

# THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 33 2019-08-23

## Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

## My Unplanned Pregnancy

The Kick I Needed

## Buying Local or Buying a Scam

Is Local Food What's on the Tin?

*Plus:*

*14 Mindful Songs*

*Next Generation Thinking*

*and much more!*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



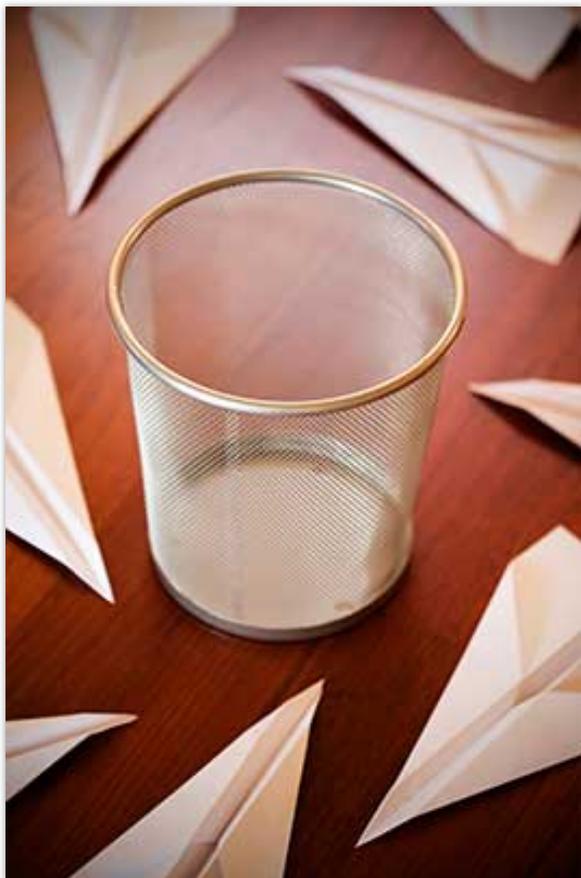
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No kidding! We also do the [twitter](#) thing once in a while if you're into that.

## Editorial Sideless

Karl Low



You may have already heard that David Koch, one of the richest men on the planet, recently died at the age of 79.

Mr. Koch was well known for his involvement in politics, providing funding to many organizations that work to discredit the idea of man-made climate change, and that also work to fight against government environmental regulations and public health care. He was, among other things, an oil magnate, inheriting a sizable fortune from his father's own oil business before becoming involved in it himself, and is recognized as one of the founders of the Tea Party movement, and was a relentless advocate of smaller government.

As the man himself, the comments about his death are quite polarized. There are quite a lot of comments basically celebrating that this man is gone, although on websites such as Fox News, his death is being taken with much more sadness.

It'd be nice to just be able to look at his political activism, his funding of various groups that often argued against, if not outright fought, various measures to help address injustices through government action, and conclude that he was simply an evil man. But there's more to it than that. His association with the Tea Party means most people feel he's probably socially conservative, yet he funded a wing devoted to evolution in the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, provided significant money to the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the United States, and has indicated he disagrees with the Republicans who feel that gays should not be allowed to marry, and has been a staunch advocate of prison reform so that it reduces recidivism.

He was also a candidate for Vice President of the United States under a libertarian banner, and ran on a platform of eliminating most forms of social welfare, but also on eliminating restrictions from how people live, such as laws about victimless crimes.

My point isn't to excuse the things he advocated for, often with millions of dollars, that we can certainly see as causing harm to people, nor to celebrate the things he did, again with millions of dollars, that may have been to help people, but simply to remind all of us, it may not be as clear cut as we first imagine.

Regardless, in this week's Voice, be sure to check out newer writer Karlee Kapler's article on how her unplanned pregnancy was what she needed to move forward, or Francesca Carone's article about buying local, are we really getting what we think we are? And of course, our feature article is an interview with a student like you, plus scholarships, advice, and more!

Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'l'.

# MINDS WE MEET



*Lauren is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Science Program at AU and works as a Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technician in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In her spare time, she loves meeting new people, exploring, playing sports, and going to ballet shows. This is her story.*

**Can you give us a little bit of background information about yourself? Who are you? Where do you live, where do you come from?**

My name is Lauren Canning, and I work full-time as a Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technician; I make life saving vaccines and I love my Job. I live in Winnipeg, Manitoba which is

the province I have lived in my entire life. I grew up in small towns all over starting as far north as Gillam. I moved to Winnipeg initially at eighteen years old to attend RRC for Applied Pharmaceuticals and knew what I wanted to do from there.

**What program are you in? Do you like your program?**

I currently am working on my Bachelor of Science through Athabasca University and I have been loving it!

**Could you describe the path that led you to AU? What was it that made you realize you wanted to go back to school, and what pushed you into the program you've signed up for?**

After college I thought I was done, then I met an amazing woman. She changed my view on life, in the pharmaceutical industry there is a regulation that specifies you cannot move above an assistant, unless you hold a degree applicable to the job. After many discussions with her, I decided that not having a piece of paper is not what was going to hold me back in life, I got this.

**Any advice for people who are on the fence about going back to school?**

Try it if you think you want more, what could it hurt. Lifelong learning is amazing, this is a unique opportunity to accomplish something to be proud of or give it a try to know its not for you. Sitting and never knowing is not me, so I encourage everyone to give it a go to see what they are capable of.

**What do you do like to do for fun when you are not studying? Any hobbies?**

I love experiencing what life has to offer and meeting new people. I go to the park and listen to music, go to the ballet or shows, and I play sports (badminton, archery, and bowling) in a social league.

**What are your plans for this education once you finish? What would be your dream job?**

I will have my piece of paper that unlocks unlimited choices, so I am still working on that one, however, the more I talk about my job the more I realize I love it. I get to train others on life saving technologies and help them be good at their jobs, it brings me lots of joy.

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

The amazing woman who I met the first day I started at this company (the reason I am taking this degree). Her story inspired me to be the best version of myself.

**Describe your experience with online learning so far. What do you like? Dislike? Why?**

Online learning and I have a love hate relationship. I love the flexibility, the promptness in handing in assignments, the quick feedback. Overall, I would say it is a positive experience, which is why I am still doing it. However, I do find e texts challenging to sit to read on a screen, and my computer fights me because I am not the greatest with technology.

