



# THE PHOENIX NEWS

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## POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE, THE LEFT, & THE SWING OF POWER

SUO

### A Heatwave in November Expect the Unexpected

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN



Photo provided by Jian Suniga

Even with persistent requests for a famous artist and a large concert, Kyei-Badu thinks this will provide an opportunity for students to push themselves out of their comfort zone and try something new: “don’t be afraid of change or things looking differently, that doesn’t mean things will be bad.”

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### Love to Local Art Galleries & Stores

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA



Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

Throughout my travels around Canada, I have seen many different small galleries and art stores. Frequently, these stores and galleries are direct lines into a local artist community and provide many small artists a way to get their art seen and sold. Importantly the sold aspect, putting funds right in the hands of artists themselves. pick.

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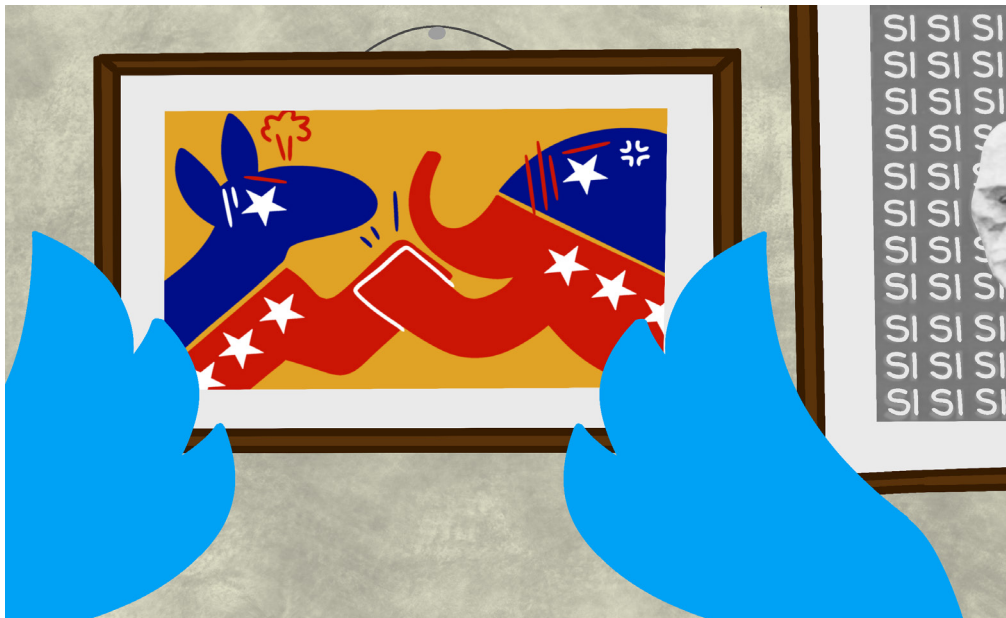


Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

ARTS & CULTURE

### Chill Playlists to Read Articles to: Background Studying Sounds for Phoenix Readers

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA



Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

There are many different kinds of sounds one can use to make studying feel a little less tiring. From crypt keeper ambiance to wood soup ASMR, everyone can take their

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### On-Campus Publications Want You!

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA



Images provided by the Creative Writing Course Union and Mattea Fazio

Last year I had written an article on publishing. While I stand by what I said, many of the self-publishing avenues I discussed require some sort of self advertising, which is what turns many writers off of publishing in the first place. Starting off a little closer to campus may be just the trick to getting the young artist to develop a personal portfolio.

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CLICKED BY SABHYA ARORA



Photo by Sabhya Arora

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If leftist cultural platforms sought long-term societal change that uplifted minority groups while maintaining and reforming social institutions, they failed.

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BY GABRIELA CHAN

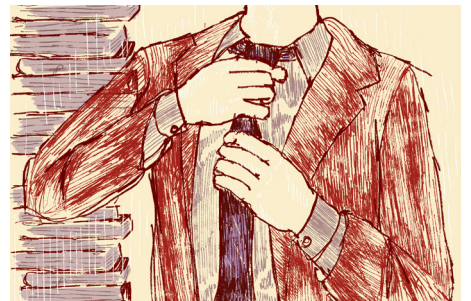


Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

Why does UBCO’s Co-operative Education (Co-op) program not have the best rep among students? Are there other ways to step out of the academic setting and prepare oneself for post-graduation?

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### Should We Call the Police on BookTok? The Dark Romance Genre

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN



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“The actions by this community are not by any means intended to be deeply harmful. But, what began as simple sexual desires has turned into an inclination for unhealthy and even illegal practices.”

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### Too Much Flesh, Not Enough Fleshi-ness

BY SAMAIRA TALWAR

Everyone knows sex sells. But lately, it’s selling out the soul of cinema.

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# Is UBCO’s Co-op Program Worth It?

BY GABRIELA CHAN



Illustration by Iso Maaud Rodriguez

Youth in Canada face the highest unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> this country has seen since the mid-1990s, meaning that securing a job as a new graduate is an increasingly competitive task. Having a high grade per average alone will not do, especially not in the post-pandemic era.

As undergraduates at UBC Okanagan scramble for work opportunities that might elevate their resumes, many apply to the university’s optional Co-operative Education Programs (Co-op),<sup>2</sup> which coaches students to acquire a temporary position at a local or international company and enables them to pursue a year of full-time paid work before completing their Bachelor’s degree.

There are two types of Co-op programs: the UBC Applied Science Co-op Program<sup>3</sup> for Engineering students and the Interdisciplinary Co-op Education Program<sup>4</sup> for Arts, Fine Arts, Health and Exercise Sciences, Management, Media Studies, Science and Sustainability students.

Interestingly, first-hand opinions about the program’s mandatory pre-employment training have been generally negative. Students’ criticisms revolve around the program’s unreasonable fees and lack of personalized guidance.

In order to have a better understanding of how Co-op works at UBCO, I gathered various students’ perspectives on whether the program is really worth the financial and time commitment, as well as alternative paths to career readiness as an undergraduate student.

You can think of Co-op as something like a minor or additional major in the sense that you have to apply and get accepted into the program, and that it offers an added credential on your degree. Upon graduation, the Co-op designation on your Bachelor’s degree can serve as an easy communicator to potential employers that you have a certain level of experience in the workplace.

Note, however, that getting accepted into the program does not guarantee you that Co-op designation — it remains your responsibility to find and secure a job at a company for the Co-op work term. The university’s role is to hold your hand through that often overwhelming process.

To elaborate, the Co-op pre-employment training, or Career Readiness Curriculum (CRC), takes place between October and December each year and consists of both online modules and live workshops on topics like resume and cover letter development, interview preparation, and professional communication.

*Doing pre-employment training alongside school is not necessarily easy. Tan-mehar Singh, who just completed his first four weeks of the CRC, states that “the training and the workshops have been fantastic up until now, but because they released the workshops and materials during midterm season, I was not able to give it my full attention.”*

While Singh’s feelings about the training are otherwise positive, some students do not feel as satisfied with its lack of specialization.

On one hand, the UBC Applied Science Co-op Program is designed for Engineering students at both the Okanagan and Vancouver campuses, and for Architecture students at the Vancouver campus. It provides industry-specific training and has a designated Co-op advisor for those respective disciplines. As for the Interdisciplinary Co-op Program, where the rest of the students fall, the resources provided are hardly as specific.

Thiên-Nhi Vu, a fourth-year-standing Data Science major at UBCO, was formerly enrolled in the Interdisciplinary Co-op Program but eventually opted out for several reasons, one being that the coaching she received was not very substantial:

*“I felt that the feedback from workshops was quite generic, especially when it came to tech, presenting a portfolio for your work, and projects in Computer Science and Data Science.”*

Another student, Q, expresses similar frustrations with the lack of personalized guid-

ance, which makes her wonder if the program “prioritises money over student support.” She states that the cost “feels pretty steep since I don’t expect to be making a lot during the Co-op job.”

