



THE

PHOENIX NEWS

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In Partnership with your Students' Union

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SUO ALLOCATES 23K to Train Executives

By Siya Gupta

The SUO spends a significant amount of money to train its Board of Directors. Considering that this comes from money paid by students, some might say that trips to Penticton and Golf Courses seem a bit excessive. Unfortunately, the SUO has no plans to discontinue its lavish traditions.

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CAMPUS LIFE

Feeling SAD? Blame the Weather

By Ana Mar Picazo

There is something enchanting about snowy scenery, but it isn't long before the winter wonderland turns into a depressing apocalyptic setting.

The sneaky icy winds of fall are here to announce the inevitable; the return of winter. Gone are the days of 7 p.m. golden hours, or warm strolls by the lake. Instead, we find ourselves surrounded by a flushed landscape of reds, oranges, and yellows. Autumn is the season of ethereal visuals, sweater weather, and pumpkin spice latte — what's not to love? But, what follows shortly can be a thing of nightmares for many people.

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OPINIONS

To Submit or Not to Submit: Tips to Combat Perfectionism in University

By Ainslie Spence

I'm tired of being an academic victim — even when I perform well.

I've heard my fair share of stories and quips from my classmates surrounding the academic culture of revising and revising and revising and revising... and infinitely revising to try to achieve perfect assignments that will receive perfect grades, which will make us perfect students.

Right? No. Perfection is impossible.

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SPORTS

CLASH OF TITANS:

UBC Okanagan Heat's Pursuit of Excellence in Collegiate Sports

By Ansh Tak

The UBC Okanagan Heat's recent matches in women's and men's volleyball, men's basketball, and men's rugby have been a testament to the spirit of collegiate sports.

The world of collegiate sports is a dynamic and thrilling arena, where athletes strive for excellence, teams battle for dominance, and every game is a testament...

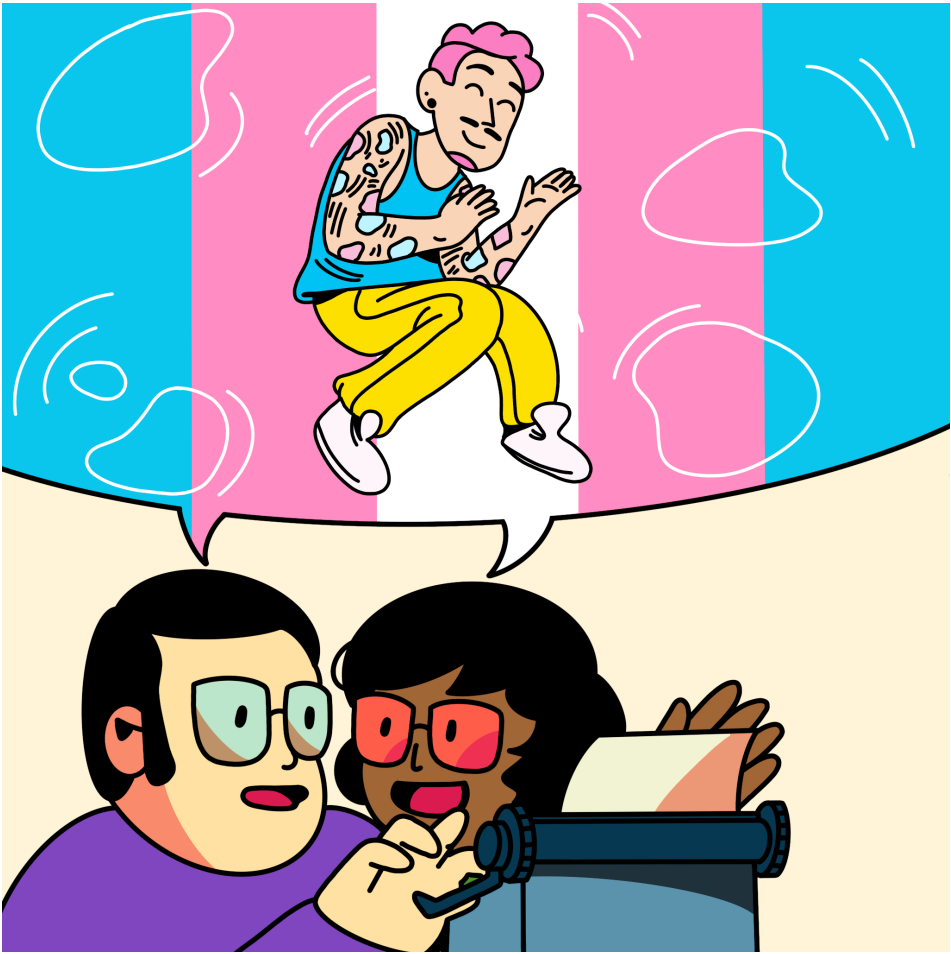
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ARTS AND CULTURE

How to Write Transgender Characters

By Noah Davis

With book banning, and transphobic rhetoric being spread in the United States and Canada, it's important for transgender people to have representation through literature. It's also important for transgender allies to advocate for that representation by writing transgender characters and reading transgender literature.



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FEATURES

PROFESSOR PROFILE:

Meet Dr. Anita Girvan

By Ainslie Spence

Dr. Girvan's interests include — but are not limited to — environmental and epistemic justice, decolonization, language, metaphor, and coalition-building.

The Professor Profile series at The Phoenix aims to help UBC Okanagan students get to know professors more intimately and learn about their interests. This time, we had the privilege of speaking with Dr. Anita Girvan (she/they), an assistant professor in the faculty of English and Cultural Studies, new to UBCO.



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RANTS

An AI 9-5: Beating Gender Bias in a Digital Landscape

By Sarah Meier



"Hey Siri, what are you wearing?" Siri: "Let's see... OK, just as I thought... the same as yesterday."

GENDER BIAS CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

RANTS

Baby, It's Cold Outside

By Kai Hugessen

The temperature has dropped, and will keep dropping. I discuss how that sucks, and what can be done to prepare for it.

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PROFESSOR PROFILE:

Get to know Dr. Anita Girvan

WORDS BY AINSLIE SPENCE

The Professor Profile series at The Phoenix aims to help UBC Okanagan students get to know professors more intimately and learn about their interests. This time, we had the privilege of speaking with Dr. Anita Girvan (she/they), an assistant professor in the faculty of English and Cultural Studies, new to UBCO. However, Girvan's research interests are interdisciplinary to fields such as ecology, languages, Indigenous Studies, Black Studies, philosophy, and political studies.

Ainslie Spence: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your research interests?

Dr. Anita Girvan: I study and teach environmental justice and cultural studies. I'm interested in stories, metaphors, and how they orient us to think about and act upon the world: both human and non-human. I started out critically analyzing the carbon footprint metaphor as my doctoral research. My research expanded from that, especially thinking about decolonizing stories, or how land-based understandings of social and ecological relations shape how we work within and against the norms that shape this critical moment we're in. Recently, I've been reading Black feminist orientations around ecology and Indigenous women's orientations around ecology. So, just thinking beyond Western binary paradigms of human and non-human, around social and ecological justice.

