

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE
Vol 25 Issue 09 2017-03-03

In Praise of Amateur Writing

What the Professionals Miss

Social Media Purge

Taking Control Back

Technical Observations

A New Series

*Plus:
Music Review: Bleak
Letters!
and much more!*



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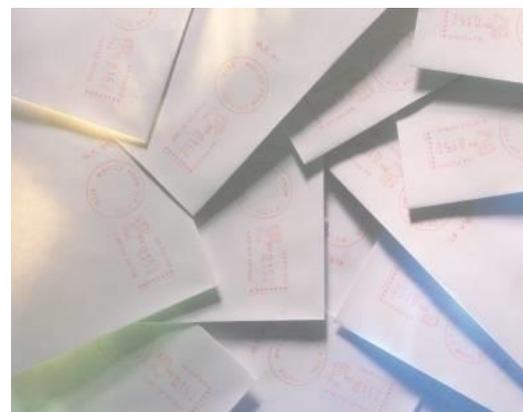
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The Voice does not share its subscriber list with anyone. Even I don't look at it. It's all on auto.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Re: Council Connection, Feb 25 Issue

I don't think it's fair have to pick up the tab for council's extravagant choice of accommodation. There are plenty of qualified individuals who would than happy to work at a cushy job in West Edmonton. I feel the cheaper alternative would have been the better choice. If the council wants the more expensive option, then take it out of their salary!

Matt.

And where should we take the costs for re-hiring and re-training new staff members from? -Karl

Re: Throw Kindness Around Like Confetti, Feb 25 Issue

Thanks Carla for your article on acts of kindness, it was encouraging to me as this morning, I phoned three widowed ladies, invited them to join my husband and I to our evening meal. We will play dominoes-Mexico train.

Vera

I love it when we've inspired something in our readers! -Karl

Hey! Did you know the Voice Magazine has a Facebook page?

No kidding! We also do the twitter thing once in a while if you're into that.

Re: The ~~Lonely~~ Social Student, Feb 17 Issue

As a faithful reader of The Voice Magazine and a member of AUSU council, I was surprised to see some of the advice given to AU students in the article called The ~~Lonely~~ Social Student written by Marie Well in your February 17, 2017 issue.

This article suggests that students post a video to Facebook of an AU class presentation and that students could also pay to boost the post and reach more people.

Both AU and AUSU have been working hard over the past 6+ months to bring awareness to an increase in charges of academic misconduct relating to plagiarism and unauthorized use of AU materials. I wrote about it in my December Executive Blog [here](#), and AUSU has made efforts to get the message out to students through the AUSU [newsletter](#) and a page in the [December 9](#) issue of The Voice. Additionally, the topic of academic misconduct has been included in multiple AUSU monthly executive reports and discussed at several council meetings.

I would like to point out that AU's [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) prohibits distributing any course materials, including assignments, without proper written consent from AU. Posting a video of an AU class presentation may be considered academic misconduct under this policy.

On December 15, 2016, AU held a webinar on academic integrity that touched on what is and is not allowed. They have posted it on their website [here](#).

I want to advise students to be cautious when sharing any type of course work, assignments, essays, etc. If students are unsure what is allowed, they should be seeking clarification from their tutor, academic expert or the AU [registrar's office](#).

Please don't put yourself in a situation where you could be charged with academic misconduct. Please don't follow the advice in The Voice article noted above and risk putting yourself in a situation of academic dishonesty. The penalties for this could include suspensions, or expulsions.

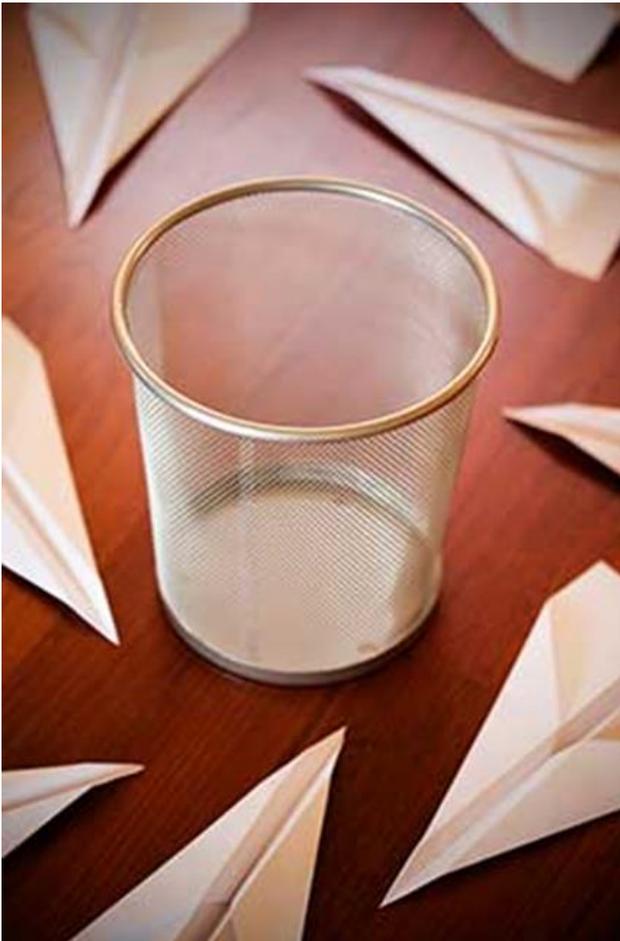
I hope that The Voice Magazine can jump on board and help us inform students of the risks and consequences so that we can reduce, rather than increase, the number of academic misconduct charges at AU.

Thank you,

Kim Newsome
AUSU Vice President Finance and Administration

*To be clear, the policy says you cannot distribute **AU-issued** course materials. AU's [blog](#) makes it clear that you can post your own course or study notes, but to be cautious because if someone else uses it inappropriately, you may be charged with aiding another in committing an offence. So a good reminder in any event! -Karl*

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**Taking the Lead****Karl Low**

There are now two leadership campaigns officially underway. Both the NDP and the Conservatives now have a competition with multiple candidates vying to be each party's new leader. I haven't been paying a lot of attention yet, as what the opposition parties do internally won't have a lot of effect on me, and there's still at least a year or two before we'll see what effects the eventually elected leaders will have on their parties.

However, I have caught some of the ideas that are being put forward, on both sides, and, given those, it's not at all unlikely that come the next election, Canadians might finally be offered a significant amount of choice in the direction that we want our country to move in.

On the Conservative side alone, there's considerable choice, with candidates like Michael Chong being almost diametrically opposed to candidates like Kellie Lietch, and then a third side of the issues being brought forward by candidates such as Maxime Bernier. And that's not even considering the likes of the iconoclastic Kevin O'Leary, who is coming in with the attitude that everything needs to be reset and built from the ground up (and that he's the guy to do it).