The cost is two-fold: administration and workshop fees; and the Co-op course fee. The former is a one-time non-refundable fee of \$282.57 upon acceptance into the program. The latter, which is charged only after you secure a job, ranges between \$855 to \$871 per Co-op work term, depending on the type of Co-op program you are enrolled in. More information on fees and application can be found in the Co-op Fees page<sup>5</sup> for Engineering students and the Apply to Co-op<sup>6</sup> page for those interested in the Interdisciplinary Co-op Program.

Without a doubt, these costs are an additional monetary commitment alongside an already expensive university tuition. Considering this financial burden and the lacking quality of training, many students believe that the cost of participating in Co-op is too high.

That is especially true for international students, yet they are also the ones who, in many cases, benefit the most from this experience. The Co-op Program Office partners with the Global Engagement Office to assist international students in applying for a Co-op work permit, which is needed in order to work full-time in Canada without citizenship.

*As an international student who hopes to pursue a career in Canada, Q is willing to pay the fees mainly “for the work prospect after graduation and for immigration purposes.”*

Indeed, though a Co-op placement does not directly help with immigration, it could increase an international student’s chances of getting hired in Canada. This would ease the process of securing a work permit post-graduation and of sustaining oneself financially in a country far away from family.

The above reasons are why the Co-op program could especially benefit international students. As for someone like Thiên-Nhi Vu, who already has Canadian citizenship, the cons outweighed the pros. The program did not necessarily ease her job search process.

She concluded that between May and August, 2025, she applied for 160 jobs and got just five interviews. At that point, the administration and workshop fees, and the prospective eight-hundred dollars per work term, did not feel worth it.

At the same time, Vu believed that it was important to apply her skills and knowledge from school to the workplace. After opting out of the Co-op program, she continued to look for similar opportunities independently.

Two months ago, she secured a year-long Data Science Time Series internship at Themis Intelligence, an advanced data intelligence and AI-driven analytics company in Brampton, Ontario. This internship, which is set to complete in mid-August, 2026, will not be considered a Co-op placement by UBCO. In other words, Vu is currently taking a gap year or academic leave, which is possible for students in good academic standing.

Even though Vu’s graduation certificate will not say “Co-op,” her current placement has, all the same, been meaningful in terms of work-integrated learning. As a data science intern, she is assigned daily tasks like coding, evaluating error metrics, and doing readings to familiarize herself with industry techniques.

Each week, in addition to team meetings, she also meets with her supervisor to discuss her accomplishments, challenges, and the highlights of her learning and development. The hands-on tasks, evaluation by professionals, and workplace interaction make up a valuable environment to learn about industry standards that are not taught in the classroom.

What is more, working in Brampton has broadened Vu’s perspective on company culture and social norms in different parts of Canada:

*“Knowing who you’re working with is really important. I’ve talked to people working at other companies around the area, and each company’s boss and work style differs a little. For example, some bosses are more friendly and others are more reserved; some companies have stricter HR (human resources) than others.”*

*Generally, I’ve observed that people in Ontario seem more work-oriented than people in BC, who are more relaxed; punctuality is more strictly adhered to here [in Ontario], such as clocking-in and clocking-out times.”*

In the span of just two months, her thoughts on professionalism and work-life balance have evolved. She emphasises those ideas are up for interpretation and depends on a person’s positionality:

*“In the first month, I looked around me at the employees who were older and more experienced, and saw that no one was taking breaks. I felt that I shouldn’t be taking breaks either; like I needed to stay at my desk and stay focused. I wasn’t used to sitting in front of a desk for long hours, yet I didn’t want to distract other people, especially in the beginning when I didn’t know anyone.”*

Now that Vu has gotten to know some of her colleagues, she has learned to give herself grace, considering the fact that the long-term employees are much more used to such lengthy work hours than she is.

*“I was talking to an older co-worker and they said, ‘Yeah, it’s okay to take breaks, and if you ever want, just come to my desk and we can go outside, take a ten minute walk, and talk.’ I understood over time that I’m here to learn and they don’t expect me to be perfect. They’re here to help and teach me the industry approach to this discipline that I’ve been studying.”*

In contrast to university, which Vu describes as “a bubble, where you’re surrounded by people your age,” the workplace is not as conducive to friendship. Most employees are older than Vu, or commuters from around the Greater Toronto Area, meaning that hanging out after work is not necessarily an option.

Therefore, to maintain a good work-life balance, she sought out alternative avenues to meet people and continue her existing hob-

bies:

*“I like to stay active and have some sort of creative outlet. At UBCO, that was running, tennis, skiing, and a cappella. Here, I learned to adapt my hobbies into a new environment. I joined a run club and also tried a new sport, ultimate frisbee. There is no a cappella group here, but I’ve turned my creative outlet backstage, where I’m helping out as a crew member for a musical theatre production.”*

Those are just some ways in which Vu has grown personally and professionally during her internship so far. Other riveting topics that came up during our interview were coping with loneliness in a foreign city and experiencing imposter syndrome as a student intern. In essence, work opportunities like this help a student expand their professional skillset as well as mind-set.

Even outside of the Co-op program, Vu successfully acquired an internship to enhance her career readiness. She did so by applying for jobs in her own time, at her own pace, and interning with a year of academic leave. Considering this, are UBCO’s Co-op programs worth the time and money?

“The high cost would have been more justified,” Vu says, “if Computer, Math, Physics, and Statistics (CMPS) students received specialized training, similar to what is offered in the Applied Science Co-op Program.” Having a designated program would be especially helpful to disciplines like CMPS that prioritise industry skills.

Co-op might also be worth it for those who appreciate being kept accountable by someone external during their job search process, international students who need help acquiring work permits, and those who have no trouble paying the fees.

All things considered, Co-op or not, the key to career readiness is stepping out of university’s “bubble,” as Vu has put it, and actively seeking opportunities to learn in different environments, including the workplace.



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# A Heatwave in November

## Expect the Unexpected

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN

Every year, students can expect something different on campus at UBC Okanagan when a new SUO executive team is elected. Undoubtedly one of the most active times of the year is the start of the new academic term in September. New students are starting at UBC Okanagan, and current students are returning to their community on campus. In the past, a large concert known as FROSH and funded by the SUO was held at the beginning of the winter term to get students excited for the year ahead; previous headliners featured big names such as NLE Choppa and Lil Pump.

This year’s Vice-President of Campus Life, Ashley Kyei-Badu, is hoping to switch things up with how campus life has historically been approached. With a fresh approach in mind, and wanting to go beyond just throwing parties, Kyei-Badu commented on her objectives for this year:

“A lot of my goals this year are based on community building, making things accessible and affordable for students, and making spaces for people to form meaningful relationships. [I want to] focus on smaller and recurring events that take place throughout the year.”

The SUO formed the plan of hosting smaller and more intimate concerts

throughout the academic year, naming this string of three separate concerts Heatwave. The first concert took place on November 6th, 2025, and was headlined by Grammy-winning artist, Alex Cuba. The Cuban-Canadian jazz singer takes a step away from the custom of hosting a hip-hop artist that previous Campus Life executives had stuck to. This event was put on in conjunction with the Latin American Student Organization (LASO), intending to promote different cultures on campus.

A lot goes into planning a major concert: logistics, time, effort, and most importantly money. Kyei-Badu expressed that past FROSH concerts consumed large amounts of the Campus Life budget, which took away from other events and experiences for students. Getting a big name for FROSH is also difficult, and it was explained that 2024’s headliner, NLE Choppa, was a very unique situation where the SUO was able to reach a rare circumstantial agreement with the artist. Nevertheless, Kyei-Badu still recognized the importance of live music to students, stating that she “didn’t want to take that live music experience away from students, but it wasn’t worth the risk to invest so much into one concert because our funds were limited.”