My undergrad was actually in languages. I studied French and Spanish, Italian a little bit, just very surfacey. In that process, I read books and creative texts across languages — so literature was part of that “thing.” I started thinking about how different languages and stories orient us differently in the world. Then I did a Bachelor of Education. And I was teaching in elementary school for a while—kindergarten, grade one, and grade two. And that was a lot of fun. My story is similar to many Gen Xers and following generations, where job opportunities and constraints dictate where you go along the way. I was teaching sort of precariously — a maternity-leave type of thing. Then I went to Japan to teach English as an additional language at the high school level because that previous job ended, and this job also provided the opportunity to travel. I taught in Japan for three years, developed my interest in culture and language studies and teaching English as an additional language, and then I went to do a Master's degree at Carleton around that field — teaching English as an additional language. In the process, I got introduced to discourse studies, which is a field that looks at language and politics. Discourse studies broadened my understanding of how languages really do interact with politics.

My Master's thesis ended up looking at the first iteration of the Disney film, *Aladdin* (1992), around the first iteration of the Gulf Wars (1990-1991). So, I was looking at *Aladdin* as a study of what Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said calls “Orientalism.” Through this frame, we can see how *Aladdin* comes



“My favourite place since moving here is anywhere where one of these sʔatqʔlp (ponderosa pines) is. Thank you to the Syilx Okanagan community for all the online resources that let us newcomers begin to do our homework about these lands and for care-taking and governing these lands since time immemorial.” — Dr. Anita Girvan. Photo Credit: Dr. Anita Girvan

to be the well-loved figure representing American hegemony, while all the “evil ones” are expressions of Orientalist discourses of barbarism and darkness that still, to this day, plague geopolitical relations of and with the Middle East.

So, that was my Master's degree. I took a long time out of studies after that — to teach English for academic purposes to international students at Carleton and to have children — and then wanted to get back into that idea of language and power. That led me to do a PhD in cultural, social, and political thought at the University of Victoria. I was thinking with the metaphor of a “carbon footprint” that was emerging suddenly in 2007 and became the word of the year, so when I started my PhD in 2008, I wanted to dig into what I thought was interesting: the notion of a footprint and carbon, how it was orienting us to the increasingly urgent cultural politics of climate change.

From then on, I've been trying to make up the gaps in my studies because there was a lot within this cultural, social, and political thought programme that reproduced Euro-Western forms of knowledge. So, since then, I've been looking at Indigenous, Black Feminist, and People of Colour Knowledges that were really not part of my PhD.

AS: How did you land at UBCO?

Dr. AG: I saw the call for the job — which was called “cultural studies and environmental justice.” And, these are literally the two things that I am passionate about, and have taught and studied. A number of people sent me the job advert saying, “This seems to be describing you!” So, I had to apply. And I'm really excited to start here. I started in January, online teaching a special topics course entitled “Cultural Studies from Birmingham to BLM and Beyond.” That was a good experience, and then I moved here in the summer. I'm really excited about being face-to-face with all of you!

AS: What courses are you teaching at UBCO this year?

Dr. AG: I'm teaching two courses this term. One is Cultural Studies 101, which is an introductory course in practices and methods. That course is really about introducing students to the field of cultural studies and the key notion of “hegemony” — which is about all the power relations that are around us that we take for granted, that we quietly consent to, without really understanding what they mean. So, whether that's about climate change, or racial politics, or colonization — cultural studies has different flavours.

It's quite exciting because we get to think

with the moment. Cultural studies is about the “conjuncture” — or the moment we're in — as a bundle of histories and politics that have come to shape what's happening now. I'm teaching that course again next term.

My other course is the environmental justice class, Cultural Studies 390A, which is a new one for UBC. We're looking at environmental justice, but also epistemic justice — or knowledge justice — because, for me, the two go hand-in-hand. For example, we've been thinking about the conjuncture of what it means to go through wildfires, and to question who or what is being protected (and what is not), and whose knowledges count (and whose don't). These questions do really help us critically wayfind the moment we're in.

AS: What kinds of teaching and learning pedagogies do you use in your classes?

Dr. AG: I think centering embodied knowledge in the students is something I really have learned over time — that all of you students come with understandings that don't make you like an “empty vessel” when you come here. You students have ways of wayfinding through the world yourselves. And, that's what makes it rich for me to do group discussions or group work.

I am someone who has just come from an online university after being in face-to-face universities prior. I find it so dynamic in the physical classroom. Sometimes, things can just shift. For example, a really provocative question that a student asks can shift you to go down a path that you couldn't have possibly planned on your own. So, group learning is a central pedagogy for me. I have a love-hate relationship with evaluating through grading, because it does shift relationships with students as soon as marking happens, but I try to remind students (and myself) not to get caught up with marks. You are not your marks!

Also, scaffolding within the course. Each assignment, hopefully, will build upon the last one so that students don't have to grapple with something new, and they're building their muscles throughout.

Decolonizing of courses is something I'm trying to think with too. So, learning a lot with students about the place we are in Syilx territory, doing my homework, and sharing with students that I'm also a new learner in these spaces. We're humbly moving together on that front of decolonizing.

AS: Can you describe a dream course or a form of pedagogy you would like to teach in the future?

Dr. AG: I've been thinking a lot with coalitional understandings of ecology and place. Right now, I'm doing — with some faculty — a Black feminist and coalitional ecological thought reading salon. We're reading some texts together, and I'm hoping that it informs a future course

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2...

that is about Indigenous communities’, Black communities’, and People of Colour communities’ orientations around place. In this Syilx territory, we have a lot of richness. So the dream course, in time, would be a land-based course—where I have enough background, and I have done my homework enough — to take students, with guidance, onto the land.

AS: Do you have any forthcoming research or projects that you’re excited to share?

Dr. AG: I’ve been working on a couple of things with grad students at my previous institution. We just wrote a paper for the Journal of Canadian Studies called “Tracing E-race-sures, Finding Reclamations.” It’s co-written with Métis Albertan graduate student Mikayla LeSann, and Priscilla McGreer from Black communities in Alberta. We wrote this ar-

ticle together, using the notion of “E-race-sures”— to flag the stories that we didn’t grow up with in Canada. So, Métis stories, stories of Black Albertan community — you just don’t think of that when you think of Alberta. So, McGreer, LeSann, and I are tracing the erasures of distinct communities and then reclaiming stories from these perspectives. The article is coming out, hopefully, in the next few months.