Then on the NDP side, we have Peter Julian, who came on to the scene with the idea of making all post-secondary institutions tuition-free. Well. You have my attention, sir.

I've long been in favor of tuition-free post-secondary, and have said multiple times that, while there may be no such thing as a silver bullet to all our problems, higher education comes close. But tuition-free education needs to come with other reforms as well, reforms that will unfortunately, and necessarily, make education harder to obtain. If we remove money as a gate-keeper (which we should) but continue to tie funds to simply the number of students, we risk watering down the worth of a degree. After all, if a university makes money based on having a student taking classes, then there's a large incentive to keep all students, no matter how incapable they may be, taking classes. A tuition-free post-secondary system needs to tie funding not just to number of students, but to the percentage of student failures. I think it should encourage post-secondary institutions to be willing to fail many, perhaps even a majority, of the students who attempt the education—that strikes me as the only way to ensure that a degree maintains some level of meaning in wider society. Something that, as students who are putting good money into these degrees, should be important to us.

So an NDP candidate saying free tuition definitely makes me sit up and take notice. But then comes NDP candidate, Guy Caron, with a platform of instituting a basic annual income to help us prepare for when

technology and automation has taken over most jobs. Something I also strongly support. Collapse the various overlapping social-welfare systems, and eliminate the enforcement needs that are there to ensure only the "correct" people receive the aid, and you've got a system that could be economic to run while providing more security for more people. It could let us streamline business regulations (such as no need for minimum wages) and create a level of risk tolerance to spur entrepreneurs. If you knew you wouldn't starve, what would you be willing to risk pursuing a dream? If you could spend your time volunteering for good causes and still know you'd be able to pay the rent, would you do so? And now I'm divided over which candidate I might consider supporting.

What this all boils down to, however, is that the odds are good that the next election will be considerably different from the last one, with some real choice on offer. Last election, it seemed we had to choose between a conservative platform of reduced taxes and balanced budget, the conservative-lite platform of reduced taxes, balanced budgets, and increased services from the NDP, and the liberal platform that turned out to be conservative-lite with planned deficits.

If the current slate of leadership contenders is any indication, we could be in for some serious debates over what direction we want Canada to go in 2019. And that's something that can only be good for our country.

In the meantime, however, this week we've got a fun issue of *The Voice Magazine* to keep you busy. Our feature is something near and dear to my heart, the need for amateur writers. This magazine would be nowhere without people like you who decide that you've got something to say and are willing to write for *The Voice Magazine* to make it heard. Of course, technically, once you've written for us, you're no longer an amateur, because we pay for submissions. Also, a good number of our writers move on to further success in their writing careers, whether that's writing novels, for major magazines, or their own firms.

We also have the start of our new column that will be looking at technology and what works (or doesn't) for you specifically as an AU student. And it's starting with the basics—your web browser.

And on top of our regular selection of entertainment, advice, news, and AU events and goings on, this issue marks the return of our music reviews. Helping you decide what you need to listen to, and, just as importantly, what can you skip in new music while you study. All of that and more in this week's issue. Enjoy the read!



***The Voice Magazine* needs your help!**

We're looking for students who are willing to be interviewed for our *Minds We Meet* column.

By giving us a bit of your story to share with other students, you help create a solid AU student community. And in return, we give you stuff like you see in the picture here! Contact us at voice@voicemagazine.org if you're interested.

In Praise of Amateur Writing

Wanda Waterman



"Every professional should remain always in his heart an amateur."

- Alfred Eisenstaedt

One of the high points in my reading career was a book I found in my high school library when I was 16. It was an anthology of poems written by American high school students, and the poems were so authentic, so inspired, and at times so hypnotically beautiful that I regret having returned it. I don't even remember the name of the book now, but I'll never forget how the poems spoke to me and for me, opening up new worlds to my inquiring mind.

Jump ahead a few years and I find an anthology of poems, art, and short stories by men in a Canadian prison. There's a story in which a First Nations man describes meeting and marrying the woman he loves. The story still haunts me; it was like a string of jewels, each description more beautiful than the last and ending in hints of loss and regret the more poignant because their causes were shrouded in mystery.

I couldn't stand to think of writers like these joining writers' workshops, taking degrees in creative writing, or even seeking out famous authors to tell them how to improve. And the

very existence of such literary outsiders made me resent the publishing and academic worlds even more than I already did.

A bit of context: Studying for an English degree had been taking an unfortunate toll on my love of literature, i.e. it was flushing it down the gutter and taking the autumn leaves with it. The more I studied the Medievalists, the Romantics, and the Modernists the less I was able to be blown away by them as I had been before I'd decided to study them full time.

The other English majors agreed with me, which may be why so many of us sought escape in the raw aesthetic energy of punk rock, science fiction flicks, and comic books.

During this period William Blake was the only writer whose work I could embrace, and I attribute this mainly to the fact that this rough, unschooled genius stood outside the literary establishment of his time, remaining an amateur— at least in conventional terms— to the end of his days.

This rogue poet status gave Blake a moral, intellectual, and artistic freedom that the established writers of his time couldn't imagine. He openly criticised British imperialism, the church, slavery, and the oppression of women. His poetry, wildly imaginative though it was, was firmly grounded in social concern. He printed his own work, producing several great tomes, full of gorgeous poem paintings and now worth millions. Why did he do it himself? No publisher would print his work, which was considered too unconventional and amateurish. Even today critics concede that Blake's style was simple and childlike, hardly what one would expect of a literary titan.

He wasn't the only one. We've all heard about those experiments in which people add their names to the works of famous authors, submitting said works to literary competitions with the aim of making the judges look like boobs when the works get rejected. But we shouldn't place all the blame for these kinds of errors on a judge's literary ignorance, and here's why:

If you read the work of writers like Twain, Dickens, or the *Brontës* and compare it to the latest fiction in today's most reputable literary journals, the older authors come off sounding naive. The literary establishment for some reason tends to steer clear of work that appears to come from an open, curious mind, and so works brimming with wonder and imagination are rejected in favour of writing with more polish and dignity, writing that conforms either to literary conventions or to the latest trends. New authors determined to be published tend to nudge their work in these directions, not as a compromise but under the illusion that their writing will be "better" the more it resembles the work of "professional" writers.

But what is a professional writer, really? The government doesn't license writers the way it does doctors and teachers, so you won't encounter specific criteria until you find yourself applying for grants to bodies that have their own yardsticks for limiting who gets to go on the carnival ride. To apply for a Canada Council grant, for example, as a professional writer you must cite a certain number of print publications. You must have been recognised by your peers. It helps if you've studied at a university, taken workshops, and even taught a little.