This decision was also made in the name

of student safety, as there was concern in regards to various dangerous incidents that had taken place at previous FROSH concerts. The first Heatwave concert was held in the Well on campus, leading to it being a 19+ event. In the future, the SUO will host an all-ages Heatwave concert so all students can have the chance to attend a performance if they wish.

SUO President, Peter Idoko, understands the preferences of students to have a larger concert, but wants them to keep an open mind:

“We urge students to have some grace with us, because at the end of the day we are doing our best to cater to their needs. I think the SUO offers a lot more than one concert a year. FROSH is not the SUO’s one thing.”

Since the start of the academic year, the SUO has held many different events at affordable prices for students, including baseball watch parties, wine and paint nights, trivia, halloween parties, karaoke, and so much more. With such diverse demand from the student population, it can be difficult to meet various wants and needs. By decreasing the amount spent on one concert right at the beginning of the year, the SUO will be able to put on more events that attract more students.



Photo provided by Jian Suniga

Next term, the SUO is planning on organizing two more concerts, and Kyei-Badu says there will be “[a] variety of genres and [a] variety of experiences for students. [...] Expect the unexpected.” No other teasers were given, however it is clear that things will look different based on the first Heatwave concert the SUO hosted. Even with persistent requests for a famous artist and a large concert, Kyei-Badu thinks this will provide an opportunity for students to push themselves out of their comfort zone and try something new: “don’t be afraid of change or things looking differently, that doesn’t mean things will be bad.”

# Hold the Bacon Please: The Great Vegetarian Adjustment

BY JUHI SARVAIYA

*Sitting in Cactus Club Café, I take another sip of water while scanning the menu. Across the table, my friends are deep in discussion of what to get – crispy chicken sandwiches, fish tacos, creole crab, bacon burgers. The options are endless. And for me? I will have the garden burger. Again.*

Do not get me wrong, it is a good burger. But every time I go out, I find myself wishing for something that is not a cheese pizza, a Caesar salad, or the token Beyond Meat option tucked at the bottom of the menu.

Being vegetarian in Kelowna can feel like a paradox. It is easy until it is not. You hope for variety, but you have learned not to expect much. As an international student from India, I never struggled with being a vegetarian before coming to Canada. Back home, the options were endless: home-cooked meals, street food, and entire restaurants dedicated to vegetarian cuisine. But after moving to Canada, I realized how personal and sometimes isolating that choice could feel.

Here, most of the available “vegetarian” options are vegan, made with tofu, soy, or beans. There is nothing wrong with that, but it often feels like the space between eating meat and being fully vegan goes unnoticed. In many Western countries, veganism is widely recognized and accommodated, while vegetarianism sits in a grey area, not really understood, but there.

When I first came to university, I relied heavily on campus food – Pritchard, The Well, Fusion, and Sub-

way. Back then, I did not know much about Kelowna’s restaurants and cafes, and it was not easy to find meals that felt satisfying. Pritchard’s options were limited, and I found myself experimenting with ingredients at the salad bar to make meals seem more interesting. During exam season, my friends could grab quick burgers or wraps from fast-food chains, while I had to scroll through apps searching for vegetarian options that were usually either unavailable, overpriced, or just another burrito.

Over time, I started exploring more places around Kelowna. I slowly built my own list of favorites: Antico’s Pizza, BarBurrito, Kinton Ramen, OEB, and a handful of Indian restaurants that remind me of home. It took time to find them, and even longer to figure out where I could grocery shop for ingredients that matched what I grew up eating.

My roommate is also a vegetarian and an international student, and when I asked her what her experience has been like, her answers reflected a lot of the same frustrations and a few differences, too.

“At first, I felt a little left out,” she admitted. “Most of my friends ate meat, and I’d be the only one ordering something different. But over time, I started to see it more as a personal choice... something rooted in respect for animals and for myself.”

For her, being a vegetarian in Kelowna is both easier and harder. Easier, because plant-based options exist in most restaurants and taste good. Harder, because they are almost always

the same. “The most vegetarian dishes you’ll find are burritos, pizzas, and cauliflower-or-lettuce-something,” she laughed. “There is no real variety, especially in Western or Canadian-style places. Asian, Mexican, and Indian restaurants are, of course, better.”

Cooking, she added, is another challenge altogether. “That is the hardest part,” she said. “Back home, I had variety. Here, I don’t cook as much, so I end up eating simpler food.”

On and near campus, her go-to meals are Tim Hortons’ breakfast wraps and Quesada because of how “cheap and accessible they are.” But affordability is always on her mind. “Tofu or plant-based meats are like seven dollars a pack,” she noted. “You can find them, but the cost adds up.”

Socially, vegetarianism can feel isolating, too. “You can not really share food with your friends,” she explained. “And when we eat at fancy places, I am usually limited to a twenty-dollar burger. People are mostly accepting, but some try to convince you to just try meat once or joke that I must be surviving on salads or say things like, ‘I could never give up meat.’”

I laughed when she said that, because I have experienced it too. You know those jokes about vegetarians eating grass, lettuce, or “rabbit food”? They never

seem to get old. There is always someone who insists we are missing out, that life without steak or wings must somehow be dull.

What people often do not realize is that being vegetarian is not about limitation or sacrifice; it is about choice. Here in Kelowna, I have learned it is more than avoiding meat – it is about navigating a food culture that was not built for you and still finding a way to make it yours.

In the end, it teaches you a few key things: how to read a menu like a detective, how to make a decent meal out of whatever groceries you have, and how to truly appreciate the rare restaurant that gets it right. It is a lifestyle that many people enjoy and willingly partake in. What matters is how you look at it.

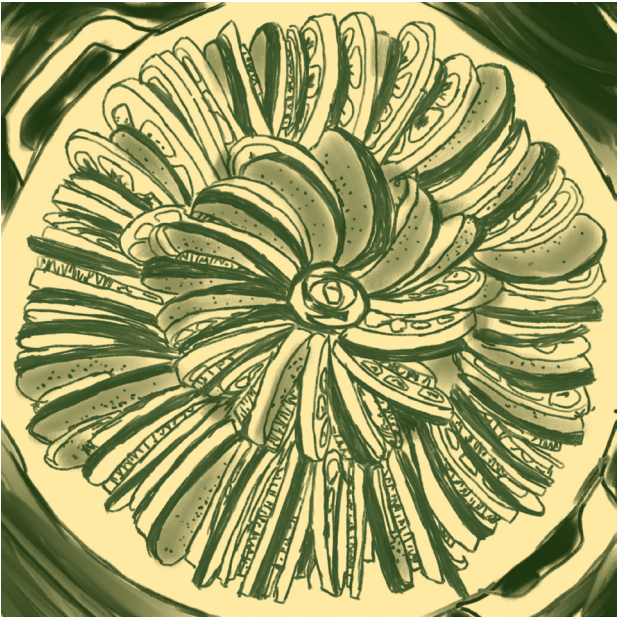


Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez



# Love to Local Art Galleries & Stores

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

Throughout my travels around Canada, I have seen many different small galleries and art stores. Frequently, these stores and galleries are direct lines into a local artist community and provide many small artists a way to get their art seen and sold. Importantly the sold aspect, putting funds right in the hands of artists themselves.

Though public art is a concept I have previously engaged with under great caution of artificial attempts to exacerbate the already inflated tourist economies in towns and cities, I believe there are also many sects of public art that do wonders for communities.