Through my broader Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-funded project called “E-Race-sures, Renovictions and Reclamations: Cultural-Material Production in Canada.” I’m working with other people, including at UBCO, Dr. Rina Garcia Chua, who’s been working on something called migrant eco-criticism and thinking from her Philippinx perspectives, “How do migrant communities negotiate socio-ecologies here?” So, we have some ideas around

learning more with Syilx understandings of land — and also migrant workers here in extractive agricultural industries. This is emerging research we’re thinking with, and we are hoping to collaborate with others.

A lot of my work right now is co-written with other people. I have another draft article with Astrid Perez-Piñan, a University of Victoria colleague — “Ecologies of De/Colonization: Embodied Perspectives from Caribbean Diaspora.” We’re thinking with walking and talking as a methodology of wayfinding on Vancouver Island on Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ territories as Caribbean diasporic people attending to global-local traffics of de/colonization.

I’m really thankful to be in this position so I can work with others and collaborate. There’s this beautiful notion of peer

review that’s built into academia, where we always send our research to others to help shape our projects. One of the things that’s underplayed in universities when we celebrate individuals for their “heroic knowledges” is that we’re always, in hopefully good ways, collaborating and peer reviewing each other’s work.

Baby, It’s Cold Outside

WORDS BY KAI HUGESSEN



Photo Credit: Kai Hugessen

There is a saying I’ve heard before in the dark corners of the Internet. One whispered in chatrooms and hallowed blogs, trawled and inscribed by those who know the ways of the web. It is said that the great god Apollo grants the gift of prophecy to the unwilling and unexpected, cursing them with a foresight they could never prepare for nor change. Much like Cassandra of Greek mythology, they are cursed with knowledge and granted no ability to change it. A fate which none desire, and yet many are cursed with.

I was one such individual this past week.

“Huh, the temperature’s not too bad. I

thought it’d be getting chilly by now.”

I curse my ignorance now. That day, October 20, 2023, the mean temperature for Kelowna sat at around 13 degrees Celsius. Today at the moment of writing, October 27, 2023, that temperature has dropped 16 degrees Celsius, and now sits at a frosty -3 degrees Celsius. That number will only continue to drop as time passes, and the inexorable march of winter draws closer.

And that SUCKS. Many of you reading right now might be shrugging your shoulders. UBCO is a Canadian school after all, and much of the student body has experienced temperatures far worse than a measly

dip below freezing. I’m still seeing some people walking around in shorts and a t-shirt, and who knows what ice-based superpowers those people must have been granted to be able to do something like that. I salute the nutcases, whatever the fault. Either way, for those of us who haven’t been blessed by the frost giants, the plummeting temperatures have been a bit of a wakeup call as to what we might be able to expect for the future. There’s nothing quite as beautiful as a fresh snowfall over the valley, and nothing quite as casually terrifying as remembering what new icy despairs that entails. For those who are having their first experience

with temperatures below freezing, there are some important things you might want to lock down while you can. Take it from someone who came to UBCO from a region whose average temperature for October is 27 degrees Celsius — winters can take you by surprise. And they’re the worst when they do.

So, here are some basics. First of all, get the right clothes. A proper winter jacket is a must, as are at least one pair of gloves. More than one pair would be ideal, actually, because I’ve genuinely never lost articles of clothing as much as I lose gloves. It’s like losing a sock in the wash, only instead of saying “screw it” and mismatching them to no ill-effect, you might end up wandering

around with two left gloves from different sets on, and that’s an experience that should never be repeated as long as humanity still roams the earth. (It’d probably be fine for the cockroaches though.) Speaking of clothing, get some good boots. It might be tempting to skimp when it comes to footwear since a good pair of winter boots can be expensive, but trust me — you need some good boots once the snow starts falling thick. Sidewalks turn to ice, roadways turn to slush, and you will fall flat on your butt eventually. There’s no avoiding it. Getting some good boots is the best way to minimize the odds of that happening. Also, this is a personal anecdote: make sure to dry your hair before you head out. Weird advice, I know, but I’m still suffering from an ear infection from two years ago after deciding it would be fine to go outside straight after a shower. My ear canal still hates me.

There’s more to be said, of course. One self-referential article from a third-year student whining about the cold isn’t enough to get you ready for the upcoming season; there are a dozen other reminders that I haven’t covered here.

The point of it all is this: prepare. Get ready. It may seem dramatic now, but it’s better to be safe than sorry. To quote an oft-lauded show with a terrible ending, winter is coming. If you know how to handle it, awesome. If you don’t... well, you’ll have to learn soon. Reckon back to Apollo granting the gift of foresight, and call me Cassandra once more. Because, if you don’t heed my warning, you might find yourself snowed in with nothing but a toque and a moth-ridden scarf to guard against the chill. At that point, you’d only have yourself to blame.

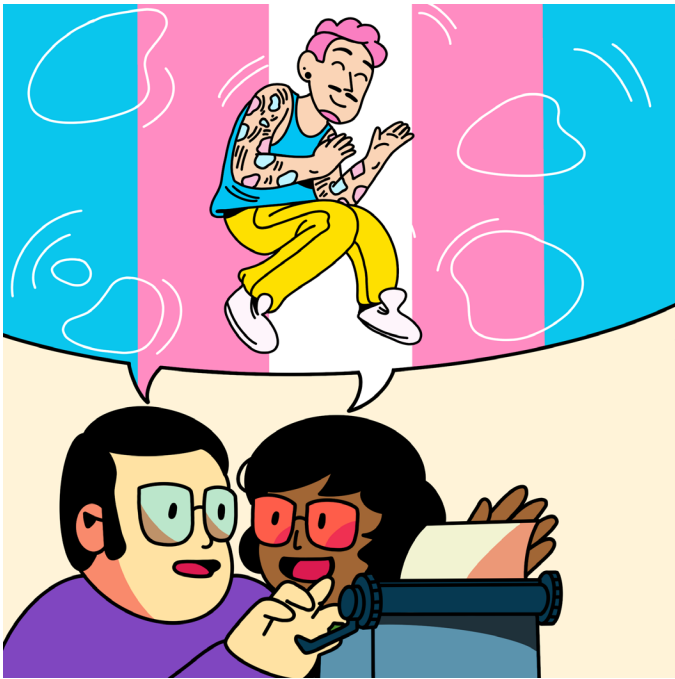
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How To Write Transgender Characters

WORDS BY NOAH DAVIS

GRAPHIC BY DERRIAN GUADARRAMA



I’m trying to put into words the anger I have at schools banning books and works about transgender people. Now, more than ever, it’s so important for transgender people to have representation, in all kinds of media, and especially literature. As a creative writing and art history major, I try to write about my transgender experience as much as possible. But, in the end, it is not transgender people’s responsibility to carry the weight of writing transgender stories, and characters. This is not to say that transgender people should not and will not continue to tell our stories through fiction and nonfiction.

I wondered how individuals can combat and rebel against book banning. An option is purchasing and reading books written by transgender authors. Cisgender writers, in particular, can use their privilege to write transgender characters into their books and/or short stories.