**Was there a point where you waived about continuing your schooling? What caused it and what got you through it?**

Last year, halfway through and I was taking a challenging course. Life threw me a curveball; my sister got very ill, my brother made some very bad life choices, some of my favorite people passed away all at the same time, and work sent me for a course to do on my own time (400 hours). Then, the course I was enrolled in was very challenging, I cried and decided I was too stupid to continue.

**What caused it and what got you through it?**

What got me through it was a mentor; simply put they told me I was amazing, and, if I gave up, I would regret it. So, I picked my textbooks back up and continued my studies. They were right. Man, people are resilient and amazing.

**What is your favorite AU course that you have taken so far, and why? Would you recommend the course to others?**

SCIE 326 (Scientific Reasoning) was my favorite AU course, as it was easy for me to focus on. The textbook was a great read and it was very relevant to what I enjoy learning. Recommending is challenging. It was great for me, but everyone is different.

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

University is a huge time investment, but it is totally worth it. Sitting somewhere and reading a textbook instead of a novel does not bother me. I am a big fan of lifelong learning, so this was all an investment in myself.

**How do you find communications with your course tutors?**

Communications are easy, prompt and I have always been able to get what I needed.

**What is your biggest pet peeve, if you have one?**

People not having time. You always have time for what you truly want. It might not be a lot and it might not be when someone asks, but if you really desire it, you have the time. Life is not a straight line, but to me, without friends and family, nothing else is worth it, so when someone cannot make five minutes in a week or month, it gets on my nerves. My closest friends and I make time each week because we are all important.

**Describe the proudest moment in your life.**

Finding out I am stronger than I think. I am a huge planner; everything is planned and there are never any crazy surprises. Then, one day a couple of years ago I bought plane ticket to Australia that left in three weeks and nothing was planned. After I booked the flight, I found out my passport was expired, and I needed a visa. I realized then that I did not have WIFI on the plane so I could still not plan anything. I landed in Sydney to stay for twenty-one days and I did not even know where I was staying that night. I sunk into the seat of the airplane and thought to myself "what am I doing?" I gave myself a quick pep talk about how sulking is not going to fix anything, and I got up forced myself to find a Hostel. I had fun. This trip ended up being the best trip of my entire life and I learned what I was made of. Also, I learned that things tend to workout, so I should not worry so much.

**Could you describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people?**

I love hearing other people's life stories. I find them inspiring and amazing. I love when I am at my favorite coffee shop and a traveller interrupts me to ask if they can sit. Then I put my book (well usually schoolwork) aside and listen to what they have to offer. Stories of travel, life, and adventure. Some of the most amazing and inspirational things I have heard are from these strangers just looking for somewhere to sit and drink their coffee. I have tried it in reverse, joining others; the reaction is not always well received, it takes some courage and sometimes a thick skin to be able to go join a strangers table.

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

Biggest impact statement that stands out to me is "Sometimes you need to stop worrying about what others are doing and look at what you are doing". I used to be very reactive to situations, not always thinking and being very passionate about what my view was in the situation. Then, when someone said this to me, I thought "wow", it was a powerful statement. When I am overwhelmed at work, I will just write this in my notebook. Sometimes I do not have control of those around me, but am I also acting appropriately, or feeding the chaos. This reminds me to be me, to respond to what is happening, not react. This allows me to help everyone in the group look as good as they can, and if there is nothing, I can do about them, there is certainly something I can do about my own attitude.

**Have you traveled? Where has life taken you so far?**

I absolutely love to travel. I have been to Greece, Italy, Australia, Dominican Republic, Canada (all of it east to west), Las Vegas, California, Ohio, Dakotas (so the US a bit).

**Out of the places you have been to, which was your favorite and why?**

My favorite places would be Australia because it was amazingly beautiful, and that trip taught me a lot about myself. Second favorite would be San Diego, because my best friend moved there and its where I feel I need to be.

*Brittany Daigle is 22 years old and completing her BSc in Computing Science & Information Systems with AU from Toronto, Ontario.*



## My Unplanned Pregnancy The Kick in the Ass I Needed

Karlee Kapler



### The Three Emotional and Academic Motivations It Gave Me

As an AU Student it can be difficult to focus on your studies and work full-time. All my energy was concentrated into this job that was going nowhere and I put my studies on the back burner. In a way my unplanned pregnancy was the push I needed to refocus on what was important, which is most definitely my education. So here are three reasons why my unplanned pregnancy was the emotional and academic kick in the ass I needed:

#### **I quit the job that wasn't serving me anymore.**

Okay, so when I quit, I didn't know I was pregnant. I was about 6 weeks pregnant and had no idea why I was crying all the time. While I was working I often would randomly cry, and my nights were spent tossing and turning due to the stress I was under. It wasn't good for my emotional health and the day I quit I had had enough. I like to thank my pregnancy hormones for that one. At the same time, I wasn't focusing on my studies as much as I should have. Quitting my job suddenly meant I had that time to focus.

#### **It Reminded Me of my Promise**

I always said I would have my degree finished before I started a family. Change. Of. Plans. I know now that it doesn't matter at what point you start a degree or at what point you start a family. At the same time, it has made it a little bit more difficult now that I have a one-year-old who really does take a lot of my attention. But that's okay, it won't be like this forever, and the lovely thing about AU is that you can work on your classes at your own pace. My pace would be classified as off-the-charts-mall-walker-slow. Some days I really feel like I am barely getting anywhere. It might be annoying, but it is the one major motivation I must get things done. I became even more serious about my education after the birth of my son. Because, though I may not be able to meet my promise now, I'm still going to get it as close as I can.

#### **It helped me figure out what makes me happy.**

I had a difficult pregnancy. I wasn't in a good place emotionally and I was very ill right up until I went into labour. Because of this, I quickly realized what I needed to do to be happy and acquire some sort of normalcy in my life. A few friendships suffered and I really had to redirect my focus to take care of myself. In that respect, I have always had to aggressively defend my education choices. It got to the point I was questioning them myself. Eventually I realized that it doesn't matter if someone else doesn't understand why I would choose to major in English. I don't have to explain myself and I don't have to come up with a career plan to present to anyone about my choices. If it makes me happy and it's what I want to do, it isn't important what someone else thinks.

When I was pregnant, I realized the only person I had the energy to focus on was myself, and that that was the most important. Now, as a mom, it is even more important that I make sure to focus on what is important to me and what makes me happy. Working on my degree through AU gives me something to do for myself, and I refuse having to defend that any longer.

