, the image of a woman in the corner. The rest of the painting was redone multiple times. Finally, out of frustration, he painted over the woman. After the woman disappeared the painting suddenly worked; the painter found what had been causing the image to be off balance. Had he not been, in my professor's words, precious, with the image of the woman, than the piece would have worked much earlier. She told us to not become precious with any aspect of our art. To allow the piece to grow and change as it needed to. We must not allow ourselves to become too attached to any one part. After the story she had us create several art cards, about the size of a business card. Then we laid them out and everyone walked around the room and took a card from everyone

else. Some found this difficult as there was without exception a card or two in every one's collection that they loved, that they did not want to give up: but they had to.

I had been working on a story for English 387: *Speculative Fiction*. It was under the desired word count. But, there was also this nagging feeling that it was not my best work, there were aspects I loved, but many I didn't. I added detail stretching paragraphs and scenes all to no avail. It was starting to sound patched together and obviously stretched, painfully stretched: the image of a man on the ancient stretch-torture device comes to mind. The important details were becoming lost in the slew of details for detail sake.

This, I decided, is not my style. This is not how I work and I knew if I handed this assignment in I would be disappointed: with the marks and with my lack of effort. Well, it was not a lack of effort but a knowledge that it was lacking and I did not resolve the issue. The lesson came back to me from my art school days; do not become precious with any aspect of what I have created. This was not a painting, but it was an art piece and it was not working. So, I did something I have only done a handful of times throughout my degree: I scrapped it. I started over, completely redoing the assignment. Some aspects of it found their way back into the new story, though likely they would not be recognised as they were adapted to fit this entirely new vision.

I completed the story start to finish in a day. It flowed through me with ease, the details poured onto the paper. I was not held back by certain details or constraints which had developed in my original story. I was much happier with this story; I felt it was the best version I could put out at this point. I have yet to receive a mark but at least this time, if it is a poor grade, I will know it was not from a lack of effort. I will be able to learn from the critique and apply it to my next piece. I will know where I need to work and it will not be comments on aspects which I knew, going in, were failing. By removing a major issue in the paper it will allow me to learn from it.

I was stubbornly sticking to my story, to the details within it. I had become precious about certain aspects and it was those which were holding me back. If I had handed it in as it was I would have been robbing myself, not only of marks, but of the opportunity to better my writing, to get the most out of the course that I can. In all likelihood I would have spent more time trying to painfully contort my original story into the parameters of the assignment than I spent completely redoing it.

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



In Conversation with The Lipstick Junkies



Wanda Waterman

The Lipstick Junkies are an alternative funk trio from Toronto that produces tracks so rich in musical ingenuity and lyrical cleverness that they intrigue the smartest music listeners while still being fun and danceable. The band is now working on a new EP called *New Lingo* and have just released a yummy single from it called "Boogie Everywhere" ([listen here](#)).

The Lipstick Junkies have been performing in southern Ontario and Montreal and have appeared at Canadian Music Week, Indie Week, and Ryerson Radio. The band is Brian Davis on bass, Jr. Tomlinson on drums, and Greg Babinski on guitar and lead vocals. Recently they answered Wanda Waterman's questions about their backgrounds, experiences, and motivators.

Music: A Coming of Age

We all started as fans of music, but something changed and drew us each to our respective instruments. For us, music represents something of a coming of age. It kept us on a path throughout our youth, something we knew we wanted to hone. That quest continues to keep us out of trouble to this day; no matter what happens in our lives we have an outlet and a purpose.

We're Our Own Best Mentors

Although we've had many great teachers, we're our own best mentors. We've grown up together as both people and as musicians. We constantly challenge ourselves and each other to be better by thinking critically about what we know and what we've learned. All the advice and analysis we get is worth exploring, but no matter how much information you get someone will have to sit down with you and help you integrate and apply it. Having that patience and belief in each other is irreplaceable.

Deep Experience

To this day we've yet to see anything more mesmerizing than a Dave Matthews Band concert. Their level of musicianship is incredible.

Delving Into the Ridiculous

Our daily lives are filled with funny and bizarre things. Honestly, we probably haven't had a recording session or live event or even band practice without delving into the ridiculous. To put it into context: We text each other backwards, we make up our own words. We even write songs called "Meow From Mars" or "Raptor Squad."

That being said, we'll take this time to tell you about something we call "studio fever." It's a lot like cabin fever; after a certain length of time in the studio we start to go a bit crazy. All of a sudden everything is hilarious; we all laugh a little harder and a little longer. Without telling any specific stories or throwing anyone under the bus we'll just leave it at this. We definitely like to keep a light atmosphere and have a good time.