I was having a conversation with one of my older friends, who is in his fourth year of a creative writing degree. We were talking about writing — whether we enjoyed writing fiction or nonfiction better. I expressed how I enjoyed nonfiction, because I could share my lived experiences, and how I enjoyed the entire process. He then asked me, “How do I write transgender characters as a cisgender person? I want to be inclusive, and represent transgender people in a positive light in my story.”

At the time, I struggled to answer this question. I think I still do, since transgenderism is not a monolith, and all of our lived experiences are going to be different, especially when considering intersectionality.

However, I think there are some do’s and don’ts in regards to writing transgender characters, which are pretty straightforward. Here’s a few ways to approach this:

1. Doing your research.

Confused as to where to start your research on how to write transgender characters? Google the questions you have, and research extensively. Don’t rely on transgender people in your life to be the basis of the transgender experience as a whole, although it’s great and important to talk to real transgender people about their experience. It’s super easy to do a Google search, when it costs transgender people so much emotional labour to educate cisgender people on what it’s like to be transgender. Research how to write characters with different pronouns, research what gender-affirming care looks like. Gender-affirming care does not need to

be medical — it can be as simple as a haircut, or buying a chest binder for transgender individuals. In the end, the most important thing a writer can do is research effectively, so that their writing does not further transphobic rhetoric. This is not to be confused with writing characters in a complex and dynamic way. Transgender characters shouldn’t only be defined by their transness — they should be complex, and have many different experiences and story arcs. Transgender characters should experience the same things a cisgender character might, while keeping in mind that transness will affect how that character will view the world and interact with individuals. Researching how to write different characters of all backgrounds will also help writers understand how to write complex identities, not just transgender characters. It’s also important to note that transness intersects with a lot of other identities, so researching all transgender perspectives — from a non-white perspective, an autistic perspective, a lower-class perspective, etc. — is super important.

2. Note on politicization.

It’s important to note that transness is going to be politicized in society, whether we — as transgender people — like it or not. Our experiences with being trans will be politicized in order for transphobic rhetoric to be spread. Writers need to acknowledge that they can address transphobia in their writing in a way that is respectful for a transgender character, but transgender characters can also exist in their world without being politicized nor experiencing transphobia, especially when fiction tends to be an escape from reality for many readers. It’s important for writers to research how politicization of certain identities occurs, and how transgenderism is currently being, and has always been, politicized in society.

I’ve experienced individuals asking me to write more political topics, after writing about transness for a long time. My answer to this was, “transness is political,” because people in political power want to take our rights away, and ban books about the transgender experience, as well as gender-affirming care. Individuals make transness political. Transgender people don’t make our identities political, which is important to consider when writing transgender characters. The question to ask is: am I politicizing transness, or am I representing how transness is politicized in society? These are two different things.

3. Workshop your writing.

Ask your friend to read your story over, ask a professor to read it over, even ask transgender people to read it over if they are comfortable and have the emotional capacity to do that. The first step in attempting to write accurate representations of transgender individuals is to experiment and test it out. As a transgender individual myself, I often find that transgender representation in books is most effective when writers acknowledge that a character is transgender through a discussion between characters, a correction of

pronouns, or through simply stating that the character has a different experience in the world because of their transness. However, the writer doesn’t necessarily have to center the story around the transgender experience, or transphobic experiences.

Listen to the feedback individuals give you regarding the character or the story, and build your new draft around the feedback from individual readers in your life. If an individual tells you your character’s experience with transness is too broad or generalizes a lot about the transgender experience, then change the representation. State that the character you’ve written has a unique transgender experience. Maybe even write more than one meaningful transgender character into your story, so that the readers understand that transgender people can have different definitions of what it means to be transgender and still be valid.

4. Read books about transness.

Don’t know where to start with reading about transgender experience? Check out my article “5 Transgender books by Transgender writers you NEED to read” in print issue #10, from 2022-23, under “Issues” on *The Phoenix News*’ website. That article introduces fictional stories and non-fiction books about the transgender experience, and are all different with unique points of view. The best way to learn how to write transgender characters is to read about transgender experiences, from transgender individuals.

Writing this article, I reached out to Tash McAdam, a Welsh-Canadian author from Vancouver, who has written various Young Adult (YA) books with queer representation, specifically surrounding the queer and transgender experience. They are also a teacher! They were unfortunately unable to answer my interview questions, but were very enthusiastic about this article. Their new book, *No One Left But You*, comes out on November 7 and is a YA thriller featuring a transgender character. I would encourage readers to check out their work, and to check out various transgender authors who are from Canada or British Columbia. It’s important to support queer authors at a time when book banning is prevalent, and when the trans experience continues to be politicized.

In the end, every single transgender person will feel differently about transgender representation. What’s important is that writers attempt to write transgender characters in a way that does not forward transphobic rhetoric, in a way that makes the character they are writing interesting, and in a way that makes it clear that this is one transgender experience and not a generalization of every single transgender experience. It’s important to workshop said characters as well, because in general, writers will not improve without feedback from others.

With book banning, and transphobic rhetoric being spread in the United States and Canada, it’s important for transgender people to have representation through literature. It’s also important for transgender allies to advocate for that representation by writing transgender characters and reading transgender literature. If you’re reading this article, that’s one step towards advocating for transgender representation. If you’re considering writing a transgender character into your work and you take these tips into consideration, then you’re further advocating for transgender representation through literature, especially at a time when transphobic individuals desperately want to do everything in their power to restrict this kind



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To Submit or Not to Submit: Tips to Combat Perfectionism in University

WORDS BY AINSIE SPENCE

GRAPHIC BY DERRIAN GUADARRAMA

I've heard my fair share of stories and quips from my classmates surrounding the academic culture of revising and revising and revising and revising and revising... and infinitely revising to try to achieve perfect assignments that will receive perfect grades, which will make us perfect students.

Right?