In my hometown of Niagara Falls, there is a great community of artists buried like a gem amidst the rampant tourists swarming the falls for selfies. Finding the way to access this community comes from going to spaces like Riverbrink, a small gallery just a short drive from the falls. Riverbrink is a gallery that was originally a rich man's summer home, his basement full of collected art pieces ranging from Group of Seven sketches to full pieces from artists like Grant Wood (see *American Gothic*). Beyond their personal collection, they have solo and group exhibitions from all sorts of artists, many of whom are local wonders.

The real connection, however, comes from Riverbrink's use of scheduled events (often free to the community) and their "gift shop" at the front of the gallery. Plenty of local artists come to host events and workshops at Riverbrink, many of which

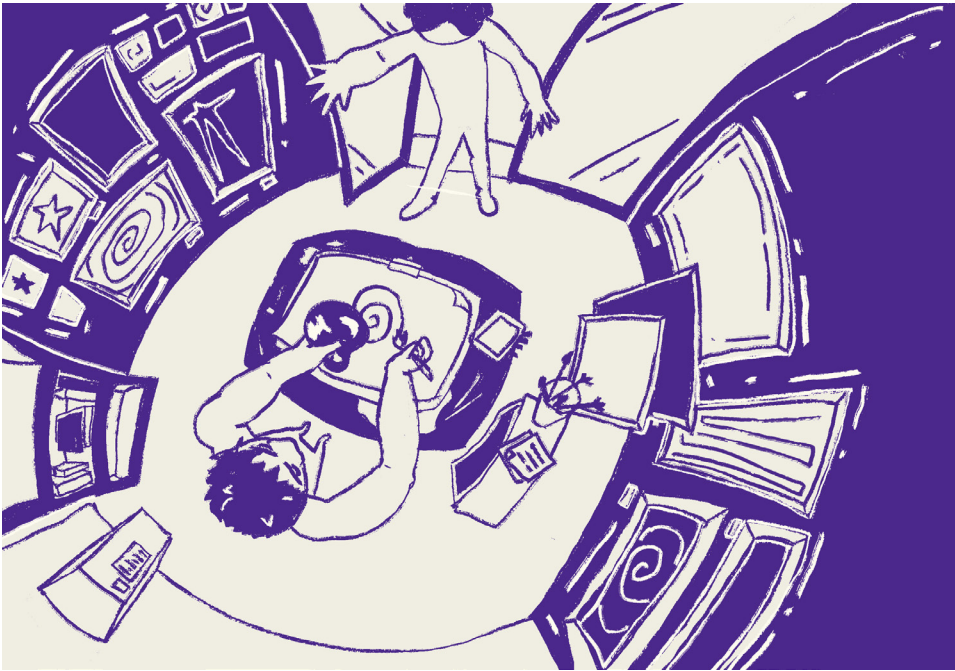


Illustration by Iso Maaquod Rodriguez

you will see the same faces at. The gift shop is home to many of these artists' work, such as indie novels and hand-made ceramic joys. Though often a space for more classically trained or recognized artists and art, it is a great home base for many artists in Niagara.

Not all artists are so classically recognized or trained, however, so how do they get seen? During a trip to Alberta I found a large amount of art decorating stores and streets alike. Downtown Calgary's Chinatown has a great deal of artist shops and small galleries. These shops usually have a similar format with a number of shelves and spaces for individual artists to set up their own little corner of goods and trinkets for

purchase. They are often especially good for smaller, non-traditional artists.

Moonlight Books and Gifts is an excellent example of one of these stores. Entering the store and seeing so many different creations from local artists is really incredible. Despite not knowing much about art in Calgary, I felt connected to a cool part of their local art scene. Being a modern artist online can make it hard to gain traction on work, and especially if you hope to make a living on your work, it can feel like an impossible boundary to being successful as an artist. Art stores like this provide a real life way to get your art into people's hands and homes.

In Kelowna, The Rotary Centre for the Arts is a wonderful place for community events as well. I have heard personal testimony from many different artists of different professions who have had great experiences with the centre. The Rotary Centre is part local gallery and part event centre for all different kinds of events, and the benefit of the centre is largely in how many different kinds of art are showcased there. They host performances of all sorts, multiple gallery spaces, and a small theatre room. A lot of artist's events are hosted at the Rotary Centre, and specifically in Kelowna this is a great place to get to know the art community a little better.

***The common thread between these spaces is always funding and uplifting artists. The center of any good arts community is always going to be the artists. Expecting to bring culture and community to any space without funding artists is always a fruitless venture.***

That is the reason why I love these spaces. Artists get paid and are able to connect not just with each other, but with an audience. For an artist looking to have a career in that field, an audience brings about a feeling of stability and accomplishment. Finding your audience will also create a community around you full of both artists and art lovers, giving way to a rich and exciting art scene. So if you have any interest, I would highly recommend seeking out these local galleries and stores to make your mark wherever you may reside.

# Too Much Flesh, Not Enough Fleshiness

BY SAMAIRA TALWAR

The film industry works off a simple truth: sex sells. It's Hollywood's golden goose that they are not planning to give up anytime soon. Somewhere along the line, however, this relentless quest to titillate has turned into a formulaic routine. It's the same shallow and predictable content being churned out over and over again, portraying sexuality as a spectacle rather than anything substantial.

Paradoxically, this cycle has made contemporary cinema lose sight of what makes sexuality on screen meaningful and deeply human.

The term "oversexualisation" is tossed around quite a bit these days, but what does it really mean? This word does not only encompass characters that are naked, or those that are engaging in frequent erotic acts (although that is certainly part of it). Oversexualisation is about a specific way that cinema treats bodies – especially female bodies – as objects. They are shown as thrills to be consumed rather than stories that should be experienced. Simply put, it is the difference between when a camera lingers meaningfully on characters to show their desire and intimacy, and one that just... lingers, period.

Take Emerald Fennell's *Promising Young Woman* (2020), for example. This film is a case study in how sexuality can be wielded as a weapon; the manner in which it can be a challenge to predatory masculinity that seduces and unsettles at the same time. Fennell's work excels in a rare feat of blending overt sexiness with witty criticism. It is layered and full of

contradictions. Exactly the kind of "sexuality with fleshiness" cinema needs more of.

But then you look the other way, at a significant chunk of what mainstream cinema has to offer, and it often feels like we are stuck in a loop. The camera zooms in on cleavage or chiseled abs, like a salesman showing off the latest model. *Magic Mike* is a great example of this – while some might celebrate it as a male empowerment fantasy, the franchise essentially replicates the same commodification applied historically to women. It is less about character and more about the spectacle. A lot remains to be said along those lines, especially with movies like *365 Days* existing, movies that are nothing but a blend of toxic romance and borderline softcore pornography marketed as "sensual drama."

The presence of sexuality itself is not the eccentric part here, it's the way in which it is curated; the endless replication of the male gaze. Laura Mulvey has a theory that still rings true: cameras are made to fetishize and dominate female bodies, turning women into an object for male desire. Ever since the #MeToo cultural movement, parts of Hollywood have been reshaped. Unfortunately, however, the blueprint still remains largely the same. Old habits are hard to break.

The controversy around the recent *Wuthering Heights* (2026) adaptation trailer is a case study in this dynamic. The promotional material leaned heavily into eroticism, sparking debate about whether it honored the novel's Gothicism

or reduced it to an oversexualized exhibition. Critics argued that the focus on sensual imagery overshadowed the story's rich themes of class conflict and torment.

It gets even trickier when we bring in intersectional layers. The sexualisation of racialised bodies – Asian women depicted as "dragon ladies" or "lotus blossoms", women of colour hypersexualised since the dawn of cinema – reflects centuries of oppression that continue to find new shapes and forms on the big screen. Here, sexualisation is never neutral. It is loaded with years of historical and political weight, whether the ones who make these acknowledge that or not.