These are the things that matter to funding organisations. Have you changed someone's life? Big deal. Have you written lines that draw sighs from sad hearts? Whatever. Have you spun metaphors into pure gold? Bravo, but you're not getting a grant.

So let's 'fess up and acknowledge that the distinction between amateur writers and professional writers is a false construct, at least insofar as it measures the quality of the writing itself. Publication by traditional means is no firm indicator of writing quality. There rests, subjective as it is, the far more salient distinction between writing that blesses readers and writing that leaves them cold. And both types of writing can be found on both sides of the amateur-professional divide.

There were other great writers like Blake who were never published in their lifetimes because their work was considered amateur. Most certainly they would have wanted it to be read, but they didn't invest a lot of time or energy promoting their work or "improving" it to resemble the work of people who did get published. Why should they have? They were too busy writing from their souls. And if they were alive today they may still have trouble getting published, but they'd have no problem getting their work read, because they'd have cyberspace.

Just think of the Internet as a huge park where you can place your writing on a bench and walk away. As if by magic, the rain won't ruin it, the wind won't blow it away, and except under extreme circumstances no one can remove it but you. You can drop by now and then to edit it, if you like. You can move it to another park bench if you think that will bring it more attention. You can just pick it up and hand it to someone and say, "Here, read this." People who read your writing can comment on it. They can share it with their friends. And they can leave their own writing for you to read. Amateur writing has never known a finer moment.

To be clear, there's no shame for those who've achieved professional status via traditional publication, as long as their aspiration is to write ever more honestly, clearly, and beautifully. And there's no glory in being an amateur writer whose sole *raison d'être* is producing something that will be considered worthy of publication. Every writer must remain an amateur; yes, in the end we have to be doing it for love.

Childlike wonder is the very vibrancy of creative life, and it's so easily dulled by efforts to prune, correct, smooth, deconstruct, and critique. What could your writing possibly gain by letting someone stuff it into a corset so tight it can't breathe? Or chloroforming and dissecting it? Or packing it up in a stylish jacket and making people pay through the nose to read it?

Alfred Eisenstaedt's words about photography can easily be generalised to writers: "Once the amateur's naive approach and humble willingness to learn fades away, the creative spirit of good photography dies with it. Every professional should remain always in his heart an amateur."

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

Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Jennifer Laura Eve Wilson Memorial Scholarship and the T-Base Communications Scholarship

Sponsored by: Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBBC)

Deadline: March 31, 2017

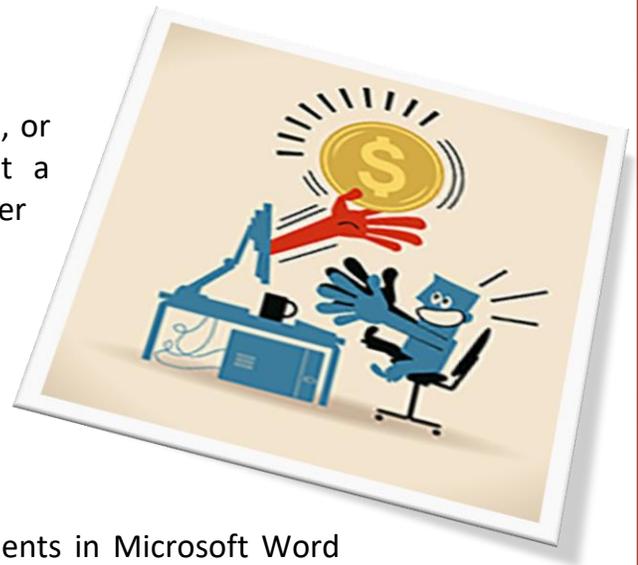
Potential payout: \$1000 to \$2000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be blind, deaf-blind, or partially sighted, and studying or planning to study at a Canadian post-secondary institution between September 2017 and April 2018. See full [eligibility requirements](#).

What's required: A completed application form in English or French, a recent transcript (official or unofficial), a letter of reference, and three short essays, as described in the Completing Your Application section.

Tips: Submit the application form and supporting documents in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx), Rich Text Format (.rtf), or plain text (.txt). Your transcript may be in a PDF, if that is the only format available.

Where to get info: www.blindcanadians.ca/programs/scholarship



Fly on the Wall

The Gravity of Mythology and Vice Versa

Jason Sullivan



Spinning in zero gravity would be terrifying. Likewise, going back to school as an adult student can be pretty scary. Education is like a spacewalk in that we have to learn to let our thoughts be spun around and turned on their heads if we are going to get anywhere. The movie *Gravity* comes to mind where Sandra Bullock, cast loose by a space disaster, loses her bearings as she hurtles through the abyss. At first she exclaims "I don't know! I don't know! I'm spinning! I can't -- I can't -- " and then "it's so fast, I can't breathe" until finally she is asked to flash her light as a beacon. She replies "my light...my light?" And then she uses her light. Discovering our own way of

thinking, our personal enlightenment, is possible as students when we open ourselves up to new intellectual inputs. We have to let our light shine. We have to allow ourselves to be uprooted and thrust free of our philosophical and existential bindings if we are to fulfil our destiny as students. After all, besides future employment, the other main goal of post-secondary schooling is to maximize our potential.

One way to do that is to develop tolerance to myriad viewpoints, especially those we find bizarre or distasteful. For example, moviegoers who criticized *Gravity* for not expressing total fidelity to the facts of physics missed its artistic value. The director didn't want too much science to get in the way of the plot. He said, "we chose to disregard those things because we wanted, first of all, to honour the emotional journey of the film," (Offman, online). Willingness to see things other than one's usual way may be what makes education most valuable.

Whatever the academic discipline, to find facts requires an ordering of what counts as data. In physics the formulas are what matter; they allow us to visualize the world as though a series of immutable laws were propelling objects to and fro like billiard balls. Limitations occur when we consider what aspects of reality are elided because they don't have a place in the formula. Consider a drawing of a gymnasium where the trajectory of a dodgeball is mapped according to the standards of physics. Its speed and angle are reduced to numbers and lines. Relevant factual equations are expressed as the projectile glances off a wall and strikes the gym teacher's cranium at a certain angle. The gym teacher's ballcap is dislodged owing to a certain force and plunks to the ground according to its mass and the attendant attraction of gravity. Nowhere is the laughter of the class, the anger of the instructor, or the malice of the student-assassin represented. In short, we have no idea *why* things happened, only *how*. We see physical reality as the laws of physics would have us believe; what is subtracted nonetheless exists in reality.