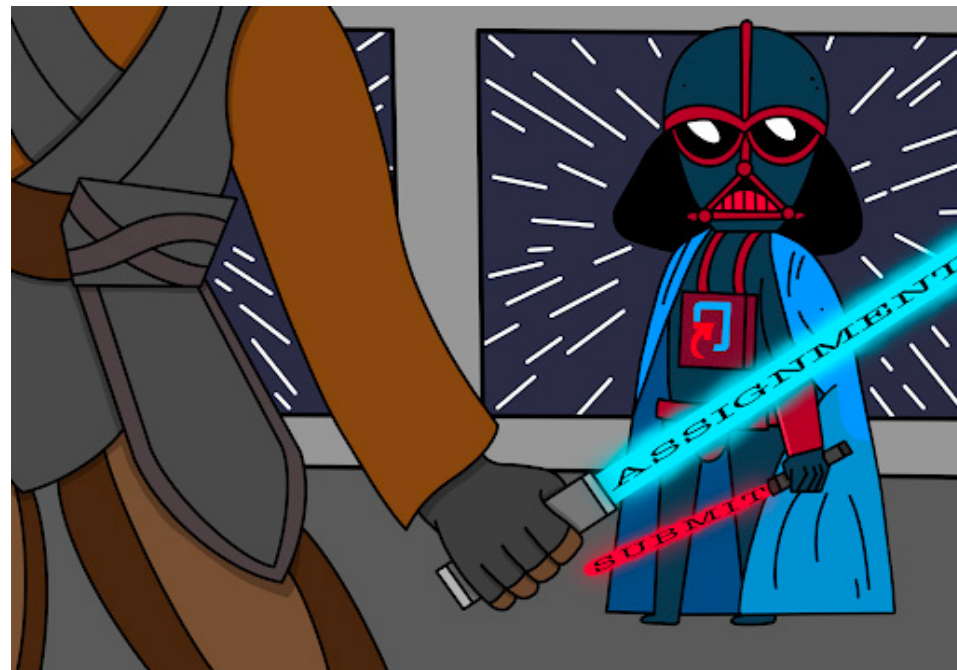
No. Perfection is impossible.

Assignments really just have to be “good enough.” As students, we need to put effort in, but not obsess over the final product. And, I say this with an incredibly clear understanding that this is much easier said than done. Maybe if I read this paragraph a few (hundred) more times, I'll actually start to believe myself.

In all seriousness, now that I'm in my fourth year of university, I have a slightly more stable relationship with my grades and scholarly self-image than in my previous years. But, I still have major beef with Turnitin (does any student like Turnitin?) and have a lot of anxiety about the finality of submitting assignments. For example, earlier this term, I wrote an essay, stared into the evil and intimidating Turnitin dropbox, and subsequently decided my essay was a flaming pile of garbage. As a result, I basically rewrote the whole assignment the day it was due, wasting countless hours obsessing over it when I could (and should) have been doing literally anything else.

On that note, I hope this list of tips and tricks — that I'm working on implementing into my own life — is helpful for my fellow perfectionists in academia, who want to start setting healthy boundaries between themselves and their roles as students.

1. Set yourself an early deadline for final submission a few days before the assignment is actually due, if possible. And then, just submit the dang thing. This will keep you from editing and revising your work a million times before



realizing you hate it — because you've read it so many times! Your work probably doesn't suck. And, even if it sucks a little bit, this assignment is not synonymous with your identity as a human being.

2. Experiment with situations where you can experience what you perceive as “failure” in safe doses. For example, if you have time-related perfectionism, take your time getting to class one day and see what happens if you're late by a minute or two. People are inherently imperfect, and life gets in the way. You must realize that no one rational will hold a lack of perfection against you.

3. Recognize that (in most cases) no one is going to die if your assignment or test isn't perfect. And, don't stress about the finality of sub-

mitting assignments so much that each Turnitin submission process turns into a battle. We're all in this institution of higher learning to learn, not to be perfect. Why would we pay UBCO exorbitant sums of money in tuition if we already know everything?

4. “Check yourself before you wreck yourself.” Get to know your habits and perfectionism triggers, and know when to take breaks or seek out help from others. It can be very helpful to check in with a trusted friend, family or community member, or mental health advocate to help you get out of your own head. I've asked my family members to gently point out when I'm spiraling with perfectionism, and to become more firm in pointing it out if I am in denial of being in a perfectionist headspace.

5. Fill up your schedule as much as you safely and healthily can — and don't only fill it up with school and work activities. As a few examples from my past week: going for a walk in a new neighbourhood, getting caught up on TikTok celebrity gossip, and treating yourself to a Costco hotdog are all valid activities that will round out your schedule and keep you from totally obsessing over whatever current project has the possibility to trigger your perfectionist tendencies. Be reasonable with your time commitments, take breaks from the scholarly grind, and don't spend too much time on one thing.

6. Ultimately, be kind to yourself and others who deal with perfectionism. For example, if your friend is always convinced they've failed an exam and then always seem to get As, don't lash out at them. They've probably been beating themselves up all week over their fear of failure. Remind your spiralling scholarly perfectionist that they did everything they could reasonably do on the exam, and feeling uncertain about one assignment does not equate to a psychic connection with the grading professor or teaching assistant. Graders usually realize that students' assignments will vary, and will also often recognize brilliance where a student might not. And, if this “friend” that I speak of is you — treat yourself the same way. We don't know until we know — don't make assumptions and spiral over them!

It's common to fall back into perfectionist tendencies once in a while. But, the more we work on seeing ourselves as separate from our assignments, tests, and grades in university, the healthier our relationships with ourselves will become. We are all human beings, not machines. And hey, even ChatGPT makes mistakes.

SUO Allocates 23K to Train Executives

WORDS BY SIYA GUPTA

The Student Union's budgeted amount for the training of their Executives and other Board of Directors is \$23,000. To put this into perspective, it is a third of the budgeted amount for Frosh (\$66,450), an event hosted for the entire student population with multiple artists performing. In 2021, the budgeted training amount was \$10,000. What do these sessions involve, and why has the budgeted amount doubled in the past two years?

The first training session after the Executives' election is an organized retreat in Penticton. The Directors learn about the SUO's vision and values, communications, board functions, and Robert's Rules of Order — the procedure for conducting meetings. Additionally, they conduct team-building activities and learn about the British Columbia Federation of Students. Now, if someone were to ask for my personal opinion, I'd say that a trip to Penticton for this sounds rather unnecessary. As someone who has been a part of several on-campus clubs that organize events (in unpaid positions) — one of these clubs is even building a house from scratch — I can confidently say that a retreat is not needed to build friendly relations. Usually, a pizza party once a term suffices. However, Cade Desjarlais, the current President of the SUO, justifies the trip by saying,

“Penticton was selected for our Board Retreat and Training to work on developing relationships within the Board that would not be accomplished over a few short days on campus. The overnight stay really helps develop some cohesion and friendships vitally important to



Photo Credit: Becca Evans, Communications Manager SUO

the running of SUO operations. We also get preferred rates with the hotel as we are a student organization. The Penticton orientation is a great tradition that we plan to continue!”

The second training session conducted this year was at the Okanagan Golf Course. The topics covered at the session include effective board meetings, developing decision-making skills, sessions on emotional intelligence, working collaboratively, conflict resolution, and problem-solving. Cade says,

“At the Golf Course, we were training there merely for the purposes of training...no golfing was involved! The Okanagan Golf Club has meeting spaces available and a catering team. When the Board, Staff, and ex

ternal partners join the training, space is also a concern. The rented spaces provide all the technology and space needs required for our growing team at a location a quick 5 minutes from campus. Additionally, the Okanagan Golf Club is the home course for our UBCO Heat Men's and Women's teams so they are always looking for opportunities to support students. When the training involves 8-hour days sitting down, it's important we do so in an engaging space.”

