NICOLE LALIBERTÉ
CAG Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography

Dr. Laliberté is an exceptional professor who is dedicated to inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, and committed to meaningful pedagogical innovation. Her students refer to her as an "outstanding and generous mentor" who engages them in "inspirational" bouts of learning.

Dr. Laliberté has a wide range of pedagogical strengths, and has designed several new and innovative courses. She has demonstrated particular skill in creating inclusive learning spaces and working collaboratively with her students in crafting unique learning experiences tailored to their interests and abilities. She is committed to feminist anti-oppressive pedagogies informed by a critical ethics of care.

To expand on Dr. Laliberté's extensive background and accomplishments in teaching, we have aligned our comments along four themes: (1) Approach to Teaching, (2) Teaching Effectiveness and Impact, (3) Leadership in Teaching and Learning, and (4) Pedagogical Development and Research.

(1) Approach to Teaching. Dr. Laliberté has taught a broad variety of undergraduate courses in Human Geography with class sizes ranging from twenty to more than 300. Among her course offerings are GGR111 Human Geography, GGR202 Geography of Canada, GGR208 Population Geography, GGR277 Social Research Methods, GGR313 Gender and the City, GGR385 Geographies of Indigenous Identities, co-taught with an Haudenasaunee Elder, JEP356 Environmental Justice, and GGR426 Geographies of Human Rights. Her course designs reflect her teaching philosophy, which is an agency-based, feminist approach for the creation of active learning spaces. It is evident that Dr. Laliberté cultivates connections with students, and emphasizes relationships as central to the development of knowledge.

Dr. Laliberté has a genuine interest in the student learning experience, and invests her time in establishing supports for student learning. She strives to create accessible learning opportunities, as seen through her use of diverse models of student support, ranging from open office hours, to online help forums, to one-on-one formative feedback sessions. She constantly works to improve her teaching by working collaboratively with Educational Developers, other faculty, and her students to imagine, create, and evaluate more effective and engaging learning activities.

Of note, Dr. Laliberté is also involved in supporting students outside of her own classroom. She evaluates internship students in other classes, hosts extracurricular reading and discussion groups on feminist geographies, and assists in student life activities and field trips. In 2015 Dr. Laliberté was the faculty lead on the Waawaahte Indigenous Initiatives field trip which gave students opportunities to learn about Indigenous history and culture. She was also the faculty lead on the co-curricular Global Experience trip to Guatemala in 2014 and 2015.

The Research Opportunity Program (ROP) at UTM is designed to give undergraduate students the opportunity to do original research with faculty members. Dr. Laliberté has taken advantage of this program to support students in their own areas of interest, ranging from critiques of international programs to evaluating Fair Trade programming on campus, to studying

geographic memories of displacement among Palestinians in Jordan. This last project led to a paper that won the AAG GPOW Glenda Law's Student Paper Award in 2016.

In collaboration with Dr. Matthew Adams, Dr. Laliberté used the ROP format to initiate a new research program as part of the 'Geographers without Borders' initiative being developed by multiple Universities in Canada. As part of the inaugural project for this initiative at UTM, Drs. Laliberté and Adams supervised a group of six geography undergraduate students working as collaborative researchers with the Peel Aboriginal Network (PAN). This project ran from September 2018-April 2019 and involved the creation of maps and other types of visual data representations in order to assist PAN in examining existing data and communicating trends in this data. The specific focus of the research was determined through a series of consultations between PAN representatives, the undergraduate students, and the supervising professors. This community-based research project is currently on hold due to COVID restrictions.

(2) Teaching Effectiveness and Impact. The outstanding Student Opinion Survey scores submitted by students taking Dr. Laliberté's courses demonstrate the impact that Dr. Laliberté's teaching practice has on the student experience. The University of Toronto uses a 5-point scale for student evaluations of teaching. Dr. Laliberté has routinely received extremely high scores on these evaluations. For example, for Q3, "Instructor created an atmosphere conduce to my learning" the mean score across all of her courses is greater than 4.4/5. In the past term (Fall 2020), despite the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Laliberté received a mean score of 4.7/5 for the large first year introductory human geography class in response to the question "The instructor created an atmosphere that was conducive to my learning." Of note, the mode score for this question was 5/5, a truly exceptional accomplishment for a large first year class.