*Karlee Kapler is a student at AU, majoring in English. She hopes one day to pursue a career in either editing, publishing, writing, communications, or post secondary teaching. She can't decide! Feel like reaching out? Shoot her an email at [karlee.kapler@gmail.com](mailto:karlee.kapler@gmail.com)*



## The Mindful Bard's Top 14 Mindfulness Songs

Wanda Waterman



If you really want to get into the meditation zone, you need, if not complete silence, then meditation music — ambient, world, classical, jazz, or anything that draws you into your own contemplative space, usually music that's free of voices or any audio distractions that force you to think or that draw you away from being fully conscious in the moment.

But sometimes you fall off the consciousness wagon. Your ego takes over and once again you let yourself get caught up in life's pointless and exhausting treadmill. It's for this reason that it behooves you to fortify your playlist with at least one of the following tunes, all of which have this in common: they encourage us to see the beauty in the present.

By no means an exhaustive list, I'm hoping you'll add to it by sharing the names of your favourite mindfulness songs in the comments section below.

### "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'"

(Lyrics by DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin, music by George Gershwin, 1934)

This is a song about being content with a little. It rejects the accoutrements of wealth and derides the time wasted pursuing it, extolling instead the joys of relationship, music, nature, and conscious contact with the divine. Eckhart Tolle would surely approve.

### "Inchworm"

(Written by Frank Loesser for the 1952 film *Hans Christian Andersen*)

The inchworm is asked why he's always measuring the marigold and never stopping to see how beautiful it is. A lesson here for compulsive data-collectors and workaholics: stop and admire the marigolds once in a while.

**“Feeling Good”**

(Written by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse and first released in 1964)

Just the thing for coming off a long bout of hardship and suffering. The singer identifies with nature and proclaims the ecstatic sense of newness that comes with full awareness.

**“What a Wonderful World”**

(Written by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss and first released in 1967)

A deeply life-affirming song rendered ever the more poignant by Louis Armstrong’s gravelly vesion and our knowledge of what he and other black Americans were enduring back then.

**“The 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Song (Feelin’ Groovy)”**

(Written by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel and released in 1966)

“Gotta make the moment last ...” Can anyone help following such a delightful directive, especially hearing it couched in such harmonious and lilting voices?

**“Here Comes the Sun”**

(Written by George Harrison and released in 1969)

Another classic affirmation of the hope of new beginnings, wisely admonishing listeners that “It’s all right.” You’re safe. You’re connected to the source of love—you just couldn’t see it before.

**“Let it Be”**

(written by Paul McCartney and released in 1970)

Yes, “let it be” represents words of wisdom, the virtue of acceptance, as does the trusting phrase “There will be an answer.” Let it be.

**“Moonshadow”**

(written by Cat Stevens and released in 1970)

Along the same lines as “Plenty o’ Nuttin’,” the singer expresses an absence of fear in the face of possible loss. If he loses his legs, he won’t have to walk, and if he loses his mouth, he won’t have to talk, etc. There’s nothing to fear, and he’s safe, grateful for what is.

**“I Can See Clearly Now”**

(written by Johnny Nash and released in 1972)

If you’re now regaining your strength, your faith in the universe, and your spiritual consciousness, have a listen to this song. Boy, will it resonate.

**“Stand”**

(Written by Berry, Buck, Mills, and Stipe of R.E.M. and first released in 1989)

According to legend this song was written as a bit of nonsense in a playful attempt to recapture the innocent, joyous sounds of early sixties pop. It just happened to turn into a hymn to the here and now.

**“Right Here, Right Now”**

(Written by Mike Edwards and first released in 1990)

This one was reportedly written in response to a sense of optimism about the way things were at the time, but that’s not really true mindfulness, which looks at events as passing phenomena

leaving no mark on true being (remember the proverbial “This too shall pass”). Nonetheless it remains an anthem to the present moment.

### “Good Mother”

(Written by Jann Arden and first released in 1994)

No more blaming other people for how you turned out, not even your mom. No more wanting more and being less satisfied with each new toy. This song is a beautiful paen to gratitude for what is.

### “Beautiful Day”

(Lyrics written by Bono, music written by U2, and first released in 2000)

Could have been written by the angels, this one, proclaiming unconditional happiness and a recognition of the beauty inherent in being itself. It’s a plus that the lyrics approach poetry and harbour the wisdom of the ages. Enough said.

### “Joy”

(written by Jackie Venson and first released in 2019)

Yes, as Stratis Myrivilis wrote in his 1930 novel *Life in the Tomb*, “one must choose happiness.” Guitar wizard Jackie Venson sings about choosing to face rejection and abandonment by *not* allowing them to form a tragic story. She chooses joy, and so ought we all.

*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:** Community Leaders Scholarship

**Sponsored by:** BluEarth Renewables

**Deadline:** September 15, 2019

**Potential payout:** up to \$3000

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be residents of Canada or the U.S., and pursuing full-time studies at an accredited Canadian or United States university, college, or trades or technical school.

**What's required:** An online application form, including academic and community involvement information, along with an unofficial academic transcript and a letter of recommendation.

**Tips:** Read the [FAQs](#) for helpful information.

**Where to get info:** [blueearthrenewables.com/our-responsibility/scholarships/](http://blueearthrenewables.com/our-responsibility/scholarships/)



## The Study Dude

### The Unsustainable Financial Models of Universities

Marie Well



Colleges must adapt or die.

Jeffrey J. Selingo (2013) suggests education could wind up as a bursting bubble, not unlike the housing bubble that exploded this past decade, which devastated the global economy. “Michael Crow ... in his ten years as president, had transformed Arizona State from a sleepy public university to a test bed for new ideas ... [He said that] higher education is clinging to tradition. Too few students are going to college, not enough are graduating, and the whole thing costs too much. Quoting his father, a US Navy sailor, Crow called this a ‘piss-poor performance’” (Selingo, 2%). If you invest in an education, you should have a good chance of graduating, right? And, after all that toil, you shouldn’t face a lifetime of debt. At least, not in tomorrow’s world.