For the purposes of physics, social facts such as the thoughts and feeling of participants are irrelevant. Yet, as students, we have to consider more than the supposedly-objective facts being represented. Critical thinking involves asking about the role of assumptions in our own common sense or the epistemological assumptions of various academic disciplines. A psychologist privileges the individual whereas a sociologist privileges social groups; each has its internal biases. Interpretation always matters. Critical thinking becomes central to our studies if we are to glean something new. We have to discard our core beliefs about what counts as fact and what counts merely as a value judgement. Or, put another way, we must consider why our dualities of fact and

value seem so certain that to accept one (the laws of physics) or the other (society and emotions) seems like a mutually-exclusive proposition.

Assumptions underlay our common sense; as students we must divest ourselves of normality if we are to truly engage with new ideas. Even the Classics cannot be taken at what seems like face value. For instance, Romeo and Juliet is more than a tragic love tale. It also expresses the philosophical belief that beneath appearances there lie essential attributes. "A rose by another name, would smell as sweet" expresses the belief that things have an immutable essence (Murr, online). Jacques Derrida expresses an opposing viewpoint with his concept of 'différance'. For Derrida, following a linguist named Ferdinand de Saussure, the meaning of one term is derived in relation to others. The rose gets its meaning in relation to other things in its environment. Pungent alternatives are required to understand the meanings of the rose. All things being equal, a rose could go by another name. A rose could be called an aardvark, for instance. But in such a case the relations between things would be unchanged and it is the deferral of meaning from relations with other meanings that gives the rose its privileged status.

Consider living your whole life on a space station. Fed intravenously you have no taste for food; no matter how many culinary books you read you can only imagine the relation of salty to sweet, or sour to umami. If the only living plant you knew of, let alone tasted on your tongue or inhaled up your nose, was a rose plant it would be your whole world, your only sensory fulfilment not provided by your machinic masters. The rose, by another name, would still be a rose. But to you only in relation to your world of injected sustenance and digitized literature.

Derrida notes how the essence of a thing is forever deferred onto it by other things (Derrida, online). He describes how this process of articulation, like the movement of a snake's bones or the tale of a cat, depends on the interaction of components. This process expresses a linguistic form of play, in that any word demands assembly in regards to others and, in the end, to all others. Each word interlocks with others to express its meaning. And without words, which is to say without culture, we would have no society. We be reduced to our mechanistic sensory selves like a marooned astronaut.

AU-thentic Events

Upcoming AU Related Events

AU Third-Party Review - Student Input Teleconference

Monday, March 6, 1:00 to 2:00 pm

Telephone

Hosted by Dr. Ken Coates

www.ausu.org/2017/03/au-students-invited-participate-au-third-party-review/

click on above address for more info and teleconference access details

Business Undergraduate Information Session

Monday, March 6, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MST

Online

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabascau.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-information-session-copy/

register online at the above address

AU Leadership and Management Development (LMD) Info Session

Tuesday, March 7, 10:00 to 11:00 am MST

Online

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabascau.ca/event-details/athabasca-university-leadership-management-development-lmd-information-session-4-copy/

register online at the above address

Library Orientation Webinar

Tuesday, March 7, 12:00 to 1:00 pm MST

Online

Hosted by AU Library & Scholarly Resources

library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html

no pre-registration necessary

Derrida suggests that even our identities are illusory in the same way that the rose's specialness is: we identify ourselves (our subjectivity) in terms of both our lived pasts and our imagined futures. "The instability of "presence" as being extends to consciousness, which is the idea of self-presence" (Derrida, online). We imagine ourselves present in terms of our imagined present self that exists as the focus of a myriad of selves surrounding our existence in the fleeting moment. Just ask: '*who am I right now, when IS this now?*' The moment has passed as soon as we have asked the question.

To be open to this seemingly-bizarre erasure of reality is possible if we suspend our disbelief in what counts as normal. Entertaining other perspectives in the ether of education can only make us more open-minded in daily life. At the very least, if a rose was merely a rose it would be less interesting from an academic point of view. A rose may smell the same to every average human olfactory system but this means nothing in terms of what makes us human; that is, our capacities for intuition and our ability to impart meaning to things. Romance would be impossible if, as fictional androids sometimes express, we all responded to our surroundings according to the received laws of logic and empiricism. One thinks here of the difference between a meteorological interpretation of the rising of warm air and the settling of cool; in weather terms these processes of subduction express fundamental realities. Not sublime ones, however. In contrast we consider the words of the Caribbean poet Aime Cesaire who intoned "reason, I sacrifice you to the evening breeze" (Cesaire, online). As students, our questions are often simpler at first and more complex as we realize alternative approaches to the same issue. To think critically is to be open to new possible interpretations of something as well as to show respect to other realities and other truths.

Quixotic interpretations of reality are not only mental exercises; they can also be profitable. On February 17th of this year a famous author and linguist named Umberto Eco died at the age of 84. His most popular book, *The Name of the Rose*, sold ten million copies (Kandell, online). He was a polymath unafraid to question commonsensical imagery around him and to ascertain new readings of familiar stories. One obituary states that "the young Eco saw the world as a web of signs and symbols waiting to be deciphered . . . No text or film was ever too lowly or trivial that it could not be analysed semiotically" (Kandell, online). He did not allow normal views of what counted as academia and popular

AU-thentic Events

More Upcoming AU Related Events

Presenting Your Work at a Conference

Tuesday, March 7, 1:00 to 2:00 pm MST
Online

Hosted by Athabasca University's Faculty of Graduate Studies

fgs.athabascau.ca/news/presentations/
e-mail fgseducation@athabascau.ca to register

AU Manufacturing Management (MMC) Info Session

Tuesday, March 7, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MST
Online

Hosted by AU's Faculty of Business

business.athabascau.ca/event-details/athabasca-university-manufacturing-management-mmc-information-session-4-copy/

register online at the above address

AU Third-Party Review - Student Input Teleconference

Wednesday, March 8, 7:00 to 8:00 pm
Telephone

Hosted by Dr. Ken Coates

www.ausu.org/2017/03/au-students-invited-participate-au-third-party-review/

click on above address for more info and teleconference access details

AU Third-Party Review - Student Input Teleconference

Friday, March 10, 9:00 to 10:00 am
Telephone

Hosted by Dr. Ken Coates

www.ausu.org/2017/03/au-students-invited-participate-au-third-party-review/

click on above address for more info and teleconference access details

culture to determine his investigations. "Eco denied that he was 'intellectually slumming it' by speaking of Donatello's David in the same breath as, say, plastic garden furniture" (Kandell, online). Even seemingly incommensurable cultures like traditional Japan and consumerist Disneyland did not escape comparison. He once stated that "Mickey Mouse can be perfect in the sense that a Japanese haiku is" (Thomsen, online). By thinking critically and against the grain he achieved success. His *The Name of the Rose* covered a crucial question of intellectual discourse: what is the role of humour and are our usual methods of inquiry masking fruitful possibilities? Humour is based on cognitive dissonance not unlike the entertainment of quirky or outlandish ideas. Eco summarized his views with the phrase "Books are not made to be believed but to be subjected to enquiry" (Thomsen, online). Our worlds, our studies, and our beliefs all are susceptible to questioning. And the best place to start is often where we'd least expect to go.