Another trend that has begun to evolve and is a tad bit surprising is the increased sexualisation of men. Hollywood's way of responding to feminist critiques basically looks like: "If women are getting objectified in our movies, that's okay! Let's objectify men too!" But flipping the script isn't the same as rewriting the story. Titles like *Saltburn* and *Magic Mike* parade male bodies with just as much styled emphasis, yet often sidestep the deeper questions that beg to be asked, of emotionality, identity, and vulnerability.

Thankfully, there does exist a silver lining. Not all cinema is caught in this loop of oversexualisation. Independent and art-house films offer a hopeful contrast. Movies like Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* or Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me By Your Name* (despite some critiques) do an excellent job of showcasing desire without pandering

to fetish. They insist on seeing their subjects as people, not props.

*At its very core, oversexualisation in cinema boils down to a bigger question. What does it mean to see someone, not just look at them? Is sexual imagery serving the story, illuminating the human condition, or is it just there to fill seats and hit streaming clicks?*

We are now at a crossroads. The film industry can either keep churning out glossy sex scenes that offer hollow entertainment, or it can push out stories where flesh isn't just flesh but the site of real complexity and connection. This means questioning who gets to tell stories about which bodies, hiring diverse voices behind the camera, and most importantly, fighting the temptation to reduce characters to mere eye candy.

Perhaps there is a balance to be found. A middle ground where sexualised imagery can serve as cultural commentary but also operate within an industry that rewards overtness with visibility and profit.

Until then, the industry will continue to be saturated with hypersexualised content. From streaming series to blockbuster movies, sex often sells, mostly at the expense of narrative depth and character agency. As an audience, we must do the work of looking beyond the flesh and searching for the fleshiness that tells us something real.

The cultural conundrum remains: do we demand art that disrupts conventions or allow ourselves to be passive consumers of this spectacle?



# Chill Playlists to Read Articles to: Background Studying Sounds for Phoenix Readers

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

A little while ago, myself, my partner, and a friend of mine were in a café studying. We all had our respective headphones in listening to whatever we felt would get us through our studies. During a small break, my partner turned his computer around to reveal that he had been listening to a little video on YouTube called “Haunted Crypt Sounds | Dark Ambient.” I took a listen for myself and was horrified at the strange white noise echoing down what felt like long, haunted hallways with random water drips periodically falling. It was creepy and bizarre. Most likely it was a joke on his part, but it started me down a YouTube rabbit hole into strange ambience videos, then down another rabbit hole of study playlists. I was fascinated by the great variety of background study noise, both online and even simply in discussion with my friends.

There are many different kinds of sounds one can use to make studying feel a little less tiring. I personally like music: it feels like a little fun treat in between the thousands and thousands of words and pages. Especially when writing an essay I do not feel particularly attached to, I find music helps me get in an excitable mood. Making a specific study playlist is something that another friend had turned me onto. I find that songs with a certain pace and emotion can lend themselves to more productive study sessions.

This is the principle a lot of the study playlists you see on YouTube operate on.



Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

The title will typically be something abstract but playing into a very specific sort of feeling or emotion. Playlists like “be a jellyfish | playlist to feel like a jellyfish” or “nothing feels real (a playlist)” attempt to capture a specific feeling that can take you out of your regular mindset and allow you to get into the motion of studying. The videos also tend to be long, which allows for long, uninterrupted streams of consciousness that can help you get into a groove of working.

These playlists often draw on certain aesthetics in order to romanticize studying and even entire majors. Coursework is important for completing your major, but oftentimes the kind of work you do in school is not the kind of work you will be doing beyond university. Romanticizing

the sometimes benign gruntwork that must be done in order to get to the really interesting stuff can be helpful to get through it. If you are interested in marine or even invertebrate biology, the jellyfish playlist may fit in with your perception of the work you want to do in the future. In previous years there has been an explosion of ‘dark academia’ moodboards and playlists alike, these most certainly serve the purpose of romanticization.

This skill of imagination is one we all have naturally, and one that may have even sparked our original desires to pursue a certain field of study. Connecting the daydreams we have about who we could be in the future to music and ambience can help continue those feelings during difficult or boring study periods.

Ambience can also be very relaxing during stressful times. Seeing work pile up on your to-do list can be quite daunting, so putting on some rain sounds or white noise can be really helpful to stay calm and take one thing at a time. Many people enjoy listening to this type of ambience while they sleep.

Speaking of sleep, autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) content is another background study noise method. For those who want to be super relaxed, ASMR provides a great background sound. I personally find that when music becomes too distracting or when music starts to make me zone out rather than focus, I switch to ASMR to hear pleasant but sort of meaningless sounds. In recent years ‘wood soup’ videos have been a popular background sound for many studios fellows.

There are many different ways to get yourself along long nights studying or catching up on readings. If you ask any person you know, you will find an extremely different set of answers and ideas. Whenever your previous method stops working, you can always switch it up until you find what works for you. Sometimes university work can feel useless and boring, but there is always a greater picture to look forward to, and a time will come when the work you are doing will feel good to you. In the meantime — as with any task that feels heavy — cope with what you can.

## On-Campus Publications Want You!

BY WENDELL ZYLSTRA

As I say to many of my fellow Arts majors, having less course work than a science degree does not often mean less work. Beyond the basic time investment of essays and readings, the academic development of one’s work is often paired with the personal and professional development of a portfolio. This means that on top of coursework, an Arts major will typically have some kind of side gig, like working on a novel or writing for a journal or newspaper (such as *The Phoenix*). Coming from an Arts student, personal and professional development is what will really help you stand out in your field before you get your degree, setting you up for success beyond school environments. Oftentimes, this development comes in the form of publishing.

Last year I had written an article on publishing. While I stand by what I said, many of the self-publishing avenues I discussed require some sort of self-advertising, which is what turns many writers off of publishing in the first place. Starting off a little closer to campus may be just the trick to getting the young artist to develop a personal portfolio.

In my continued time at UBCO I have found many small campus publications willing to take on submissions. So for the sake of the writer who still struggles to get their work out there, here is a decently encompassing collection of ways to get published through the school.

*Inkwell* is the publication I had mentioned

in my previous article and is also the official publication of the Creative Writing Course Union. Last year there were two editions and two rockin’ launch parties. I find it is a great publication to get to know the creative writers on campus as well as writers in the general Kelowna community, especially at the launch parties. They are currently closed for submissions but are on the lookout for an editor. More information can be found on their Instagram, @crwr.courseunion.

*Paper Shell* is an anthology of student work that is physically published annually. This anthology is one I scarcely hear people discuss outside of creative writing spaces, but it accepts prose and poetry from writers with different backgrounds. There are

prose can be submitted with a 1000 word limit, poetry has a 3 page limit, and screenplays can be submitted with a maximum of 6 pages. When submitting your writing, you must do so in an email to ubco.papershell@ubc.ca with the work’s genre in the subject line, a cover letter, and your name and contact email on each page of the work. The deadline for this year’s submissions is December 1st. *Paper Shell* hosts a launch party for each year’s edition and it is an excellent opportunity to get to know the Creative Writing faculty on campus.

*Audacity* is a relatively new publication on campus. It is a student run zine that accepts any and all different kinds of work. Currently in its beginning stages, they have just started accepting submissions with

freeflowing work and develop an audience with your peers. *Audacity* accepts both writing and image submissions and is currently accepting submissions for their first issue. You can find the submission form in their Instagram bio, @audacity1tyz1ne.

*That’s What [We] Said* is a student-run publication that operates under the Women and Gender Studies Department of UBCO. Each issue has a theme with some general themes and ideas it asks its artists to explore, typically within the vein of women and gender studies. For example, their previous issue was called *Pleasure* and some of the words the call for submissions post used were joy, indulgence, shame, and reclamation. Submissions will be open in the near future for their latest installment and they are currently on the lookout for editors. Submissions and resumes may be sent to thatswatwesaid07@gmail.com, for more information check out their Instagram, @thatswatwesaidjournal.