But what exactly marks the *crux* of colleges poor performance? “Colleges and universities provide a wide variety of educational and social

services and bring them together in one package, which usually is delivered at one physical location. That system is collapsing under an unsustainable financial model” (p. xvi of 238, 4%). Worse, “overall, student debt has surpassed a trillion dollars while, since the late 1970s, the annual costs at four-year colleges have risen three times faster than the rate of inflation” (Selingo, 3%). Ouch! No wonder many AU students take one course a semester. My education back in the mid 2000’s cost about \$400 per class; the cost is now over \$800 a class. Double! “Some 50 million Americans now hold some kind of student loan, slightly more than the number of people on Medicare and almost as many as [those who] receive Social Security benefits” (ibid).

“‘We need new models because the cost of higher ed is becoming prohibitive,’ [Clay Christensen, a Harvard Business professor who created disruptive innovation theory] told me. ‘The history of innovation tells us those new models are not going to come from within higher ed. They will come from new entrants’” (ibid). Some revolutionaries have started the buzz about higher education reform. “Talk of a coming disruption to the traditional college model has reached a fever pitch in some corners of higher education—each day seems to bring news of innovations with the potential to transform how we get a college degree, just as iTunes forever changed how we buy music” (ibid). This is where education like Coursera and even AU come in. “In less than a year, one of those efforts, Coursera, has enrolled 2.5 million students, offered 215 courses, and partnered with more than 30 universities” (ibid). AU, too, is in a unique position with its online model, but it needs to better innovate: cut student costs, create courses more relevant to job markets, maintain up-to-date courses, offer better video instruction, and so forth. Like every human being, all universities need to grow.

So, why don’t universities simply innovate for better financial (and delivery) models? “Unlike newspapers and bookstores, colleges are protected from market forces by large government

subsidies and a complex regulatory environment that does not allow you or me to simply start a new college from our bedroom like we can a website that puts a newspaper out of business” (Selingo, 4%). Government subsidies and regulations create market inefficiencies. I saw a video in economics class where an economy hit a debt wall and no longer had access to rich government subsidies. So, businesses were forced to innovate. Farmers raised their grain off the ground to prevent water damage, for instance. But universities need to adapt, too. They need to make themselves innovative and profitable yet affordable and practical. And not let their bureaucracy halt innovation. But on the bright side, “although as many as a thousand colleges are at risk of closing or merging in the decade ahead because of poor finances, the vast majority of colleges will adapt” (ibid).

So, what should you do while universities carefully address their unsustainable financial models? “Smart students should focus their attention on the quality of teaching, the portability of their credits, and the value a degree or other credential will provide them in the job market” (Selingo, 5%).

#### References

Selingo, Jeffrey J. (2013). *College (Un)bound: The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. E-book.



## Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

#### **AthaU Facebook Group**

Christine seeks other AU students near Brock University for meet-ups and study support. Kristy is taking her first course after a break of 15 years and seeks advice; AU students deliver!

Other posts include marking time for paper exams, individualized versus group study, the 2019 federal election, and courses HIST 224 and HLST 200.

#### **reddit**

Among the usual course queries and e-text bitching is a post asking about students' experience with quality of clothing items from the AU store.

#### **Twitter**

@AthabascaU tweets: "#AthabascaU is #NowHiring a term Administrative Assistant, Learning Services Tutorial. Responsible for assigning students and supporting faculty instructional workload needs. <https://bit.ly/2ZfHK8v>."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Get involved! Apply to join our Student Advisory Committee and have a say on important topics related to your studies! Apply from anywhere! DEADLINE TO APPLY: AUG 23. <https://bit.ly/2GXDKTM>."

#### **Youtube**

Curious about AU's MBA? Check out the Faculty of Biz's recorded webinar of its [MBA for executives](#).



## Fly on the Wall

### Limbic Fantasies amid Study Reality

Jason Sullivan



### Next Generation Thinking

Pop culture gleams with opportunities for sociological analytics. Take the country song “What Was I Thinking” by Dierks Bentley:

“I was thinking ‘bout a little white tank top sitting right there in the middle by me  
I was thinking about a long kiss man just gotta get goin’ with a night like me  
Well I know what I was feeling but what was I thinking?  
But what was I thinking?”

Repetition of that final query hones the point that many of our

actions aren't thought reactions at all; as AU students we often don't know why we do, or don't do, the things we do. The phrase “I didn't feel like it,” is the punchline to many an explanation for missed deadlines and swamy explanations.

To appear to study in earnest is not, as we may have found out but may also choose to forget, the same as actively studying for real. Yet we don't feel like skipping studying against our better judgement in isolation. As David T. Courtwright, in his book *The Age of Addiction: How Bad Habits Became Big Business*, notes: “the deeper truth is that we live in a world nominally dedicated to progress, health, and longevity but in fact geared toward getting us to consume in ways that are unprogressive, unhealthful and often deadly” (Courtwright, 2019) So if we're a victim of feeling like having fun in ways that don't involve our course material, at least we can find someone else to blame; someone else's dog of marketing ate our unwritten assignment!

### Yes, But How Do You Feel?

Remaining to consider is the nature of how we feel about schoolwork versus how we cognitively apprehend schoolwork's necessity for our future fulfilment. You don't have to take a redneck's lyrical witticisms to explore the thought/feeling dichotomy for it, either.

Long ago and far away in a distant cosmos, teen pinup actor Wil Wheaton starred in a crucial episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Titled “The Game”, he and a girl he was crushing on found themselves surrounded by the walking dead: the entire Starship Enterprise had fallen victim to the wiles of a computer game headset. Substituted in the stead of protocol were the priorities of the creators of the game. The Enterprise crew was thus was at the behest of nefarious forces while appearing to function normally. As the script states “Our crew has never looked more capable -- there is nothing different or unusual about their behavior” (Sackett et al, 1991) No matter if we appear to be studying, what matters most is that we feel those creative juices flow. And those come from within ourselves.

### Reality? No, Verisimilitude!

Here the film and literary analysis term verisimilitude rears its head. Samuel Taylor Coleridge summarizes verisimilitude as encompassing the fiction writer's need to stimulate the reader's life

narrative desires “so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith”. It's this poetic faith that allows a story about, say space travellers in the future becoming addicted to a high-tech video game, to pass itself off as something we can relate to. Kernels of truth grow gardens of fascination: that's verisimilitude.