Deliciously Danceable

Dancing may seem like something you do with your body, but it's really more representative of how you're feeling. Rare is the person who dances while in a bad mood. Everyone can groove to a beat, so if people are dancing it means we're doing our job and making people feel good.

On Covering Songs

A lot of bands will start by learning some covers to get a feel for each other and then start creating their own songs. For us it's always been the other way around. At this point there are three criteria in choosing a cover: Do people know it, do we like it, and can we do it justice? We're always looking for new covers to add to our repertoire, but to this day our two best are *September* by Earth Wind and Fire and *I* by Kendrick Lamar.

On Toronto

Toronto is a great city and the place we all call home. We've also made a lot of good friends and collaborators here, but it's hard to say that it really enhances our creativity. We're internally motivated in that way; inspiration can be anywhere if you listen, and no matter what you hear it will always emanate from you. Creativity will always come from your heart and your head.

The New EP

It had been almost a year since we released our self-titled debut album when Al Connelly of Glass Tiger approached us about recording something. We had roughly a half dozen new songs finished by then, so not enough for another album, but it was an exciting idea. We narrowed it down to three and called it an EP.

We named it *New Lingo* after a lyric in the song "Boogie Everywhere" because it represented the things we liked best about the project. Being our second release as TLJ, this EP was our first re-definition, our first chance to expand and explore our initial thesis. It's a new way of describing the ideas that make us who we are. It also represents our musical strategy; sticking to old-school fundamentals and styles but adding our own new twist. We really got to live out that idea by recording with some living legends in Sam Reid, Al Connelly, and Dennis Tougas.

The Band Name

We were initially a six-piece band, but after our previous members left we realized we had embarked on a completely new project, one that didn't have a name. We were searching for a few months without finding anything that stuck when a wise man told us that our name didn't matter, so long as it wasn't The Small Dick

Men. We heard our name in a lyric of a Red Hot Chili Peppers song and we didn't hate it after two weeks, so we stuck with it.

If your band's life were a movie, what kinds of scenes would fill it?

The things we'd be most excited to see would be all of our "imagine ifs . . ." getting their own fantasy cutaways. Like, imagine if we owned a pizzeria and in our commercial we were playing guitars that shot lasers that could turn people into cats or if this whole time we've known each other I was planning an elaborate heist to steal that \$10 from you, etc. Other than that it'd be pretty boring; we'd just be practicing a lot.

What conditions do you require in your life in order to go on being creative?

The desire to do it. Time and money and space to practice are all important, but those are external forces that you can work around if you have the will to. It'd be nice to quit our jobs and be above the poverty line though.

Feeding the Muse

We like pretty much everything, and we love to analyze it and talk about what we like or dislike about it. We love comics and movies and sports and science and philosophy and hip-hop and musicals and fashion and so on. There are ways and places where they all intersect and there are lessons to be learned from all of them.

Artistic Mission Statement

We try to create music for people from all walks of life, something beyond any style, something timeless.

Click of the Wrist

Winter Safe

With a severe winter storm hitting several major US cities this weekend, it's time for a refresher on winter safety for the rest of North America. This week's links could save your life (or at least ensure your snowed-in experience is a little less stressful).

Time Your Prep

When your area is issued a winter storm watch or warning, what should you do—besides joking about stocking up on milk, eggs, and toilet paper (and then making a run to the grocery store to do just that)? Accuweather.com has a handy checklist for what to do, and when.

Ride It Out

Home is the best place to be when a blizzard hits, but what if you're stuck in your car, and conditions become threatening? This *Huffington Post* article has tips for both emergency preparedness and emergency survival.

Keep Calm and Be Sarcastic

A little humour goes a long way to lessen storm-related anxiety. "Be sure to stock up on supplies several days before you came across this article," this *Onion* piece advises, and it goes on from there.





*Dear
Barb*

Barbara Godin

Unfairness in Life

Dear Barb:

I came across your column while searching Athabasca's site and I have a question. I am an 18-year-old who is beginning my first year of university. I have two younger siblings, a brother and a sister. We get along fairly well. My problem is that I feel my dad loves my brother and sister more than me. He has spent all kinds of money on various activities for my sister and my little brother basically gets whatever he wants. I have been working a part time job for three years to save money for university. I give almost everything I make to my dad to put away for my tuition. I don't think that's fair. Why do I have to pay for my education, while they get everything they want paid for by dad? My sister doesn't even have a part time job. Sometimes me and my dad get into it and we both end up yelling, but he never explains why he does what he does. I guess he just doesn't love me as much as them. What do you think? Thanks Daniel.