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Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.

Women of Interest

Ann Moore was born in 1934 and grew up on a farm in Ohio. She was a nurse and became one of the most influential inventors of the twentieth century with her inventions of the Snuggli and Weego baby carriers. The Wall Street Journal acknowledged Moore's design as one of the most important inventions of the past century. In 1969 Moore received a patent for the Snuggli; she also received additional patents for her development of a back pack to carry portable oxygen dispensers. Moore came up with the idea while she was a volunteer nurse with the Peace Corps stationed in Togo, as she was impressed by the way the women carried their babies in fabric slings attached on their back. Following the birth of her daughter, Moore attempted to secure her daughter in the same manner, but found the baby kept slipping. Moore and her mother got together and designed a carrier that was similar in design to the ones used by women in Africa. This design resulted in the popular Snuggli, which is now used by women all over the world. The Snuggli design is on display in the Smithsonian Institute.

<http://www.women-inventors.com/Ann-Moore.asp>
<http://magazine.uc.edu/issues/0810/moore.html>
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Moore_\(inventor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Moore_(inventor))

The Creative Spark

Live the Research

Marie Well



Do you want to master your studies? And by that, I mean, find a spark of passion that makes your research bigger than your dreams? Because if you do, your chances of success spike.

You see, I know researchers studying homelessness, but they wouldn't sleep in a homeless shelter during sabbatical—as part of their research. But some academics would. These academics are crazed with passion.

For instance, do you remember the story of the man researching wolves who lived with an actual wolf pack? Or did you hear of the MD who tended to gunshot wounds on Iraqis post 9-11? They lived their research. And not only do the stakes rise the more personal you make your research, but also a sense of purpose surges.

This article is about acting, but until I win auditions for plays, I'm a half-hearted novice. I write about comedy, but until I enroll in a comedy club, I'm small-game. So, pick your research topic carefully. Once you do, live it.

Judith Weston in her book *The Film Director's Intuition* tells actors to do more than just live out the lives of the character's they play. I take her acting tips (in bold below) and twist them to apply to student life.

When acting with others, make their needs, opinions, feelings, and dreams bigger than your own. When reading authors, fixate on their ideas. Make their revelations as thrilling as fireworks shot from your rooftop. Remember, your essays shine when you embrace the love.

If you're in an acting rut, do the opposite of what you previously did. If you write C essays without outlines, start outlining. If you get B- grades for cramming, spread out your study sessions. If you get no results exercising one day a week, exercise six. If something's not working, try the opposite.

When the right answer doesn't dawn on you, think of three wrong answers. For instance, if you're stumped over the names of Canada's last three prime ministers, substitute in Mr. Kangaroo, Homer, and Pinocchio. Pinocchio might even score you part-marks. Seriously though, coming up with three wrong answers can help you get unstuck.

Aim for truth and play in acting, not perfection. Let honesty direct your research. If your gut cringes at a popular notion, don't bleat like shaved sheep. Instead, explore your reactions. Play with learning. And don't aim for perfection—perfection leads to pain.

Pick actors you admire, and mimic them. Pick intellectuals you admire—and copy their styles. Choose giants like Foucault or Kahneman, snafuing their ideas, vocabularies, and styles. Then, inject your own personality. Make the theft authentic.

Instead of resisting an acting role, tackle it. Resistance signals room for growth. Similarly, your resistance to certain academic topics signals areas for growth. For example, if you would rather perish in hell than take a theology course, then take the AU course Death and Dying in World Religions. Defend what you oppose. Grow!

If acting out the role of a boxer, take boxing lessons. Become a boxer. Similarly, if you're studying homelessness, fast for a day—and sleep for a week at a homeless shelter. If you're studying solar energy, then transition your house to solar power. And if you're studying boxing, then sign-up for a combative to learn the mental art of giving and receiving blows.

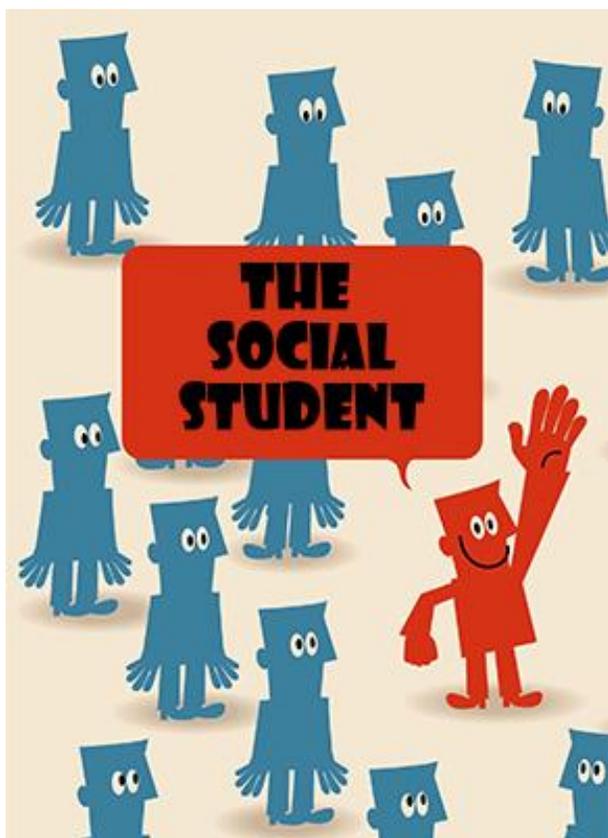
So, now you've got the boxing gear? If not, don't fret. Find another topic you could make central in your life: a calling. A paradox? I call it a creative spark!



The Social Student

Social Media Guru

Marie Well



Why wait for next month's journal article when you can read-between-the-lines today? Yes, with social media, you get instant access to academia's thought leaders. Simply pluck the best authors from your bibliography, and follow them—through, say, Twitter or Facebook. Pluck those birds bald.

But why follow top academics? When you get intimate with thought-leaders in your discipline, you enter a conversation. You get a feel for the hot-buttons and head-butting of leading edge thinkers. And you view more than mere articles: you discover personalities, urgencies, and unfolding ideas.

The above tip comes from AU's Dr. Dron. He's the powerhouse behind The Landing, AU's primary social media site. He published *Teaching Crowds: Learning and Social Media*, which you can either buy or read for free at <https://teachingcrowds.ca/>.

In the following blurbs, Dr. Dron shares a wealth of social media tips for students. I add my bits in bold font.