Jargony though its syllables be, there's a fair distance between mere believability and the magical outcome derived when a person accepts a story they're told. Verisimilitude refers to the sparkle that carries into a story's inner world; even as this world chimes with our own we find our reality transposed onto that of a fiction thus illustrating a certain fictitiousness in ordinary life itself. Like a brainwash potion, verisimilitude stimulates both our unconscious limbic drives and our liminal life expectations. For instance: everyone wants to fall in love, or almost everyone, and that's why romance sells so well. Likewise, when others in our world seem a bit akimbo or off kilter, as would happen if, say, the advent of smart phones and their attendant Apps were to appear overnight in our social life—rather than over a decade or more—everything gets thrown for a loop. People might be doing their jobs and dating and living normally, but we'd immediately notice if suddenly everyone was glued to a tiny handheld screen. This jarring reality becomes Wil Wheaton's world in the episode; it's as if suddenly our study buddy dropped out of AU or our tutor called to say that she'd decided to give up sociology and become an accountant! Sudden changes in fiction function to illustrate smaller shifts in real life. As we learned to manage our time to accommodate our distance education, we may have withdrawn from certain social engagements to meet our new priorities. If we'd drifted away all at once, however, peers and family might have assumed something was wrong with us.

### **Hypothalamic Hyperbole or the Essence of Modern Life?**

“The Game” begins when a shore leave flirt of the show's other male heartthrob, Jonathon Frakes, brings a little device into their bedroom play. It's a game that, not unlike any Gameboy at the time, involves using one's mind (more than any physical exertion) to put an, er, object into a somewhat mobile, but tantalizingly available, hole. The hypothalamus (physio-neuro home of the infamous '5 F's': food, flight, etc) , not to mention Freudian thought, is clearly implicated.

These are universal themes; we all have a limbic system, the access to which is available upon request. Upon scoring the player then receives a serotonin jolt of pleasure: “Etana continues to rub his shoulders. He concentrates --sending out more bursts -- but they keep missing the cone. Finally, the disc drops right into the cone. Suddenly, Riker's entire body tenses up. A moment, then he relaxes and lets out a small gasp. Like he's experienced a brief moment of internal pleasure” (Sackett et al, 1991). The pleasure we claim in moments of play (in any form) are of a different type than the slow slog of our academic successes; these aren't designed for instant gratification. Yet school can actually imbue our life with elements of fun if we learn to feel that way about our studies.

### **Cognition and the Limbic Limbo: Thinking the Unthinkable**

What was Riker thinking? We know what he was feeling but as the addiction takes hold of the crew the cognitive component appears inexplicable. As Wheaton and his young lady friend investigate the game and discover its addictive “psychotropic” properties at the limbic level, they consider its cognitive implications: What's going on in the player's prefrontal cortex, that seat of reason?

ROBIN

Doesn't that area control higher reasoning?

## WESLEY

Yeah... it sure does.  
 Maybe there's more going on here  
 than we thought. Someone could  
 be trying to use the game -- for  
 some purpose other than  
 pleasure..."

(Sackett et al. 1991)

One doesn't have to be a bit suspicious of the gaming industry's motives to consider that what seems entertaining or informative also contains implicit messages that, by the proverbial back door, enter the pathways of the labyrinth that is our mind. There are a lot of shysters, shills, and grifters out there looking to sell us pleasure at their profit and our cost. Courtwright notes that historically “new pleasures gave rise to new vices, new vices to new addictions—for some people, anyway. Addictive behavior was, to repeat, seldom majority behavior. But the risk of such behavior grew as entrepreneurs rationalized—that is, made more scientific and efficient—the trade in brain-rewarding commodities” (Courtwright, 2019). Even fictional futures aren't exempt; the Enterprise crew had been co-opted for a mass takeover of Starfleet. And, using a term common in the video game industry, this invasion is termed an 'expansion'. Expansion pack for your favourite game console anybody?

At AU we're prone to dalliances for the simple reason that where we work on school is also where we play at some of our favourite pastimes. We hone useful skills in self-discipline that are clearly needed in traditional educational settings. Courtwright describes how one economics class in Sweden was afflicted with an addiction to *World of Warcraft*: “‘How do they feel about their circumstances?’ I asked. ‘They feel angst,’ Berg said.

‘But they keep playing?’ ‘They keep playing.’”

This sort of behaviour does seem like an addiction, in the sense of a compulsive, regret-filled pursuit of transient pleasures that are harmful to both the individual and society. For gaming, the personal cost was highest for Swedish men. “I am,” Berg reported, “now the only male in my graduate program in economic history” (ibid).

No conspiracy is needed to explain this statistical outcome. This realm of limbic distractions isn't limited to what used to be the realm of dweebs, nerds, geeks and rejects. It's pretty normal for a hallway or park to be filled with folks holding their smartphones in front of their seemingly-downcast faces, as if there was a mystery beacon within the device that led the way to life-giving manna. Augmented realities, the likes of *Pokemon Go*, closely resemble the Star Trek: TNG episode in question. But wait, there's more.

Where there's limbic stimulation the more, uh, essential bodily functions are invariably implicated. “Back home in Florida, I noticed digital distractions exacting a more even academic toll. The smartphones that dotted the lecture halls were as often wielded by women as by men. But when I told Berg's tale to my students, they instantly recognized the type. One admitted that he had lost a year to compulsive gaming. He said that he was in recovery—precariously, to judge by his grades. Another student knew gamers who kept cans by their computers. They used them to avoid having to take bathroom breaks” (ibid)

If you can't take the time to get up and pee you've probably got a problem. It must be a heckuva fun game but seriously: what are you thinking? The outcome in terms of medical discourse is probably not surprising: "In 2013, the new edition of the bible of psychiatry, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5, described gaming disorders in language indistinguishable from drug addiction. The editors ushered "internet gaming disorder" into the green room of addiction by designating it a "condition for further study". Likewise, in 2018 the WHO made it official by adding "gaming disorder" to the revised International Classification of Diseases" (*ibid*).

Whatever our distractions from the edifying impact of cracking our textbooks, it's clear that these pleasurable asides can be more than mere fun and games. Cell phone apps with wan names like *Words With Friends* belie their tendency to implicate underlying compulsions. Something may be amiss anytime something seems like a necessity when rational cognition clearly categorizes it as a luxury. "Medical researchers have discovered that substance and behavioral addictions have similar natural histories. They produce similar brain changes; similar patterns of tolerance; and similar experiences of craving, intoxication and withdrawal" (*ibid*).

