

# unMitigated AudactY

IT'S ALLLLLL O-VERRRRRRRRR!  
Some thoughts on undergrad life.

(or "Stay in school. It beats working!")

I've been trying to fight this fact back since January: my university career is just about over, and the future is about to run me over like a herd of sumo wrestlers who have just discovered an all-you-can-eat for \$5.99 smorg. In a mere matter of days I'll have written my last exam, and I'm going to have to look for a real job, pay rent, and act responsibly. In short, I have to act like an adult. This *scars* me.

When I was about to leave for my first year here, my parents -- and every other know-it-all adult figure -- bashed me over the head with their belief that I was going off to school to learn and to advance my future employment prospects. After five years I realize there's a small element of truth to this. But on the whole, I've just had a lot of fun punctuated with frequent stress-headaches. Some growth, but my time here was generally an extension of childhood.

I mean, the beauty of being in university is that you exist in your own little sphere, where the laws of the "real world" (Gawd, I hate that term) have little or no meaning. As students, we don't have to worry about curing cancer or displacing thousands of workers. The biggest concern is whether or not your paper on the effects of the internal combustion engine on the political system of Tahiti has enough footnotes. There's no mortgage to pay here, no worrying about getting downsized, just minor details which take on a whole lot of meaning. As a student you can sleep for days and not be called lazy (you're "overworked" or "burnt out"), you can be drunk for weeks on end and not be called an alcoholic, and occasional outbursts of weirdness (and there's been a lot of them) are easily excused as stress-breakers. There's only light responsibilities here, and I'll miss all that.

But I think what I'll miss the most about school is the security. More specifically, I'll miss the security to act as childish as I please. Ragging rooms in Marian Hall, sliding through snowbanks after PPV wrestling shows at the Barn, hijacking radio shows with a roll of Saran-Wrap. I can't get away with stuff like that anymore. Somebody point me in the direction of an office where I can do this stuff and not get fired and I'm there. But unfortunately, this can never be my niche in life. I'm gonna have to join the button-down Borg and become a faceless corporate stooge.

Ahhh, phucket. I'm still young. I'll just tank my exams and see yez all in the fall.

- Ross Williams, forever juvenile



Let me tell you about my theory of "the moment".

I believe that life is simply a collection of little gaps in time -- brief instants when everything around you stops and you realize that something is *happening*. Something that reminds you of what it means to be alive.

You've had them with your lover, that first time conversation ran out and you felt nervous and embarrassed over what you knew was about to happen. Remember your first apartment and that feeling of independence? Your first job? The last time you could look at an accomplishment and said "I did this!!"

Those are moments. They are the essence of life, with everything else in between little more than an intermission. You exist, and then BAM! -- you live; and as soon as you realize what's happening, the moment is gone. That's why we live so many years ahead of each day. We are constantly searching for that next interval of life.

And it is my sincere belief that the greatest moments of all happen right here: at UPEI. Give me a 'moment', and I'll prove it to you.

Ask yourself why you are here. Your first answer may be "to get a degree," but a closer examination would prove that false. If I were to offer you the opportunity to skip four years of school and to go straight into debt for a pretty piece of paper, you would probably tell me to go to hell. The paper means nothing.

"It's not the degree, but

what it gets you." Really, and what exactly is that? An edge over the other 5,000 people fighting to be waiters in PEI during the summer? Perhaps it is the international prestige that goes with earning your B.A.? Sorry, a degree gets you nothing that you couldn't have gotten yourself with a little hard work and luck. "I had nothing else to do." Maybe that's why you came, but it's certainly not why you stayed. Nobody, and I mean nobody, is that bored.

The answer is very simple. You were sitting in class one day, checking your watch every five minutes or so, while the professor rambled on about some abstract theory that has no use in the "real world". This time was different, though. This time, you were *listening*. You couldn't help yourself, it was interesting. No -- it was fascinating. It was the most incredible thing you've ever heard. Your heart sped-up, you leaned back in your chair, and then BOOM -- your mind exploded!! Thoughts started racing through your head and you felt as though you were about to reach some incredible conclusion, some shocking discovery that no one else had ever thought of before.

Then the class ended and you were pissed (how dare they interrupt you). You hung around outside with your classmates and kept talking, kept arguing the same point over and over again. Then you left and wandered in a daze, oblivious to the world, trapped inside your mind. The first person stupid enough to say hello

heard all about it. You described everything, every thought you had, and your friend looked at you like you were an *idiot* -- some moron released from the Ivory Tower on a day-pass. You didn't care because you were *on fire*. You were thinking. You were alive.

That's why you're here. That's why everyone is here. Your professors can't bear the idea of leaving a university and giving up that feeling. Can you imagine what it must be like to sit in a classroom, say a sentence or two, and then watch your students light up the world? A retired professor of mine described as the most incredible feeling in his life. To see the spark in a student's eyes, to know that you just caused something good and pure and right -- that was a moment. Nothing else compared. Not the administrative bullshit, the politics, the egos. Nothing.

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it is the degree, the pay cheque. Maybe students are too numb, professors too old and disillusioned. I can't believe that, though. I've felt it, watched it happen.

For those of you who are graduating, I hope you had the chance to taste it before you go. It's too late for you, now. For those of you who are staying, if you haven't felt it yet, pay attention. You don't know what you are missing. If any of you think such a feeling is beyond your reach, then I suggest you leave. University is for the living.

And life is moments.