Each of these publications are accessible to students and often made specifically to get the young artist’s voice into the public sphere. Being published is a wonderfully affirming thing once you can make it happen, and these publications all aim to boost you on your journey, whatever that may be. So if you have something to share or if these publications spark your imagination, please send something in, even just for the satisfaction of holding in your hands something you helped to create. It may even become a great jewel in your crown portfolio.



Images provided by the Creative Writing Course Union and Mattea Fazio

some stipulations which are as follows: very little limits on what can be submitted. *Audacity* is a great place to submit more



# Should We Call the Police on BookTok? The Dark Romance Genre

BY CHARLOTTE TAPPIN

*CONTENT WARNING: This article discusses issues of sexual assault, rape, and other forms of violence that may be disturbing to some. Reader discretion is advised.*

In late 2019, a new sub-community emerged on the internet: BookTok. The group was primarily based on TikTok, but has also made its way onto other platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, and Facebook under other names. BookTok’s members create and interact with short form video content that reviews and discusses books, or gives recommendations for other prospective readers. The popularity of this community was in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as people were stuck at home and not working as much, they were in need of new ways to pass time on their own.

Reading was a great way to amend this issue, as books could easily be ordered online through retailers like Amazon, Indigo, Barnes and Noble, or Waterstones. E-reader companies like Kobo and Kindle have also made access to books easier through electronic means.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, women have always been more drawn to the romance genre. This can be seen through the popularity of classic authors such as Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters, all the way to contemporary romance writers like Nora Roberts and Danielle Steele. This genre offers happy endings, entertaining romantic plotlines, and exploration of relationships not everyone gets to experience in real life. Women are placed at the centre of the plot, with emphasis on their issues and needs.

In the past six years, specific trends have emerged from BookTok and similar online communities. Romance is a very broad genre, and with that some specific niches or sub-genres have emerged. Some of these sub-genres include romantasy, a blend of romance and fantasy; sports related romances, featuring hockey and football players alike; historical romances that can take the reader back in time; and romantic comedies, a time old classic. These genres are not mutually exclusive, and overlap can be found in the most odd places. A perfect example of this is Lia Riley’s “Puck and Prejudice,” where a hockey player accidentally travels back in time and falls in love with a woman from the Regency era. Some authors take a satirical twist on romance, especially in Chuck Tingle’s “Space Raptor Butt Invasion” and “Slammed in the Butthole by my Concept of Linear Time,” where I think these titles require no further elaboration. However, there is one genre that has captivated a wide audience, for better or for worse: dark romance.

This genre sparked the dimming of my laptop screen in public while writing this article as the topics explored in these books can be perceived as controversial or even triggering by a variety of audiences. Unfortunately, a large focus of this genre is unconsensual sex. A significant part of the intrigue of this genre is the depiction of erotic violence that often pushes and crosses lines of consent, exploring sexual themes that are generally viewed as taboo. The actions taken by the characters in these books are often described as “morally grey,” despite portraying distinctly abusive and unhealthy relationships.

One popular example of a dark ro-

mance book is “Haunting Adeline,” written by H.D. Carlton. This book means to justify its ‘morally grey’ male love interest, Zade, by having him hunt down and kill pedophiles in his spare time while simultaneously stalking and sexually assaulting the female lead, Adeline. Without having read the book, I cannot offer a proper review, but I will let some various Goodreads reviews speak for themselves:

One-star review: “YOU CANT HAVE HIM SAVE RAPE SURVIVORS AND THEN RAPE [THE] MAIN CHARACTER [WITH A GUN]?!”<sup>1</sup>

Three-star review: “The feminist in me knows I should hate [Zade] for how toxic and possessive on another level he is (and how he doesn’t take fucking no for an answer). [...] BUT, the horny and ‘in love with morally grey and fucked up characters’ [in] me, absolutely loves him.”<sup>2</sup>

Five-star review: “[B]ut my goodness where is my man who will stalk me, cut others tongues out for speaking ill of me, for

to call for a complete ban on all erotica for anyone below the age of majority, because quite frankly that is not realistic. However, when these relationships are presented as desirable, there will be people seeking them out. This can put vulnerable people into potentially abusive relationships, or expose them to sex early on before understanding the risks associated with it.

A blog post by The Reading Nook on Substack illustrates another concern about this community quite well, stating:

“If Booktok was solely a community of men talking about their kinks in public, and telling each other to read x, y, z because they were able to ‘read it with one hand’ while simultaneously jerking off to it, you would all be calling the police. You don’t and never have accepted this level of sexual freedom for the opposite gender”.<sup>4</sup>

There is very wide toleration for the actions being put forth by this internet community, and The Reading Nook is quite

tions can often be misconceived, such as it was in this case.

Neither Andrea nor her husband seemed to understand how to safely go about this desire, because Andrea had only read it in a book that glamorized it, which resulted in her being harmed unintentionally. This can be taken as a relatively mild example of what can happen as a result of the actions portrayed in these books, but what is happening that is not being posted on the internet for people to see? Sex is a natural thing, but a lack of guidance on how to step into more intense activities can be dangerous and even frightening for some individuals.

Another example of a dark romance novel is “Take Me With You” by Nina G. Jones. The book is essentially about a man who stalks and sexually assaults women at night, but eventually becomes obsessed with the female lead and kidnaps her because she is ‘different’ from the other women he has harmed in the past. These Goodreads reviews offer a variety of perspectives on the book:

One-star review: “I still can’t get over the fact that the so called hero had been raping women for years. How can you fall in love with someone like that?”<sup>6</sup>

Three-star review: “No. I didn’t really enjoy it. Not because of how fucked up the book actually is. But because it definitely failed to keep me engrossed.”<sup>7</sup>

Five-star review: “If you don’t like things pertaining to Stockholm syndrome, forced sex and manipulation, starvation, humiliation etc..this book IS NOT for you. If you have an open mind in your reading though, and want something totally different then this might be for you.”<sup>8</sup>

The fact that the three-star review is more concerned with the style of the writing, not the fact that the male love interest is a stalker and a rapist, reflects a disconnect with the severity of what these readers are consuming. Exposing themselves to so much graphic content strips away the severity of the crimes being committed. For some reason, the book is only less enjoyable not because of the subject matter, but because the author lacked a certain.

The five-star review dances around the severity of what actually occurs in this book. They say forced sex — which is a dark romance reader’s way of avoiding the word rape — as a means of watering down the violent content compiled within the pages of this book. It treats severe traumas as trivial preferences, like pizza toppings or ice cream flavours. Just like how not everyone likes pineapple on pizza, you might not really like to read books where Stockholm syndrome is romanticized.

The actions by this community are not by any means intended to be deeply harmful. But, what began as simple sexual desires has turned into an inclination for unhealthy and even illegal practices. Banning this form of literature would also not be so easy, so instead people need to have more conversations about the impact of what they read. Even a seemingly silly hockey player romance can be looked at with a critical eye, and can allow you to better examine whether or not your preferences are being shaped in a positive way.