So where does this leave our noble AU selves, studying amidst a morass of challenges both social and cultural? On TNG, the game apparatus hooks up through the temples and affects straight through their optic nerve. Like any new interest, the game navigates a steep incline from curiosity to obsession. Bearing this in mind, let's recall that AU was new too to us once. Perhaps to succeed at AU requires a certain attachment to our studies and the discovery of pleasure in our work. Otherwise, we're more likely to fall prey to those seemingly-affable stimulations of our limbic centre. Ever wonder about the link, or distance between heart and mind, between brainy desire to study and achieve success and the will's disturbingly weak and labile tendency to fall for flighty whims of procrastination? Well that's a limbic challenge right there.

### **Wil Wheaton's Lady Friend; Rational Approaches to Felt Challenges**

Wil Wheaton's eyes and mind found a winner. His crush had a unique way of learning that stimulated both limbic and prefrontal realms. Noting "your neutrons are drifting" he taught her something and she recorded it in a personal Law Book. Wheaton was fascinated by her ingenious approach:

"You have a funny way of looking at conduit configuration. But it works.

ROBIN

Law Thirty-Six -- You gotta go  
with what works.

WESLEY

What are these laws you keep  
talking about?

ROBIN

My own personal laws. When I  
learn something essential, I make  
up a law about it. That way, I  
never forget"

(Sackett et al, 1991)

Personalizing her laws allowed a closer affection with her life's work; her focus on thinking allowed her to map her responses to feelings such frustration at those drifting neutrons. As they parted to continue their respective careers, she even gave her book of laws to Wheaton. To study, perchance to learn and even follow himself.

For this “Fly in the Wall” the devil is in the details; if we can find a fondness, an affinity, with our coursework it can acquire a more beloved, or at least appreciated, place in the nether regions of our brains. I'm not saying give our coursework a name, like naming some unfortunate affliction of our bodies, but the more we enjoy our studies at every level, including the limbic, the better off we'll be. Maybe even try pairing your study time with another, purely pleasurable, action. Smarties, smoothies, sex, I don't know, the choice is yours, but to avoid limbic limbo where it never feels like the right time to study we might as well try to incorporate our whole selves.

When we give cognition to others we feel good; the heart and mind of studying are linked when we share our knowledge with others. At some level learning, like love, is itself a blend of thought and feeling. And if we have to ask 'what was I thinking' to explain our study blahs just remember: to study with feeling we have to learn to feel it!

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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.*



#### Course Exam

**MATH 366** (Complex Variables I) is a three-credit, upper-level mathematics course that is an introductory complex variable course covering complex numbers, complex variable functions, continuity, limits, derivatives, transcendental functions, integration on the complex plane, infinite series with complex variables, and the residue theorem with some of its applications. MATH 366 requires students to take **MATH 365** (Multivariable Calculus) or an equivalent course from another institution as a prerequisite and it has a challenge for credit option if interested.

Complex Variables I is made up of six units, four assignments weighing ten percent each, one midterm examination worth thirty percent, and a final examination that weighs thirty percent. To receive credit for MATH 366, students must submit all the course assignments and complete them to the satisfaction of the assigned tutor. Students must also achieve a grade of at least a “D”

#### Brittany Daigle

AU courses, up close

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or fifty percent on each examination, and a course composite grade of at least a “D” or fifty percent.

Craig Belair, twenty-nine years old and from Calgary, enrolled at Athabasca University in September of 2017. He is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Applied Math program at Athabasca University and has taken MATH 366. He provides a brief introduction, stating “I was working retail jobs through my early 20’s and didn’t feel particularly inspired by my work, so I decided to enroll in Athabasca University. I had enjoyed Math, particularly calculus in high school, so I decided to go for a BSc in Mathematics. I am currently working part-time as a math tutor for grades two to twelve. I appreciate the challenge of trying to explain a concept in many ways, trying to see what explanation best connects with the student. In my spare time I like to go for hikes, workout at the gym, go drinking with friends, watch Netflix, and play chess/various online games.”

Craig explains MATH 366, stating “MATH 366 is a senior-level math course that delves into the complex numbers and explores applying concepts from elementary calculus on functions of complex variables. The course starts out by covering some of the basic properties of complex numbers and then moves onto interpreting a lot of the fundamental ideas from real variable calculus in the complex number system. For example: what does it mean for a complex function to have a derivative? How do we integrate complex functions? What special properties do analytic complex functions have? The course concludes by going over series representation of complex functions, and ways we can use the complex integration to solve real valued calculus problems.”

As for the structure of the course, he explains that it is pretty simple, stating “The course is broken up into six units. There are four assignments, two of which each cover two units of the course, and the other two which each cover one unit of the course. The assignments are each worth ten percent of your final grade. The assignments are a mix of computational questions, and some more interesting proofing questions or questions that test a students’ understanding. There is a midterm exam that covers units one through three and a cumulative final exam. Each of the exams are worth thirty percent. As is the case with most math exams, the exams are about ten written response questions. The exams covered mostly the computational aspects of the course, which made them a fair bit easier than the assignments. Reading the textbook is one hundred percent necessary to complete this course.”

Craig states that he would definitely recommend this course to other students, as “This was one of the math courses I enjoyed most from Athabasca, a close second would have to be MATH 409. Needless to say, I would only recommend it to students who had already taken Calculus I/II and Multivariable Calculus, as the course builds heavily on topics covered in those courses. I think if a student has a good foundation in Calculus, this course is not very difficult.”

As for any tips or tricks, he believes that “The most important thing in this course is to be confident with the prerequisite material. If you do not feel confident with Taylor series expansions from Calculus II, review them before taking this course. Similarly, if you don’t feel confident with parametric representations of curves, or partial derivatives, review that material. If those foundational skills are there, I think the course will be a breeze.”

When asked how communications with his tutor was, he explains “My tutor (Ming Kou) has been super helpful. He is always very quick to respond, to mark my assignments, and willing to answer any questions I have had. His assignment feedback is informative, and if I have any questions regarding it, he is always willing to answer them.”