Forget grades—get social instead! "If you want to improve your GPA then you are focusing on the wrong thing. Stop it now! The point of education is the education, not the grade, and you should focus on enjoying the process and getting all the personal and social value out of it that you can, ignoring your GPA as much as possible."

Tweet instead of cry. "If you have a problem, your friends in networks are often able to help, even if only with moral support. Share your cares. And add people to your network that can help - classmates, subject experts, even teachers."

Twitter your way into the conversation. "Follow references. Get a feel for how people think, where the wicked problems lie, what are the main sources of disagreement."

Teach to learn. "Share what you are learning and reflect on it through social media like blogs or curation sites: teaching is the best way of learning, reflection is a critical part of all learning, and producing something for public consumption really focuses you on doing the best you can to express it well."

Get social at AU. "Athabasca University's 'official' channels, most faculties and many centres/schools, have a presence - see <http://www.athabascau.ca/contact/social/>."

Ask Nobel Prize winners for homework help. "Follow or friend or join groups with the top researchers in a field as well as other student researchers, to directly communicate with them, ask them for help, or for comment on your ideas."

Lure top academics into following you. "A good trick is to refer to researchers in your own posts (as long as your own posts are interesting, of course!) because most people track mentions of themselves."

Share your research on dedicated sites. "There are a few research-focused social systems such as Academia.edu, SlideShare, or ResearchGate that can be useful for connecting with researchers and projects, and it's worth joining them."

Blog your stuff. "I'm a fan of getting your own blog - Wordpress, Blogger, Medium, or similar tools are great for sharing stuff about yourself I maintain my own blog, on my own self-hosted site at <https://jondron.ca>."

Blog for free on the Landing. "I would most recommend Athabasca Landing, <https://landing.athabascau.ca/>, which is AU's own social learning commons (disclaimer - I am one of its creators). It has lots of social tools, including blogs, wikis, file sharing, a Twitter-like Wire, social networking, profiles, groups, and more."

Meet-up with AU students. "People on the Landing arrange local meet-ups, discover other people with shared interests, and talk about all sorts of things apart from the courses they are taking. I particularly like the Zombie Research Interest Group, but there are literally hundreds to choose from."

Hashtag search your research intrigues. "I find Twitter to be the most useful mainstream tool for helping with my research, because ... it is very commonly used in conferences, research projects, and for those with particular research interests. I follow a couple of hundred people that regularly post about topics that interest me, including the latest conferences, papers, and blog posts, but I also track a fair number of hashtags."

So, do you want a challenge? Now that you've absorbed the guru's wisdom, peer at the bibliography of your best papers. Search the authors' names on Twitter. Follow them. Message them. Mention them.

And remember, social students go further than letter grades.

Spring Cleaning Fling

Barbara Lehtiniemi



I've just flipped the calendar page. Now spring is staring me in the face. There's still snow on the ground and it's still cold, but the lengthening days tell me that winter is on the wane.

But while the days are getting longer, the time for spring cleaning is getting shorter. Once the snow melts I'll want to be outside, getting the gardens ready for the growing season and enjoying the mild temperatures before the annual mosquito invasion.

I never used to bother with spring cleaning. I'd convinced myself that I kept the house clean enough that nothing needed to be done specially in the spring. Maybe that was true at some point in my life but it's increasingly become domestic fiction.

Between work and school and life in general, weekly cleaning has become perfunctory. The essentials get

done but bigger tasks get put off until another day, which never comes. Dust builds up on ceiling fans, baseboards, cupboard tops. Window frames are grunged up with mildew and dead bugs, and window blinds are sticky with dust. It's too much for a Saturday morning's quick clean.

When I finally acknowledged that spring cleaning was necessary, I realized that spring was too late to get started. Unless, that is, I wanted to put my life on hold for a week or two and do nothing except clean from sunup to sundown (and *that's* never going to happen, believe me.)

Now I spring clean in winter, so that it will be done—or at least substantially done—by the time spring lures me outdoors. Here's my method:

Start with a list. Based on the principle that what gets listed gets done, I create a list with every cleaning task I'd (ideally) like to accomplish. I set up the list on my computer (I use OneNote but several programs would be suitable for a list) so that I don't have to re-invent it each year.

Keep it manageable. I break down big tasks ("clean bedroom") into specific, manageable elements (light fixtures, furniture, windows, window coverings, walls, closet, etc.)

Do it daily. Beginning early in the year, I try to complete one cleaning task each day. On busy days, I'll do a quick job like cleaning one light fixture or washing the baseboards in one room. On days when I have more time (and energy) I'll tackle big jobs like cleaning window blinds or liberating the dust bunnies from behind the fridge.

Make it a contest. I make note of the date I complete each task. This serves as motivation for the following year, as I try to beat—or at least match—my "best time".

Reward effort. I always reward myself after completing a task, even if it's just self-permission to sit and do nothing for five minutes. However, since spring cleaning season coincides with a certain coffee chain's annual prize campaign, my reward often involves rolling up a rim.

Spring fever hits early. By the time the good weather arrives, I don't want to be stuck in the dusty indoors. Even if I don't get every cleaning task done, starting spring-cleaning early and breaking it down into manageable tasks gives my house a hope of being clean come spring.

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



Technical Observations

Dakota Soares

Overview of Browsers: Introduction



Many people think that C. S. Lewis' "Woods Between the Worlds", Alice's rabbit hole, the trans-warp conduits of Star Wars, and the Iconian gateways of Star Trek are harmless children's fables. Little do they realize that they initiate a similar experience when opening their browser and enabling instant access to over 4.45 billion pages of data! Browsers today give us access to the internet—a vast, interwoven system of servers, IT systems, private networks, consumer power grids, university libraries, government databases, malware, trolls, hackers, and scammers.

The internet is a massive place. As we speak, one quarter of the world is surfing Facebook, and five hundred million people (more than the US population) are on the social media site Google+. At this moment, over three and a half billion people can access so much data that it would take a fast reader (reading a page a minute) 8,466 years reading non-

stop 24/7/365 to read every single word ever posted on the internet.

So what enables us to reach so vast a field of information so quickly and easily? You may have guessed the answer: a web browser. A program that does nothing but display content for viewing, yet gives us the capability to reach places unknown.

But what, exactly, does a web browser do, how does it function, and why is it so important? Almost everyone who owns a computer knows that a web browser, in its simplest sense, displays data that is put up by others around the world. As an AU student, you already know the basics of the browser of your preference. But have you thought about different web browsers and how they might help (or hinder) your academic development at AU? Different browsers, even put out by different companies, mainly do the same basic things, but with some notable exceptions (as you will find out!). Over the next several instalments I will be taking you on a journey into the "portals" that help draw humanity together in the 21st Century.