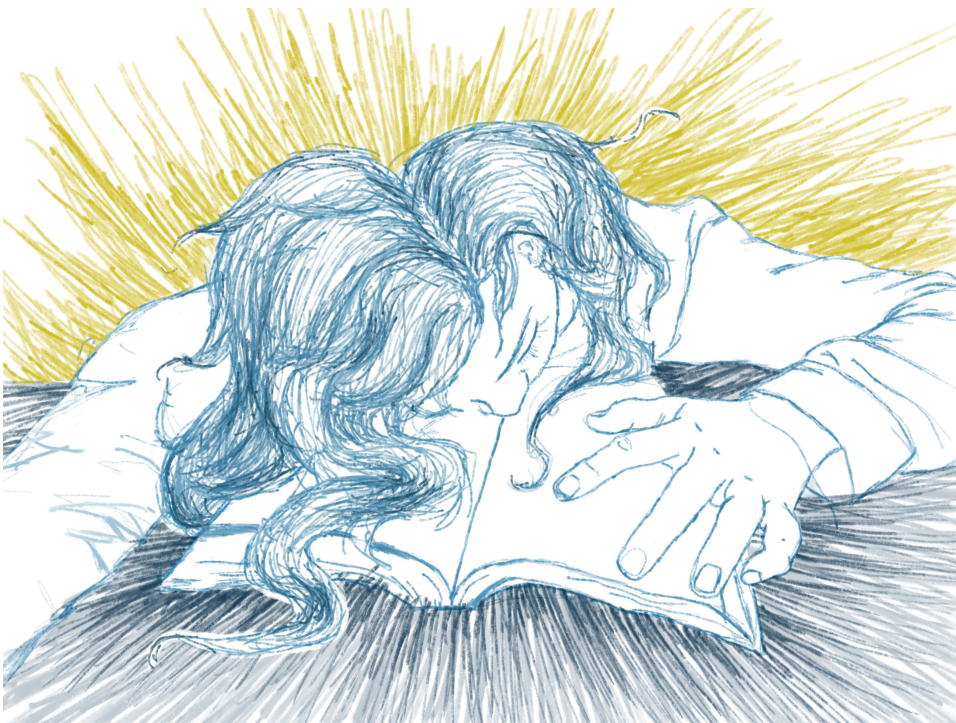


Illustration by Iso Maauad Rodriguez

chopping hands that touched me, and give me the best sex ever?!”<sup>3</sup>

Reviews about this book are dramatically polarized, and there is a large middle ground of opinion. Either you were in love with Zade, or wanted some other vigilante to end his life. One thing is clear, however: people do understand that this fascination with abusive relationships is something worth calling anti-feminist and is working against the best interests of women. However, there are still large communities of people who dedicate themselves to these questionably described ‘morally grey’ characters while acknowledging this. This disclaimer put forth by many dark romance readers in which they state they understand these books are anti-feminist is very performative at its core, and does effectively nothing but save them from minor social backlash in the form of a hate comment on TikTok or Instagram.

Portraying these fantasies as desirable might not be as harmful to a woman in her late 20s and beyond with lots of experience in relationships, but to younger audiences who are watching this content on TikTok, it is. Young girls will see videos of women speaking about how such fantasies are ‘liberating’ — despite often putting control of the situation into the hands of men — which encourages them to read these books and seek out these sexual relationships. I am not here

correct in saying that this behaviour would never be tolerated if it was coming from a community that was predominantly male. I have seen a rise in content on social media looking at ‘incel culture’ and fringe groups of young men online who garner hatred towards women and express violence towards the opposite sex, but I scarcely see the same content focusing on how women have been condoning violent behaviour when they find it attractive.

A big issue with this glamorization of non-consensual relationships is that it is signaling to people that consent might not always be necessary. A breach of consent is never appropriate, but when you have groups of people online fetishizing such violations, what consequences might emerge?

The portrayal of violent themes in dark romance books also lacks a significant amount of information that explains how to go about more intense sex practices safely. In a video posted by Instagram creator @andrea\_reads\_alot, she captions the video “when asking your husband to act out a scene from one of your dark romance books goes wrong.”<sup>5</sup> In this video, her husband grabs her by the neck and lifts her up against the wall. After he puts her down, her face is visibly red, she is out of breath, and she says “don’t actually choke me.” Desirable depictions of behaviour such as choking in sexual situa-

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5 P. Andrea. “Andrea on Instagram: “This Looked a Little Different in My Head When I Read It. #Darkromance #Bookstagram #Booktok.”” Instagram. February 13, 2025. Accessed November 3rd, 2025. [www.instagram.com/reel/DGB5RqjvwFU/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DGB5RqjvwFU/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link). Accessed November 3rd, 2025.

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# Political Independence, The Left, & the Swing of Power

BY AIDEN MALCOLM

The cultural divide between opposing sides of the political spectrum has grown tremendously over the past several years. Whether the result of the increasingly detached nature of online discourse or political shifts toward extreme politics in the Western world, this separation has growing ramifications on the world we live in.

One of these impacts is the supposed loss in viability of the “politically neutral” stance. Political neutrality, in this context, means a voting record or public perception which is neither Left nor Right, Conservative nor Liberal, or Democrat nor Republican, but one that can be found somewhere in the nebulous space that exists everywhere else along the political spectrum. Often, this is referred to as a political “independent”, signifying that a person supports a candidate that is “independent” of the major ideological divide that is present in North America.

This loss in viability is frequently discussed in online political spaces and more broadly in popular culture. In my experience, politically extreme groups can often only agree on one thing: their hate for a neutral group. Despite this, political neutrality continues to have an increasingly important role in the contemporary political climate. This growth in importance largely stems from one factor: the shift in political discourse. This shift was not from one end of the political spectrum to the other, but a change in the way that politics themselves are discussed.

Broadly, I believe this is a result of a shift from generally economic party platforms, which focus on things like the federal deficit and tax rates, to generally cultural party platforms, which concentrate on social issues, like LGBTQ+ rights and immigration. One of the first parties to make this shift was the Democratic Party in America, especially within former President Barack Obama’s successful years. Obama campaigned victoriously on issues like abortion, same sex marriage, and pay equity for women.<sup>1</sup> These cultural issues meant that politics were no longer an analytical decision undertaken every four years on what party provided the greatest personal benefit, but a broader moral decision, the results of which have outsized social ramifications. All this amounted to people taking not only their own political choices more seriously, but the choices of others as well.

*While taking politics seriously is not a problem, the political factionalism it generated en-masse certainly was. This*

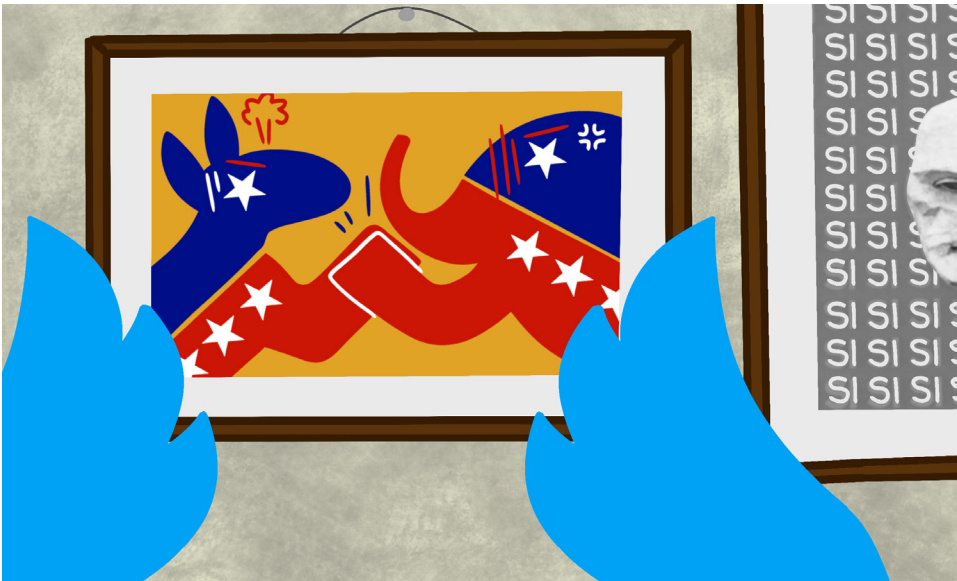


Illustration by Iso Maanad Rodriguez

*political factionalism originated in simple social signifiers.*

As politics became an extremely personal matter, people began distancing themselves from those they disagreed with politically. This progressed into the active “policing” of social relations by society, largely through social media platforms, with the express purpose of filtering out opposing views. This form of policing could be seen at its most extreme during the height of “cancel culture” in 2018. Broadly, this also signified a shift from viewing opposing political views as mere personal differences in ideology to fundamentally invalid dogma.