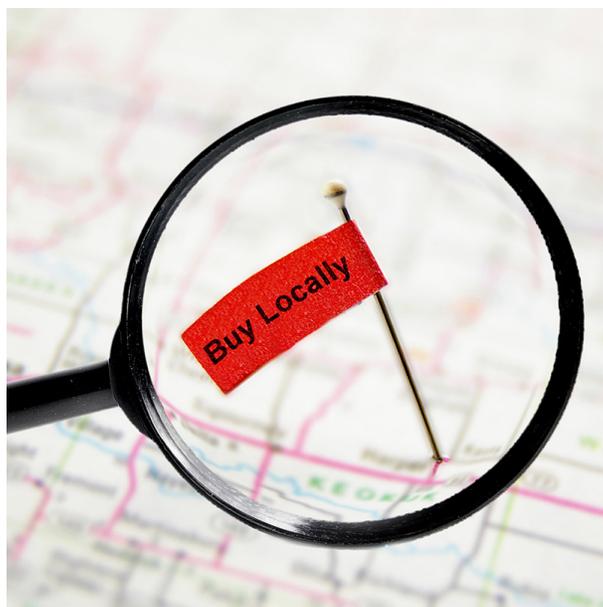
Whether MATH 366 is a degree or program requirement of yours, or the topics that were discussed above are of interest to you, Complex Variables I will have you learning some interesting and complex mathematical concepts.

*Brittany Daigle is 22 years old and completing her BSc in Computing Science & Information Systems with AU from Toronto, Ontario.*



## Buying Local or Buying a Scam

**Francesca Carone**



Local food has been growing in popularity every year. Being marketed to people as a local solution, saving the earth, and eating fresh sort of ideology. This idea is highlighted more and more at grocery stores and is also featured on restaurant menus. This local food idea seems to have shifted from a foodie movement to a widespread mainstream ideology. But what does local food mean and are we being duped into a marketing ploy?

The stated purpose of this movement is to reduce the miles in which food travels so that it saves fuel and keeps the produce fresher when you buy it. The less miles travelled, the lower the impact on the environment. This, in turn, causes people to respect eating in season and understanding the limitations of such. Not only that, but you can support your local community by buying from actual real-life farmers

you can see, hear, and touch. Many CSA box programs, farmers' markets, and U-picks survive because of people choosing to eat local. Buying directly allows them to set their price and retain good profit margins, and it allows people to know how their food was grown. Many people don't trust organic labels as much as in the past, so building a relationship with a farmer and seeing what his beliefs about pesticides are allows farmers to be transparent.

So where is the scam you may ask? The scam isn't so much with eating local but rather with grocery stores and others who label or market their food as local when it really isn't. For example, there is a farmers' market nearby and they sell a variety of items. I asked where the peas came from and he couldn't tell me. At the same time, they were selling things that were not even in season around me. I came to find out later he was buying from a food distributor and many items were coming in from Ontario and various places around Canada. Another example is at the grocery store. There were signs on a vegetable that said locally grown in Canada. I looked at the sticker on the actual vegetable, and it said grown in Mexico. If you don't check you won't know.

One example even made it on the news: in Ontario, at a Peterborough Farmers' Market, vendors were telling customers their produce was local, yet hidden cameras captured them receiving food from a distributor. You can read about it [here](#). You can even watch as they remove stickers from the food to make them look local and then lie to customers. Believe it or not, there aren't actually any provincial regulations about reselling foods according to Marketplace (CBC). So, you will have to be careful. Here are some tips to buying local that may keep yourself scam-free:

You need to watch out for vendors because a lot of them are resellers and not actually farmers. This hurts real small-scale farmers by driving their prices down.

You can ask questions about where it was grown and by who.

You can ask where their farm is located.

You can ask for a farm visit.

You can ask about their growing methods.

You can ask about food in season to see if they are knowledgeable.

Despite these problems it may still be good to buy local. You can learn about foods in your region and cut down on environmental damage while reducing the use of fuel. You may be supporting the community and people you live around and meeting new people. You may come to understand how food is grown and avoid too many pesticides. And you may discover new foods you have never seen, I have, and, finally, you would have the freshest produce ever, some being picked the same day! In the end it is worth it to add some local food to your list; give it a try.

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## The Fit Student

### Resume Fitness Basics

Marie Well



To be fit for the costs of living—and the shock of student debt—we need to woo job interviews. I bombed at interviews. It took me a year to find a job. Sadly, I would get interviews every week—sometimes three—but no one would hire me.

So, I bought new clothes, hit the gym, splashed on makeup, dyed my gray hair, and read career books. But nothing helped—until I changed my attitude. With a new attitude, I secured a job right away.

But I fret the day I re-enter the job market—as I have never seen such a bad economy. This past week, I went into a new mall. To my shock, it had about 80% vacancy. That means for every ten stores, eight were empty. Many of the empty stores came with “for lease” signs. It felt like death. The mall didn’t survive a bad economy. But can we?

Rodger Banister wrote a book called *It’s Not About You: How to Think Like an Employer and Get the Job You Really*

*Want*. The book claims to help us land a job—on the first interview, for most any interview—for even jobs for which we don’t qualify.

Here’s what Banister’s book says about resumes:

#### Customize every resume.

Banister says, “Please don’t ever send out bulk resumes or cover letters” (p. 14 of 214, 4%). I do that. You might, too. But the job market in Alberta has at least a hundred applicants for most

every job. So, stand out. “Apply for just one position a day. One. That way you can truly focus on the job description and tailor your resume to what the employer is looking for” (p. 16 of 214, 5%).

Banister also says to mimic “the language in the job description because [employers will] be looking for keywords that match” (p. 16 of 214, 5%). But leave out anything not related to the job description. I have the word “robotics” listed as a hobby, but I think it turns off many employers. Same with sports like female wrestling.

### **Don't BS.**

“Don't try to bullshit me” says Bannister, who did HR for marketing personnel. “You say: ‘I have extensive experience in digital marketing.’ Extensive? Unless you can prove this to me with some success metrics (KPIs), logistics or key language over a period of time, I read: ‘I created a Facebook ad for my friend once and I don't know what the word ‘extensive’ means” (p. 17 of 214, 5%).

I call myself a digital marketing expert. If Lynda.com makes you an expert, I'm surely one. According to Bannister, however, “You say: ‘I'm a social media expert.’ ... Unless you're the love child of Seth Godin and Mark Zuckerberg, I read: ‘I have 312 followers on Instagram and think you're gullible’” (p. 17 of 214, 6%). Does just over a 100 followers count?

“There are much better words to use that are more akin to your experience, like instead of *extensive experience*, use something like *thorough understanding*. Instead of *expert*, use the phrase *intensive apprenticeship*” (p. 18 of 214, 6%). Personally, I think *expert* sounds less contrived than *intensive apprenticeship*.