This is an interesting justification. As a *Phoenix* writer, I had to attend a four-hour training covering workflow, communications, writing style guide, ethics, diversity, biases, and team building. The only technology one needed was a projector and a laptop

with PowerPoint. Additionally, all Residence Advisors are trained on similar themes over a period of two weeks from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and since they host all these sessions in lecture halls and residences, it seems like they are quite successful in finding engaging spaces on-campus for their 8-hour sessions.

Finally, when asked about the increase in budget from previous years, Cade explains,

“Regarding the budgeted amount, it is allocated based on expenditures under that category in the previous years. While the budgeted amounts used to be lower in previous years, the actual amounts spent were over the budgeted amount. Most of these expenses go into paying wages of external presenters who conduct these trainings, costs of food and accommodation, booking of spaces, etc. Another important piece to recognize is that these years prior were during the COVID-19 pandemic when all training was online. The cost of training has increased with the return to in-person activities, like most things, and we found that the online training, while more cost-effective, did not foster adequate skills-learning and relationship-building for our Directors.”

To conclude, the SUO spends a significant amount of money to train its Board of Directors. Considering that this comes from money paid by students, some might say that trips to Penticton and Golf Courses seem a bit excessive. Unfortunately, the SUO has no plans to discontinue its lavish traditions.

An AI 9-5: Beating Gender Bias in a Digital Landscape

WORDS BY SARAH MEIER

GRAPHIC BY DERRIAN GUADARRAMA

Before smartphones, the closest many of us came to artificial intelligence was through movies. Growing up, I loved watching science fiction. Looking back, my favourites were Blade Runner, the Terminator series, and WALL-E.

All these films had one trait in common — each had female AI in their story, and in each series, there was never a female protagonist. In Blade Runner, Rachael, the humanoid replicant, is a receptionist. In Terminator, the only female-introduced robot, T-X, is posed as the hypersexualized antagonist. In WALL-E, Eve is an expendable assistant to humans, and the sidekick and love interest to her protagonist.

Moving to reality, in today's age, the capabilities of AI have changed and progressed enormously. Millions of individuals hold AI's power in their hands, yet many questions have not been answered. The reception of AI from Canadians¹ has been mixed, with more than two-thirds unsure whether AI will bring harm to ourselves. For many Canadians, the most prevalent fear has been the lack of information regarding AI's effects on labour and law enforcement.

So, the question remains — will it turn out like the movies portrayed?

Among the most accessible AI, I would like to introduce the three most well-known digital assistants — Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa, and Microsoft's Cortana. What these three virtual assistants have in common is that they all started as female-coded voices. However, since 2021, Apple² has changed the default voice to be up to the customer's discretion. In 2022, Amazon³ followed suit, offering new voices to choose from.

There have been many proposed reasons as to why AI-gendered female assistants have been the default. Most commonly argued was that the higher pitch of female speakers allowed greater accessibility to distinguish against background noises, making them easier to understand and more accessible than their male counterparts. However, these are myths.⁴ While some aspects of speech, such as vowels, have been proven to be slightly more intelligible overall using female speech, the extensive range of female voices discounts this fact. Regardless of gender, the speaker's pronunciation is the most crucial factor.

So, if female voices are not scientifically more coherent than male voices, why are they preferred as our virtual assistants?

In the last decade, female virtual assistants have been readily available in homes worldwide. This gendering of domestication and sub-servitude reinforces the gender hierarchy rampant in our society today. In gendering virtual assistants — by use of voice, modelling, or pronouns — these assistants become objectified. And, if they present as female, this incites the question — how will this further support existing biases?

In recent years, the abuse of virtual assistants, such as Alexa and Siri, has prompted their respective compa-



nies to create disengagement protocols⁵ to stave off perpetrators of harassment. Now, when faced with harassing questions such as, “What are you wearing?” or “Do you love me,” they will either refuse to answer or offer rebukes, such as by reaffirming their status as AI or as being uninterested in the interaction.

Before these changes were made, when being called derogatory terms, Alexa would respond, “Thank you for the feedback.” Likewise, Siri responded to this language with platitudes such as, “If I could blush, I would.”⁶ This caught the attention of platforms such as UNESCO. In 2021, members of the organization called for regulations from government officials for AI innovation through a committee meeting detailing recommendations on the ethics of AI.⁷ These recommendations are to create a safer environment in future development that promotes human rights, dignity, and inclusiveness.

However, many others and I might wonder, “Where are these regulations placed?” At the root of AI's central learning, “Where do these gender biases stem from?”

To answer these questions, we must look at why biases perpetuate subordination in women. Speaking with Dr. Wendy H. Wong, a Professor of Political Science at the UBC Okanagan campus and author of the recently published non-fiction book, “We, the Data Human

Rights in the Digital Age,” I gained valuable insight into where these biases arise.

Sarah Meier: During your research for your latest book, where did you see the most significant discrepancies perpetuating gender bias?

Wendy H. Wong: One theme in the book focuses on how data by nature reflects the biases of data collectors. If collecting data is being done in a way that perpetuates gender bias, the outputs from AI will also be gender biased. AI has three components: data, computing, and algorithms. Both algorithms and data can reflect gender bias.

AI's biases can't be fixed by tweaking the algorithms alone. We have to think about the bias in the types of data we are collecting about people and how those biases reflect general attitudes in society. The assumptions of their creators limit all algorithms and data.

SM: As AI becomes more integrated into our lives, objectifying assistants coded as female may increase the stigmatization of industry roles and the gender biases already present. How can computer scientists or data scientists ensure AI systems and assistants limit implementing bias?

WW: I don't think it's possible to have “unbiased” technology because technology always reflects its creator's biases and assumptions about the world.

That's why we want inclusivity in the technology creation and implementation process. For AI, we also want more inclusivity at the analysis stage to ensure AI predictions do not reproduce harmful biases or spurious findings. The more perspectives you have at these stages, the less likely the technology and its outputs will be harmfully biased against certain groups or individuals.

SM: In recent years, companies such as Apple have begun to change the default voice for AI assistance and have created disengagement designs to combat abuse. Do you believe this is enough initiative to protect against further gender biases?

WW: In general, AI systems are not human, so their “genders” reflect our societal assumptions about gender (e.g. “women's voices”). But I think the main issue is that we gender AI at all. We are assigning them characteristics of human beings. Other inventions - for example, cars - aren't presumed to have genders. So, I think one question is, “Why do we assign genders to AI?”

Reflecting on my conversation with Dr. Wong, I realized that gendering AI not only reiterates the systematic oppression of outdated ideals, but also devastatingly creates a binary system that does not recognize those who do not identify in the binary of male or female. In these realizations, it is apparent that AI serves as a mirror, reflecting only a portion of society's opinions and views — this is where the biases come in.