Hey Daniel:

I know this sounds crazy but sometimes we have to trust that our parents know what they are doing. Your complaints sound pretty typical of the oldest child. Parents often try different techniques on the oldest child and if they don't work out so well the younger children reap the benefits. I don't think you should assume your father doesn't love you as much as your siblings just because he expects more from you. Most parents treat

their sons different from their daughters, I know it doesn't seem right, but sometimes it's just the way it is. I would suggest you discuss your feelings with your dad at a time when you are both calm that way, hopefully, it won't escalate into a screaming match. You have a right to share your feelings with your dad and he needs to take the time to consider your feelings. Great question Daniel and good luck in university.

Dear Barb:

Last June I completed a five-year degree in Environmental Science. When I began my degree all the information indicated that there would be lots of jobs when I graduated. Not so! Since graduation I have been working at Walmart, making minimum wage. There are jobs available, but I would have to move to another province and I'm just not ready to do that yet. I will have to begin paying my student loan in June and I'm not sure I can afford it. I really feel like I've been duped! Frustrated in Ontario. Sarah

Hi Sarah:

I hear your frustration, but when you were told there would be lots of jobs upon graduation, they probably weren't limited to Ontario. It is not unusual to have to relocate to further your career, however if you choose to not go where the work is, then I don't really think you can complain. Ultimately if you choose to move it may only be for a few years to get experience in your field, and then if something opens up in your area you can move back. I guess you are going to have to make a decision soon so you can begin paying your student loan. Thanks for your question and good luck Sarah.

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.

Weird Canada

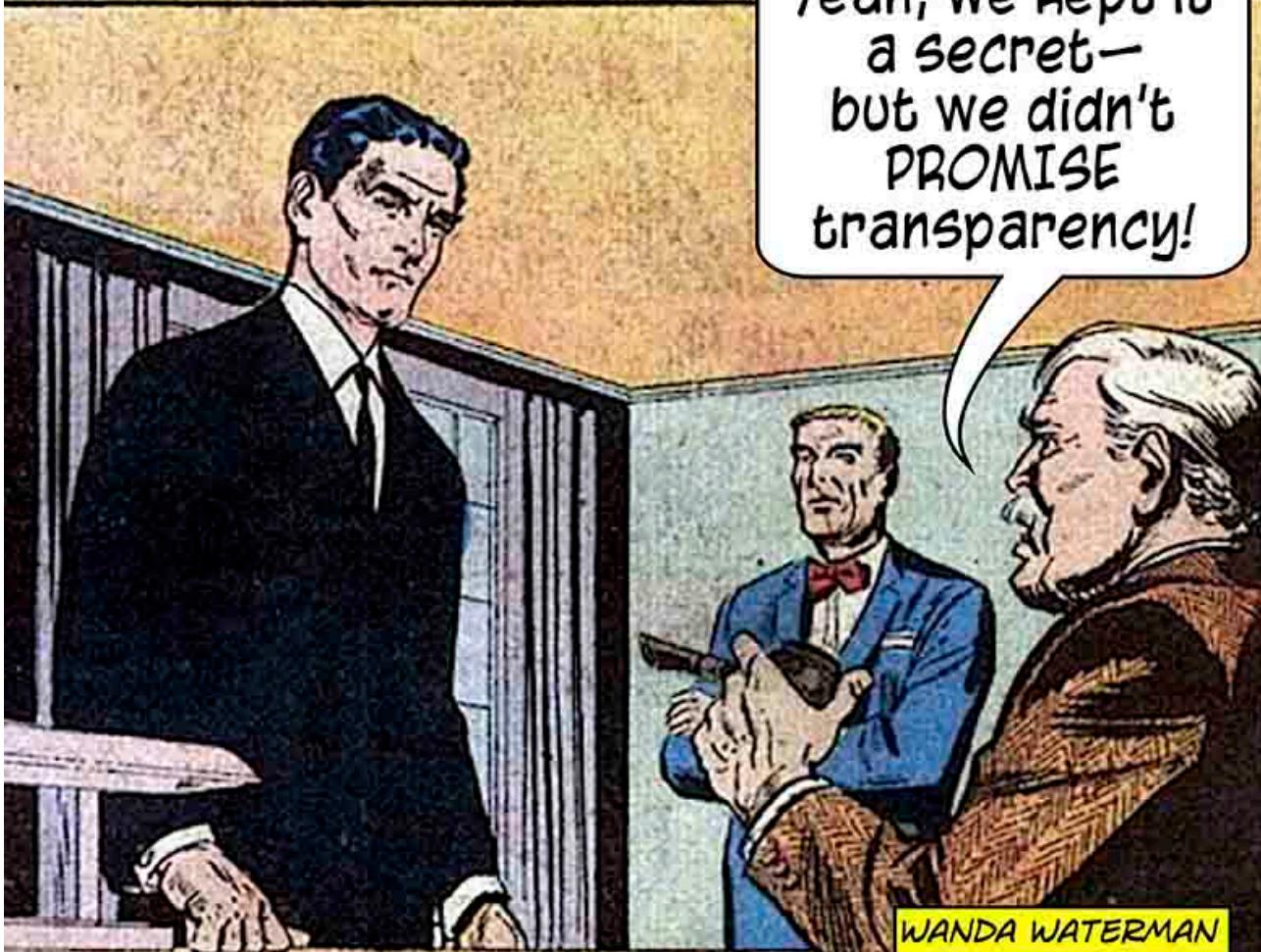
WHEN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WAS IN POWER CANADA MADE A CONTROVERSIAL DEAL IN WHICH THEY SOLD WEAPONIZED VEHICLES TO SAUDI ARABIA. THE DEAL DEMANDED THAT SAUDI ARABIA AGREE NOT TO USE THE VEHICLES AGAINST THEIR OWN PEOPLE.