We will start with Chrome, Google's browser, that can be used on almost all devices today. Then we will take a peek at Firefox, designed and built by Mozilla, and used mainly by geeks and other developers. Leading the race

in the Apple lane, we'll look at Safari, why it didn't make the cut into the Windows environment, and what makes it a much-loved necessity for Apple users worldwide. Hopping over to Microsoft's own web browsers, Internet Explorer and Edge (Project Spartan), we will look at why there are two, what the differences are, and why one is the butt of all the jokes from the tech community. We will also look at the last of the browsers that make up the forefront of advancing web technology, Opera. Rounding out our discussion will be a talk about mobile browsers for the phone and tablet, what differences are in them versus the desktop versions, and what can and cannot be done with them.

I invite you on a journey of discovery, as we take a look at the browsers that enable us to reach information and ideas that we never would have known. I hope you enjoy the upcoming series, and if you have any questions, please feel free to comment or contact me!

Dakota Soares is an entrepreneur taking his BSc through AU, and has many interests including music, information technology, and chicken producing.



Social Media Purge

Deanna Roney



It is easy to get caught up in the state of American politics. And while it is important to stay informed about what is happening, there is a point where it can get to be too much. Especially when we are in another country and have no influence over it. There are small things that can be done, such as support to certain groups. But it is important not to get too caught up in the madness of it all. When it starts to affect your work and studies then it is too much and steps need to be taken to reduce its influence over you.

I took the steps to "mute" certain words on twitter, and while this isn't fool-proof and many tweets still get through the filter, it has significantly reduced them. Which means twitter can go back to being what it was before this chaos started a place to research agents, connect with writers, and academics. Twitter is a great place to find community in your area of interest, but don't be afraid to "mute" and don't feel guilty about tuning out of some of the political mess that has overtaken twitter in the last while.

This isn't only twitter either. For awhile it was all social media; you couldn't get away from it. And, while in one sense it helped to get some work done because there was no desire to go onto social media, it was also extremely distracting. Because when I did log on I was overtaken by these awful comments, by changes in laws that were terrifying, it was like looking at a car accident, you don't want to see it, but you can't look away. Social media had and has a unique way of sucking you in, drawing you into the mess and outraging you. But before you know it time has ticked by and your five-minute break has extended and you're going to be late for the next thing on your agenda. And what you were supposed to be working on is effectively lost.

It has inspired a social media cleanse so to speak, on all platforms. I unfollowed, unliked, muted, and unfriended. I did what I needed to do to find a place that felt more familiar, less daunting. I am still connected and staying informed about what is happening, but not in the way that it distracts me from the things that matter to me: the things I have control over. I saw posts that spoke in the terms of how could they go back to a normal life, posting about things that now seemed mundane, when all of this was happening. It might feel strange to decentralize it from your life, but by taking control, by focusing on what is important to you, you are helping the cause.

By finishing your studies, finishing that book, or that report, you are taking control of your life back, and that is empowering and political. Don't stop doing what you love because of it, don't get distracted. Instead, allow it to inspire you to finish what you started, to better yourself and give yourself a chance to make a change in someone's life. Whether you're going into accounting or creative arts, you will have the power to change someone's life, the accountant is vitally important to those who are trying to carve their own path and the creatives have a chance to change perspectives and craft understanding.

Don't lose yourself in the madness, protect yourself by doing what you need to stay focused on what matters to you.

Deanna is an AU graduate who loves adventure in life and literature. Follow her path on the writing journey at <https://deannaroney.wordpress.com/>

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group

Kari wonders what browsers other students use to access AU courses. Laurie seeks info on exam re-writes. Sarah posts a [link](#) to the new Facebook group for AU BSc Applied Math students.

Other posts include student funding, easy courses, student input for AU third-party review, and courses FREN 100, LGST 331, and PSYC 435.

Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets: "Whether you are already an [#onlinelearner](#) or just starting out, you will benefit from Learning to Learn Online: <https://t.co/aq1lI62Vbx>."

[@AthabascaUSU](#) (AUSU) tweets: "Calling all [#AthaU](#) students - you are invited to participate in the [@AthabascaU](#) third party review! <http://bit.ly/2ldspGe> [#abpse](#) [#cdnpse](#)."

[@AthabascaUBiz](#) tweets: "Are you using [#LinkedIn](#) to its full potential? Join [#AthaUBiz](#) for a free LinkedIn tips webinar: <https://goo.gl/4UIK0k> [#UpYourProfile](#)."



Music Review

Bleak

Drew Kolohon



Artist: Bleak

Album: *Dig Two Graves*

Last Halloween we had a lot more to look forward to than a bowl of candy. In a surprise move, Bleak released their new album *Dig Two Graves*. This is the first we had heard from them in five years but it was well worth the wait. The timing was perfect, as this album bleeds Halloween and gives us a journey to go on while waiting for kids to come to your door.

Bleak is a death blues band based out of Tottenham, North London. Rachel Woodworth, Yvonne Okoduwa, and "Howlin'" Anton make up the band, but on this album they have added AP Clarke for the live guitar sections. Not to be confused with Universal Music's Bleak that hails from Syracuse, Bleak, the death blues band from London, had a

lot to live up to coming off of their debut album, *For The Good Of The Nation*, and they did not disappoint. I don't usually find it necessary to listen to an album from start to finish, but with *Dig Two Graves* it only adds to the enjoyment.

Howlin' Anton lives up to his name in "30% Wolf", as a wolf in human skin, howling out this coarse opener. Taking a step forward into the spot light, bassist Rachel Woodworth gifts us with her haunting voice that only adds to the Halloween spirit in "Ebb & Flow." Rachel isn't the only one to get a moment in the spotlight, Yvonne also steps out from behind the drums and entertains us with an impassioned performance of "Bones."

My own personal favourite on this album is "Three Days of Hell". A gospel choir is sprinkled throughout this song, which makes you feel like you are listening in the graveyard on the album cover. Following suit, "Babe" is a soulful ballad that you can picture them singing in a darkly lit bar, with smoke hanging in the room. But, not all songs on this album are ballads. The song the album is named after, "Dig Two Graves" is a heated song all about telling someone to go to hell, which could not be more appropriate for the album's feel. "The Longest Night" ends the album with another sample of Rachel's stellar vocals. The album feels like if Skip James wrote for Ozzy Osbourne.

Labelled as death blues, these edgy Europeans know how to put on a show. Rarely do they play live shows, but when they do the energy is electric. I urge you to go to their [YouTube channel](#) so you can share in that energy. This album was released on Halloween, 31 October 2016, on Screamlite Records and while it was available exclusively on [Bandcamp](#) until November 28th, it is now available at all major digital stores. I strongly recommend picking up this album to play while handing out candy and terrorizing the children.