In a report published in 2023 by the World Economic Forum, statistics displayed that in 2022, globally, 30% of AI researchers were women.⁸ Given this significant gender gap in the creators and innovators of AI, it becomes more prevalent than ever to increase diversity and inclusivity to all genders, ages, and races in collaboration with AI.

To gather more insight into how universities are working to rectify this issue and address the gender disparity in computer science, I talked with Dr. Ramon Lawrence, a professor of Computer Science at the UBC Okanagan campus and founder of UnityJDBC.

Sarah Meier: In my research, I learned that only a small portion of researchers in AI are female. As a professor of computer science at the university, how do you support female students in the field?

Ramon Lawrence: It is critical to make it open and welcoming to everybody. Trying to use examples that are not gender specific or, to be on the positive side, provide examples of women succeeding in AI and computer science in general.

This is a long-standing issue in computer science, and we need more representation of women in the discipline. [The faculty] prides itself on developing courses and content welcoming to women who want to be in the discipline. We are one of the few departments where our ratio is near 50%.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7...

SM: In your curriculum, what initiatives have you taken to reduce inequality and lack of diversity attributed to gender biases?

RL: It's essential to do more social things. Many courses are doing pair programming now, and working in groups. The typical stereotype of people in computer science is the male, loner, gamer who's all by themselves. [The faculty] wants to break that stereotype. Everybody can program; everybody can do it.

Sometimes, you just need to see either role models, like faculty who are leading these courses, who have demonstrated that you can be successful as a woman in computer science, or you just need peers in your course that you can work with — that's the significant change, not so much on the data, but for the university teaching students in conducive environments that women want to be in, to get a hold of and learn what to do.

Computer science is a space for everybody. We're working together collaboratively because that's how you will be successful.

Moving forward, it seems impossible to escape bias; we all have our own.

During the development of the Internet today, many factors were largely unknown. The same is true for AI now. Therefore, how we approach and configure these new avenues of learning is entirely a reflection of ourselves as a collective

AI is quickly innovating at a very rapid pace. Looking around, it is everywhere we go and almost always on us. The anxiety that many people are feeling right now is palpable, which has manifested over the last decade in newer sci-fi films, like *Ex-Machina* and *Jexi*. In these movies, the female AI, Ava and Jexi, are left to their own devices. In

doing so, AI's ability to control and learn information that may extend further than their programming is called to light.

Though only fictional, this uneasiness is reminiscent of development in earlier technology. The uncertainty in where the effects are leading is clearly shown in these cautionary tales critiquing the treatment of AI.

As a student in STEM, I constantly see the inconsistency in the representation of women, specifically women of colour, as role models to look up to. Questioning and thinking about these issues is the start of addressing the problem. To ensure that the future digital landscape is welcoming and promotes equality for everyone, it is vital to protect AI by diversifying the data, the engineers, and the designers creating this intelligence for the future.

The digital revolution against gender biases must start with us.

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Feeling SAD? Blame the Weather

WORDS BY ANA MAR PICAZO

GRAPHIC BY DERRIAN GUADARRAMA



until further notice of warmer weather. Of course, even the novelty wears out for most winter enthusiasts after a few weeks of snow shoveling. There is something enchanting about snowy scenery, but after days on end of monotonous grey skies and dirt-covered ice, the winter wonderland suddenly turns into a depressing apocalyptic setting.

This all might come across as a bit melodramatic; for most, this is something they are habituated to. Kelowna weather is mild compared to other Canadian regions that experience average temperatures of -30 degrees Celsius. However, this does not mean that our negative weather experiences in the Okanagan are any less valid.

Regardless of the average temperature or snowfall, the unforgiving aspects of winter

— such as lack of sunlight, shorter days, and darker nights — can all contribute to something known as “Seasonal Affective Disorder.” SAD, for short, can lead to, well, sadness. More scientifically put, it can encompass depression, sleep disturbances, mood swings, and irritability.

Some people are particularly vulnerable to this disorder, and getting out of bed may prove to be an insurmountable challenge when your circadian rhythm and brain chemistry are fighting against you. We may all be aware of the burden that mental illnesses can create, but it's important to raise awareness of the disorders that can be affecting us without knowing so. Feeling “bluer”

during the winter months may have a more deep-rooted cause than you think. People used to colder temperatures and the yearly darkness might be more vulnerable to brushing these feelings off. International students coming from warmer climates might be caught off guard and not know what it is they're experiencing. All in all, it's important to be aware that this is a real condition that might be affecting all sorts of demographics.

A recent poll carried out on *The Phoenix News*' Instagram page revealed that 83% of the participants had experienced symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder at some point in their lives. On top of that, 71% of them reported that it had impacted their academic performance at university. Feeling somber and unmotivated during the colder portion of the year can have a direct impact on your ability to work and stay on top of your responsibilities.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is much more profound than just “thriving” during summer and feeling melancholic during the winter. We have to learn to accommodate activities that are easily carried out during the warmer months. Taking a “mental health walk” is not that easy when the sidewalk hasn't been cleared. Similarly, taking power naps at 4 p.m. is not that fun when you wake up to a pitch-black exterior. It's normal to feel emotionally and physically drained when you have to adapt to a new way of existing.

Complaining aside, it's important to have a contingency plan in order to prevent severe symptoms. Having alternatives to your regular summer hobbies and activities will prove to be key in anticipating this issue before it creeps up on

you. Indoor gyms, board game cafés, and quaint coffee shops are among many of the spaces you can find solace in. If you can spare a few dollars, there are special SAD lamps that can help combat ailments from sunlight deprivation. Similarly, there are supplements — like Vitamin D — that can come in handy during these months.

The main takeaway is to find comfort in the resources that are available to you. Seek out your friends, try to stay active, and most importantly, don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it. There are various campus resources that can help manage Seasonal Affective Disorder or any mental health issue you may be struggling with. The Student Health Clinic on campus has drop-in or scheduled counseling sessions.

You can book both in-person or virtual appointments using the following QR code:



For more health and wellness resources check out this link:



CLASH OF TITANS:

UBC Okanagan Heat's Pursuit of Excellence in Collegiate Sports

WORDS BY ANSH TAK

The world of collegiate sports is a dynamic and thrilling arena, where athletes strive for excellence, teams battle for dominance, and every game is a testament to skill, strategy, and spirit. This narrative unfolds in the recent matches involving the UBC Okanagan Heat's volleyball and basketball teams, as well as the men's rugby team.

The women's volleyball matchup between the UBC Okanagan Heat and the Trinity Western Spartans on November 3 was a remarkable showcase of skill and resilience. The Heat's Natalie Funk, hailing from Strathmore, Alberta, left an indelible mark on the court with her exceptional performance. As a third-year middle, Funk's versatility was on full display. She not only contributed six kills but also made her serves a potent weapon, securing three aces. Adding to her impact, Funk recorded four crucial blocks. Her contributions amounted to an impressive 11.5 points for the Heat. This outstanding performance reaffirms her status as a key player to watch in the world of women's collegiate volleyball.