### **Avoid clichés.**

Bannister warns, “Be very careful about including clichés that everyone puts in but mean nothing ... Want a few examples? ‘I'm a team player.’ No way! We've been looking for someone just like you! All these jerks we keep interviewing don't care about our team at all. Where have you been hiding all this time?” (p. 21 of 214, 8%). I've done worse on my resumes; I've claimed I prefer to work independently.

“There's always a much better way to say this, such as: I impact company culture in positive ways by (insert the amazing thing you do)” (p. 21 of 214, 8%). For myself, I buy welcome gifts for new employees—a teddy bear and chocolates—and get the team to sign a card. I once read a story about an employee greeted first day with roses and a card. Classy! That's the culture I hope to mimic.

### **Use metrics.**

“Here are a few examples of areas you could measure—even if they relate to school projects: The size of team you managed .... Revenue generation .... How you ranked in performance .... The amount of money you saved the company or department” (p. 24 of 214, 9%). Saving money isn't my strongpoint. When I held an event, I splurged on the best buffet for my guests: triple stuffed salmon, prime rib, braised chicken, a waterfall of French desserts. To start, I bought my guests hors d'oeuvres, including shrimp cocktail and veggie samosas. I just didn't offer them anything to drink, so many guests had to stake out the water fountain. How does that look for saving money?

Hopefully you've got an edge on writing winning resumes. So, customize your resume for those six-figure jobs. Even if you're not qualified, you might still get the call.

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Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## The Stuff Moms are Made Of

*Dear Barb:*

*My mother is in her mid seventies and is starting to slow down. My father passed away five years ago and mom has stayed in our family home. Recently, she decided to move into an apartment and has been getting rid of stuff. The problem is mom expects me and my two sisters to take all her stuff, like dishes, pictures, and numerous mementos. We don't want any of mom's stuff and when we hinted that we didn't want anything, it was obvious she was hurt. My sisters and I have a million good memories in our hearts, and we don't need any of this stuff. We don't know how to manage this situation without causing mom more pain. One of my sisters feels we should just take the stuff and donate it without telling mom. I don't want to do that because what would we say when mom comes over and doesn't see any of her stuff. We really need some advice.*

*Thanks, Jessica.*

Hey Jessica:

You are in a difficult position which many adult children find themselves in. The movement today is towards minimalism. I think you and your sisters and your mom need to read the book *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning* by Margareta Magnusson. The book will help your mom to understand the process of letting go and come to realize that it is nothing personal.

As well, you and your sisters could go through your mom's stuff and pick out items that are special to each

of you and create a memory box. Your memories are not in a set of china, or a picture from your great grandma, your memories are in your heart and you need to help your mom to understand how you feel. Perhaps you could spend some time speaking to other family members about whether they would want these items. Also, you can take pictures to preserve the memory, without having to actually keep the item. Millennials generally do not want to keep large sets of china to use simply for Christmas dinner, they use their every-day dishes. Explain to your mom that you don't want to keep stuff that you will never use. Although it is understandable that the Boomer's want their kids to keep their treasures, it is unfair to expect them to take on stuff that they have no use for. The focus of today's millennial is often on traveling and collecting worldly experiences and memories, rather than accumulating goods to sit in a cabinet or basement.

Hope this helps, thanks for your letter Jessica.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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.*



Poet Maeve  
Riches

Wanda Waterman



The information on this page is provided by the AU Students' Union. The Voice does not create this content. Contact AUSU at [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) with any questions about this article.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Aug 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Oct](#)
- **Sep 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Oct 1](#)
- **Sep 12:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Sep 15:** AUSU Get out the Vote Campaign Launches!
- **Sep 15:** [Oct degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Aug 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Nov](#)

## NEW AUSU Open Mic Episode

AUSU has posted a new Open Mic Podcast Episode!

### [Episode 11: A Great Chat with Two AU Students](#)

Two AU students – your VPEX Natasha Donahue, and Ryan Morstad, a visiting student – have a great conversation about transferring credit to and from other institutions as well as getting Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. Listen in [here](#)!

Check out all our Open Mic episodes online [here](#).

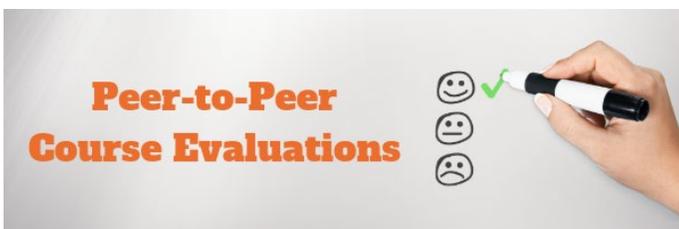
Available for free on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), and [Pocket Casts](#) (search "AUSU Podcast") - and now featured on [VoicEd](#), an open space for conversations about education in Canada!



## Peer Course Evaluations

Taken any AU courses recently? Fill out an AUSU peer to peer course evaluation online [here](#).

Responses are anonymous, but you can view the evaluation results as well, which can help you choose future AU courses!



## "How do I get more involved as an AU student?"

Although Athabasca University is an online university, there are still lots of ways to get involved! Here's a few suggestions:

**Download the AU Student Mobile App** for free courtesy of AUSU. The app has an active campus chat community, and quick access to resources for AU students. Get the app [here](#).

**Follow AUSU on Social Media** ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#)) for regular updates on opportunities and events and to engage with fellow students.

**Write for The Voice Magazine!** Sign up for more info [here](#).

**Run for Student Council!** Council elections are held every 2 years. Our next election is coming up on February 2020 - visit our website [here](#) for more information.

**Come out to an AUSU Student Social!** We hold in-person student events across Canada throughout the year, so stay tuned for upcoming events, or check out our events pages on [Facebook](#) or our [website](#).

**Join an AU Facebook Group!** There are numerous active groups for AU student on Facebook. You can just search for Athabasca University groups, or try the following:

- [Athabasca University Community Facebook Group](#)
- [Athabasca University Student Families Group](#)
- [Athabasca University: LPN-BN Group](#)

This is not a comprehensive list - there are always new opportunities popping up! Keep checking out our future newsletters, Voice updates, or follow us on Social Media!

**Have questions? Let us know at [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).**



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students!  
Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

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## THE VOICE

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