Naturally, this self-policing was extremely complex, as individuals are almost never diametrically opposed to anyone because politics is not binary. As such policing began adoption en-masse, it was necessarily simplified by public dialogue so that it could be almost formulaically applied to anyone, by anyone.

This simplification gradually began eating away at the political “center” as it categorized many of these people into “the Left” or “the Right” binary, despite their potentially multi-faceted and varied political opinions. In popular discourse, there was no longer a political spectrum, but two definite sides that were wildly opposed to each other.

The polarization of day-to-day political life has granted many opportunities to each respective ideological group. Among them was the ability to codify the long-held sentiment within the deeply politically inebriated that the opposing side was not only wrong, but defective in principle.

This invalidation was ratified by the characterization of the belief that members of the opposing group are inherently evil, and their goals are solely

motivated by malice. This allowed the divide to grow even wider, as it became critical that people were deeply politically invested to assure that they were not part of the “evil” side. This is exemplified by the 2016 Democratic campaign website, which foregoes an easily accessible campaign promise section for a section painting the GOP’s nominee, Donald Trump, as someone who is evil.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, this political investment did not need to be backed by understanding theory, or even agreeing with any theory broadly, but instead could be constituted entirely by lip service.

Treating lip service as political involvement greatly exacerbated political problems. Once political affiliation could be made at the cost of forsaking your own beliefs while taking advantage of a swathe of social benefits, this trend was sure to spread. Whether consciously or not, thousands of people became “leftists” overnight, without ever interacting with any theory critically or making any concerted effort to change the world around them. For them, the choice was not a political one, but a social one.

While this certainly had some positive effects, like the uplifting of certain marginalized communities, these empty promises spelled doom for left-wing cultural parties worldwide. Post-pandemic, as society began to shift away from “cancel culture,” being “leftist” lost its allure for many people. Its social significance faded, taking with it millions who had been committed to the democratic cause by word only.<sup>3</sup>

Somewhat expounding the severity of this shift, and thus the severity of the Democrats’ mistake, was the level of support that Trump commanded after his re-election. He not only won the Presidency, but also the popular vote —two

separate things in the US due to quirks of the electoral system — and currently enjoys a House and Senate majority, giving him an exceptional and rare level of control.

Instead of a slow, natural growth toward increasingly leftist views that seek to reform society, a short boom in left-leaning ideology occurred, immediately followed by a cataclysmic reversal. *If leftist cultural platforms sought long-term societal change that uplifted minority groups while maintaining and reforming social institutions, they failed.*

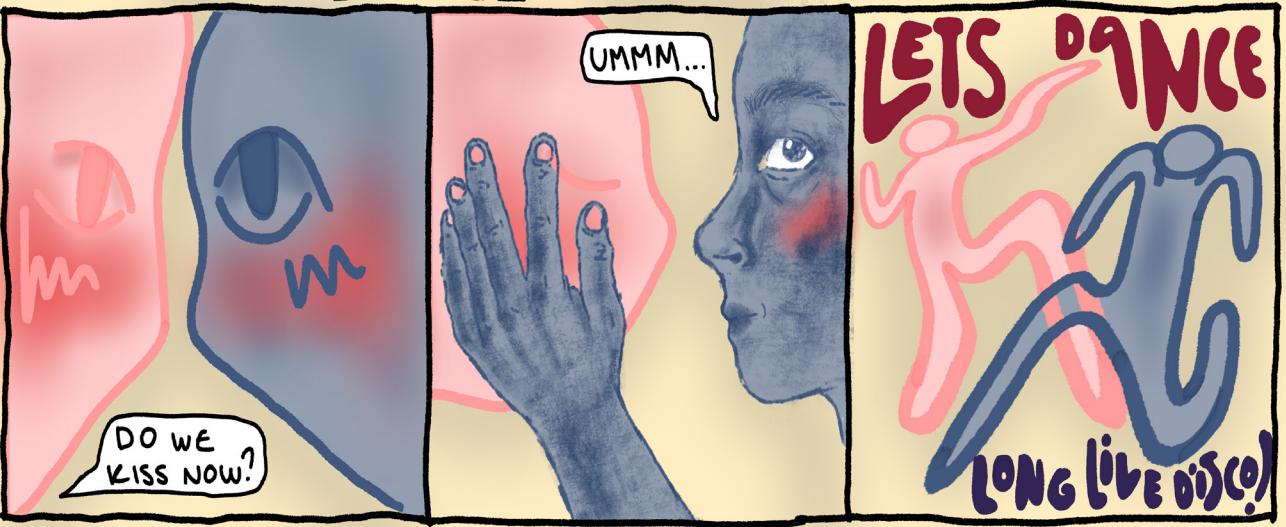
Now, as increasingly extreme right-wing groups vie for power throughout much of the developed world, we can see the Left pinning their failings on the ever-growing share of independents and right-wing voters. For many, this could seem natural; independents represent original thought and political opinions, the opposite of the almost blind adherence to a corporate agenda which characterized so many cultural platforms in the 2000s.

It is here that the root of the supposed “inviability” can be found, but it is best exemplified by the Democratic Party of America. In the Democratic Party, many voters understand that political neutrality is antithetical to their own party, but misunderstand the characteristics of their relationship, and therefore often form false equivalences.

To these party members, their almost archetypical nemesis is the GOP, or Republican party. To them, the GOP represents everything they fight against, almost to a tee. This gives them the impression that they are two great polar forces, tangled in bitter struggle. Instead, they must understand that they are merely two sides of the same coin: a corporate party vying for power.

As such, a false equivalence is born: if independent voters are the antithesis of Democrats, and Republicans are their bitter enemies, then they are equivalent. This faulty logic leads them to misunderstand independents as hopelessly incorrigible individuals who do not understand the power they command. Instead, they could be the future of a truly powerful leftist party grounded in critical thought and understanding, not blind obedience. If Democrats do not understand the characteristics of this paradigm, they will continue to alienate what could be powerful new foundations for their party.

<sup>1</sup> The Democratic Party. (2008, September 25). [https://web.archive.org/web/20080925065911/http://www.democrats.org/a/national/american\\_democracy/civil\\_rights/](https://web.archive.org/web/20080925065911/http://www.democrats.org/a/national/american_democracy/civil_rights/)  
<sup>2</sup> Democrats.org: Change that Matters. (2016, November 15). <https://web.archive.org/web/20161115100318/https://democrats.org/page/fact-check/>  
<sup>3</sup> Inc, G. (2007, September 20). Party Affiliation. Gallup.Com. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/Party-Affiliation.aspx>



Graphic by Iso Maanad Rodriguez

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“Telescope” by Brendan James, Estimated Difficulty: 3/5



# Warning!

## *Do NOT keep your film away from ‘HEAT’: Sports Photography On Film*

CLICKED BY SABHYA ARORA

I learned nine rules of composition when I first picked up a camera: leading lines, frame-within-a-frame, the rule of thirds, and so on. But it was the ninth rule that stayed with me, the one I return to every time I lift the viewfinder to my eye: experimentation.

These photographs come from an afternoon spent capturing the UBCO Heat vs. UCalgary Dinos men’s soccer game. Shot on a Canon AE-1 with a Sunzoom 300mm lens, loaded with Lomography 800 film. In each frame, I chased not just the action, but the unexpected, the small fractures of light, motion, and emotion that reveal themselves only when you are willing to experiment with your art-form.