BUSTED

CANADA'S SIGNATURE ON THE DEAL REQUIRED AN ANALYSIS OF SAUDI ARABIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IN ORDER TO DETERMINE THEIR READINESS TO ABIDE BY THE TERMS OF THE DEAL.

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS CALLING ON THE NOW RULING LIBERAL PARTY TO MAKE PUBLIC THIS ANALYSIS—AN ANALYSIS THAT THE CONSERVATIVES THEMSELVES KEPT HIDDEN FROM CANADIANS WHEN THEY APPROVED THE DEAL.

Yeah, we kept it
a secret—
but we didn't
PROMISE
transparency!





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Congratulations to the winner of the 2016 #AUSUResolutions Tweetchat!

AUSU hosted a contest from January 8-15, encouraging all members to post their 2016 New Year's resolutions using the hashtag #AUSUResolutions. Congratulations to our winner!

Michelle D @callmeMD tweeted "*I plan to complete two courses by March 2016 #fasttrack #believe #iWantToWin :)*"

#AUSUResolutions



FREE Smart Draw Subscription

Did you know that AUSU provides all AUSU members with a free subscription to Smart Draw?

This is a \$197 package, only for AUSU members!

Smart Draw is an award-winning business graphics software. It allows users to create a wide range of charts, diagrams and other business graphics that can be dropped in to Microsoft Word or Excel files. This makes it easy for students to include professional diagrams in their assignments for AU classes.

To obtain the software: Email our office at admin@ausu.org with your full name and student ID to get the license key and link to the installer file.



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IMPORTANT DATES

- **Jan 29:** February course extension deadline
- **Feb 10:** Deadline to register in a course starting Mar 1
- **Feb 10:** Call for Nominations for 2016 General Election
- **Feb 11:** AUSU Council Meeting
- **Feb 29:** Deadline for exams for Jan 31 course end dates
- **Feb 22:** AUSU Election Campaign Period begins

AUSU Advocacy

Wondering what AUSU is doing to advocate for our students?

AUSU executives represent AUSU in over 20 committees at AU, including the Board of Governors, various Faculty Councils, the General Faculties Council, Student Experience Team, Student Relationship Management Project, E-text advisory Committee, and many more!

AUSU is also a member of the Canadian Alliance of Student's Associations. To find out more about what AUSU and CASA are doing for you, check out our most recent Executive Blog [here](#)!

For more information on AUSU's advocacy, visit our website [here](#).

Online Course Evaluations

AUSU recently launched **online course evaluations** for all undergraduate AU courses. We encourage all AU students to fill out evaluations for any courses taken in the past year. The more feedback we receive, the more useful this resource becomes!

Please note, these evaluations are separate from the ones sent out by AU. The reviews are available anytime, even after your courses has ended. You can also see the results online for any completed course evaluations!

AUSU will track the reviews received and discuss them with AU when there is a notable trend in a course.

**Click here to fill out a
COURSE EVALUATION**

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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