Drew Kolohon is an avid music fan who is finishing up his bachelors degree in English.



Not a Bad Way

I've often mocked the hours of pre-game coverage of major sporting events on TV like the Grey Cup or Superbowl. That I don't understand or like football clearly doesn't increase my tolerance. Who needs to see game highlights from previous (often decades old) contests? Or suffer through mind-numbing stats rattled off by expert panels of former athletes and colour guys? Or pre-game interviews with coaches, players, and hangers-on who alternately talk trash about the opposition team or earnestly declare how they intend to give 110%. Not this kid. Each time I do learn the final score only so I can make small talk if I need to.

Yet, as I write this I've had one eye and one ear on E! in what has literally been hours of pre-Oscar coverage. And we haven't even gotten to the Red Carpet yet. Oi. Part of me hates to admit I'm sucked in by something this shallow. The other part says I need an inane antidote to the blistering and relentless bad news world of Trump. Can't a girl have a few hours of total escape into the alternate reality of Hollywood's rich and famous?

I saw hosts do segments on how to embellish cleavage, penned puppies picking winners, and movie animals. Celebrity hair stylists like Ted Gibson did makeover dos. He transformed long blond hair into a flaming red bob length ala Emma Stone. Ross Mathews inadvertently created an Oscar acceptance speech by answering random, nonsensical questions. Canadian fashion stylist Brad Goreski identified fashion trends from New York Fashion Week he hoped to see on the Red Carpet: full skirts, pants (suits and jumpsuits), feathers, one shoulder, colour, velvet.

Of course, it was impossible to escape politics as host Jimmy Kimmel and others made their points, both in-your-face and subtle through the night. In a surreal moment, a busload of tourists was paraded into the facility and past the front row of stars. Between shaking hands, hugging, and taking selfies with A-listers, it was a bit of a spectacle and further delayed the process.

In the most bizarre ending ever, La La Land received the Best Picture award and acceptance speeches were made before it was determined there'd been a mistake. At first I couldn't tell if Warren Beattie was either just acting coy or had lost it. The morning after, it seems that Price Waterhouse Cooper screwed up; the presenters had the envelope for Best Actress not Best Film. Before long, Moonlight was crowned the rightful winner. In another flub, a photo of someone very much alive was included in the In Memoriam segment. Oops.

The post-Oscars weighing in about Best and Worst Dressed proves, yet again that opinions are subjective and so much fun. The Dakota Johnson and Janelle Monae dresses were gawd-awful in my opinion. All in all, not a bad way to spend a Sunday from where I sit.



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

A Winning Move

Dear Barb:

I work in an office with six other people. We've worked together for five years and some of us are friends as well as coworkers. We contribute weekly to a lotto fund. Last week one of our tickets won \$100,000. The problem is, sometimes I'm late in contributing and unfortunately this week I didn't get my money in before the draw. Now my coworkers are divided as to whether I should get my share of the winnings. Four said I shouldn't get my share and two felt I should. I think I know who the four were. I think I should get my share; I almost always get my money in, just a little late sometimes. What do you think? Deanna.

Hi Deanna:

Thanks for your excellent question. Office lottery winnings are an ongoing issue for many coworkers. Ideally you should draw up a contract and have everyone sign just in case of a situation such as this arising. The contract would cover situations such as yours, so there would be no question of what to do. Maclean's Magazine did an article about office lottery pools that go bad, the article includes a downloadable contract. In your case, I think you are at the mercy of your coworkers, or you could hire a lawyer and hopefully get your portion minus legal fees. In any event, this makes for a very uncomfortable work situation for you. Best of luck with whatever you choose.

Dear Barb:

My husband and I have two children aged five and three. We have been married five years and we have recently decided to separate. Financially neither of us can afford to move out, as all our money is tied up in assets, therefore we have decided to share the house until we can sell it. We are even sleeping in the same bed, but there is no intimacy. It is a little awkward, but we put pillows between us in the bed and manage to keep our distance. I am a little worried about my kids, I know they are young, but to them everything looks normal. I'm not sure how they are going to feel when the house sells and we each go our separate ways. My family and friends are telling me that this situation is not good for the kids since they will be devastated when we separate. I agree to a certain extent, but what are we supposed to do, neither of us can afford to move out. Thanks, Rhonda.

Hey Rhonda:

Well you can only do what you can do. Your children are going to have to deal with the separation eventually, so as long as you are not arguing and fighting, I don't see what the harm is in maintaining the status quo until your house sells. I assume you have thought this through and been to counselling. Ending a marriage should not be taken casually. Thanks for writing Rhonda.

Follow Barb on twitter @BarbGod

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.

We land on earth at last.

As soon as we emerge from the Flotsam . . .

. . . Alan and I are arrested and separated.

I'm left to wait in a dark room, alone with my terrible thoughts, until--

You must be
Emma Woodhouse.

Helmi pekkanen???



Guilty as charged. I've been
waiting a long time to meet you.

Is that why you had me
arrested?

We found out that the
Generalisimus had dispatched
troops to apprehend you and
Alan as soon as you got off
the ship.

We thought we'd save them
the trouble.

We need you, Emma.



I'm flattered. But what exactly
do you need me for?

The screens.
The wall.
The Generalisimus.



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IMPORTANT DATES

- **Mar 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Apr 1](#)
- **Mar 14:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Mar 15:** [April degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Mar 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for May](#)
- **Apr 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting May 1](#)
- **Apr 11:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Apr 28:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for June](#)

AU Student Invited to Participate in AU Third Party Review

Athabasca University is undergoing a third-party review, conducted by Dr. Ken Coates, in order to provide advice to the Board of Governors and the Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education on the institution's future.

Dr. Ken Coates is inviting all AU students to participate in this review! As a student, you have an invaluable perspective on the operations, contributions, and challenges of Athabasca University.

For more information, you can review the Terms of Reference for the Third Party Review [here](#).

There are no parameters around your contributions. You may wish to speak regarding the student support systems and services, university's financial situation and options, learning model, technological issues, multi-campus operations, or other aspects of AU's current or future plans. Dr. Coates is particularly interested in your views of AU's [mandate](#) and options for successful and sustainable operations going forward.

Ways to Participate:

Take part in one of three 1-hour teleconferences.

Teleconference number: **1 855 228.6652**

Participant pass code: **5446862**

- Monday, March 6 at 1:00pm MT
- Wednesday, March 8 at 7:00pm MT
- Friday, March 10 at 9:00am MT

OR

Email Dr. Coates directly at kennethcoates@gmail.com.

All comments will be held in confidence and will not be cited without your clear permission.

We encourage all AU students to participate!

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CLASSIFIEDS

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

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