On the opposing side, the Trinity Western Spartans showcased their own star player in the form of Maryn Buldon. As a second-year outside hitter, Buldon demonstrated her prowess with a match-high 18 kills. Beyond her offensive contributions, which amounted to a serving ace, Buldon also excelled defensively, recording two blocks and five crucial digs. Buldon's performance was instrumental in pushing the Spartans to victory. Her ability to maintain a high level of play in both offensive and defensive aspects solidifies her position as a standout athlete within the U SPORTS league.

The recent clash against the Trinity Western Spartans was not merely a game but a testament to the Heat's commitment and the level of competition within women's volleyball. The Heat's season record now stands at 3-3, positioning them in a three-way tie for seventh place within the competitive Canada West conference.

The Spartans, on the other hand, maintain their unblemished record of 6-0. This remarkable streak positions them at the top of the Canada West rankings, sharing the coveted spot with the UBC Thunderbirds. Their consistent and dominant performances highlight the high standards they've set for themselves and the league. As the UBC Okanagan Heat regroup during their bye week, they are undoubtedly eager to continue their journey and strive for excellence as the season progresses.

In the realm of men's volleyball, the UBC Okanagan Heat faced a formidable adversary in the U SPORTS No. 9-ranked Trinity Western Spartans. Despite a valiant effort, the Heat found themselves on the wrong side of a straight-set loss on November 3.

Renn Petryk emerged as the leading contributor for the Heat, recording a team-high 11 kills. Petryk has been a force to be reckoned with, leading UBCO with an impressive 3.38 kills per set this season. In addition to his offensive prowess, he added



Photo Credit: @UBCOHeat on Instagram.



Photo Credit: @UBCOHeat on Instagram.

an ace, a block, and two crucial digs to his stat line. The Heat's outside hitters, Lucas Woelders and Seba Manuel, also made note worthy contributions, accumulating 8.0 and 7.5 total points, respectively, while Ashton South led the team with three total blocks.

The Spartans, fueled by productive performances from Kaden Schmidt and Kyden Dmitryk, both in their second year, exhibited remarkable efficiency. Each player achieved a hitting percentage of over .400 and tallied more than 10 kills. Collectively, the Spartans displayed an incredible .360 hitting percentage, while the Heat posted a .213 hitting rate.

In a highly anticipated rematch on Saturday, November 4, both teams were geared up for an intense showdown at 6 p.m. Fans, eager to witness the action unfold, tuned in live on Canada West TV. However, the outcome wasn't in favor of the UBCO Heat, as they faced a loss in this closely contested match. The UBC Okanagan Heat's athletes, in both basketball and volleyball, continue to exhibit unwavering determination and skill. Despite the challenges and strong opponents, they remain a resilient and competitive force to be reckoned with in the Canada West conference.

As the season standings show on November 9, UBCO holds a 1-4 record, whereas the perennial powerhouse Spartans have secured their second win of the year, improving to 2-3.

In a thrilling men's basketball match, the UBC Okanagan Heat showcased their grit and determination against the

Winnipeg Wesmen. While facing significant challenges, including a depleted roster due to injuries, the Heat delivered an inspired performance. Relying primarily on just six players throughout much of the game, the Heat burst out of the gate with a fiery start. This was largely fueled by the exceptional play of guard Jalen Shirley from Brampton, Ontario. Shirley, a standout for the team, was in amazing form, pouring in 15 first-half points and igniting the court with his scoring prowess. On the defensive end, the Heat forced an impressive 13 turnovers, and their collective efforts translated into a 41-36 halftime lead against one of Canada West's top teams.

The Winnipeg Wesmen, equipped with a healthy roster, found their rhythm in the second half. They staged an unbelievable comeback, outscoring the Heat 27-15 in the third quarter, which granted them a seven-point lead entering the fourth quarter. Although the Heat managed to narrow the deficit to just six points midway through the final frame, Winnipeg's resolute defense in the closing moments secured them a well-earned victory.

The third-year guard for UBCO Heat, Jalen Shirley, delivered a career-high performance, his through the opening week-end of the season have solidified his position as the third-highest scorer in the conference, averaging an impressive 25 points per game. Mikhail Mikhailov, the third-year forward from Madrid, Spain, played a pivotal role for the Wesmen. Not only did he contribute 22 points, but he also led his team with 10

rebounds and 3 steals. His commanding performance was instrumental in securing the win for Winnipeg.

The UBC Okanagan Heat men's basketball team, in spite of being the best team over the four quarters, had to taste defeat. As of November 9, they currently hold a 0-2 record for the season, while the Winnipeg Wesmen are at 2-0 in the Canada West Standings. The Heat are gearing up for their next matches of the season.

On October 29, The UBC Okanagan Heat men's rugby team secured the silver medal at the 2023 Prairie U Championship at Nonis Sports Field. Despite their best efforts, the Heat was defeated 27-17 by their rivals, the Calgary Dinos, in the gold medal match, falling just short of their championship aspirations.

The Dinos took an early lead in Sunday's championship game, leading 10-0 at halftime and extending that lead to 24-0 in the second half. However, the Heat didn't back down and attempted a comeback with converted tries from Andrew Zutter of Calgary, and Jef Vreys of Kelowna. Jean-Louis Desgouttes of Hong Kong, the team's leading scorer, added a penalty to reduce the Dinos' lead to seven. Despite this, a late penalty from the Dinos secured them the gold medal.

The Heat had advanced to the gold medal match following a decisive 36-3 victory over the University of Alberta the day before. After initially falling behind 3-0, the Heat responded by scoring 36 fabulous points, in a quick succession. Finn Hussey of Kelowna led the way with three tries, while Zutter and Jackson Croze of Surrey added singles. Desgouttes also scored one try along with three converts.

Following the tournament, the Prairie U conference announced their 2023 major award recipients. Desgouttes, who led the Heat with 71 points in four regular season games — thanks to four tries, five penalties, and 18 converts — was named the conference Player of the Year. Additionally, head coach Dan Haynes was honored as the Coach of the Year after guiding the Heat to an undefeated regular season.

The UBC Okanagan Heat's recent matches in women's and men's volleyball, men's basketball, and men's rugby have been a testament to the spirit of collegiate sports. Each game showcased skill, strategy, and resilience with athletes like Natalie Funk, Maryn Buldon, and Renn Petryk leaving their mark. Despite the challenges and losses, the teams demonstrated determination and a competitive spirit. The recognition given to Jean-Louis Desgouttes and coach Dan Haynes is a testament to the hard work and dedication invested throughout the season. As the teams regroup and prepare for their upcoming matches, they carry forward the lessons learned, the aspiration to improve, and the relentless pursuit of excellence. The anticipation for the upcoming games is palpable, promising more thrilling encounters in the world of U SPORTS.

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