The qualitative comments of these student evaluations of teaching illustrate the meaningful impact Dr. Laliberté has had on her students' learning experiences. Students routinely use words such as "inspiring," "passionate," "excellent," "approachable," "engaging," and "phenomenal," to describe Dr. Laliberté. Of note, a student in GGR313 Gender and the City stated, "I found something I was passionate about and explored it. It took everyday social norms and exposed the historical and political and economic factors that contributed to making them so normalized. The instruction was amazing, as a future teacher candidate it was refreshing to see a professor using teaching methods we learn about in our education courses." A student in GGR111 Human Geography stated that Dr. Laliberté "is definitely one of the best instructors I've ever had. Her dedication and passion for the subject matter passed on to me, to the point that my friends and I were walking out of the lecture hall continuing conversation about the topics. As an aspiring teacher, if I can be half the educator that [she] is I will be happy."

Dr. Laliberté is a critically reflective teacher, and routinely conducts midterm surveys and engages in other feedback mechanisms to gain insight into the student experience, and gather information that can inform her course redesign or guide adjustments as necessary. By gathering data on student perspectives of learning, she takes an evidence-based approach to her teaching practice.

(3) Leadership in Teaching and Learning. Dr. Laliberté has demonstrated pedagogical leadership in her department, across her campus, and in the discipline. In her department, she led the curriculum mapping endeavor, working to align learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments and to guide program design using an outcomes-based approach. She also created and implemented a 'TAs for TAs' peer mentoring program to encourage graduate students to

support one another's teaching by learning how to give and receive formative feedback. Finally, she has been a leader in the department's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action through the creation of a course co-taught with Elder Cat Criger.

In terms of leadership on campus, Dr. Laliberté worked with the Women and Gender Studies Program to establish the 'Feminist Lunch Hour Speakers Series' that has, for the last seven years, provided a space for feminist community to grow outside of the classroom. Scholars and activists are invited to come, present, and engage with students, staff, and faculty during these lunch time gatherings. Dr. Laliberté was also a member of the Dean's Office Indigenous Initiatives Task Force and is currently a member of the Indigenous Action Group (IAG). The overall goal of the IAG at UTM is to establish an Indigenous and settler alliance of solidarity between local educational institutions and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation community (MCFN). The Indigenous Action Group is establishing the foundation for sustained presence and recognized decision-making of the MCFN, as a local Indigenous community at the University of Toronto Mississauga, on the post-secondary education of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The initial focus of this partnership has been the design, implementation, and evaluation of ANT241H: Anthropology and Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island in Canada. Dr. Laliberté is responsible for leading the research arm of this project, working with a team of graduate and undergraduate students to evaluate student learning and the role of relationships in this innovative educational project of reconciliation.

Within the discipline, Dr. Laliberté has contributed to pedagogical leadership by co-organizing *Controversy and Feminist Pedagogy: A Geography Workshop* with Dr. Alison Bain from York University in 2018. In the summer of 2017, they received a $24,217 Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections Grant for this workshop and raised over $17,000 in matching funds from York University, UTM, and *AMCE: An International Journal of Critical Geographies*. This workshop brought together 20 feminist geography scholars from across Canada and the United States. Participants were at different career stages, ranging from graduate students to senior academics, and represent socially diverse perspectives and experiences. They invited Indigenous, racialized, and queer scholars to decentre the whiteness and heteronormativity of the discipline and to make space for collective mentorship and knowledge production in relation to anti-oppression pedagogies.

(4) Pedagogical Development and Research. Dr. Laliberté has published and presented extensively on her teaching and learning work. In 2019, Dr. Laliberté presented at the *American Association of Geographers* (AAG) conference on work she developed collaboratively with students – one about teaching about human rights and the other about community-based research and learning. Other examples include her work at the 2015 AAG conference as a panelist discussing emotion and mental health in academia, as well as presentations at the annual teaching and learning conference with the *Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*'s annual conference, and the biannual Western Conference on Science Education. A panel she co-organized at the 2014 CAG conference on teaching the Geographies of Canada led to a publication in The Canadian Geographer that is now being used as a teaching resource for teacher training at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

As part of her commitment to collective knowledge production and feminist mentoring, Dr. Laliberté has written multiple papers with undergraduate and graduate students. These papers span topics covering the emotional politics of global citizenship in study abroad programming, urban geopolitics and displaced persons camps, and feminist geographic perspectives on

mentorship. In addition, Dr. Laliberté has worked with faculty at other institutions to produce a variety of publications exploring the politics of feminist pedagogy and mentorship in contemporary North American academia.

In addition, Dr. Laliberté, has been successful in securing grants for teaching innovation and development work. For example, in 2020, she was the co-PI on a $148,000 grant focused on teaching students to embrace, learn from, and bounce back from failure. Through this grant Dr. Laliberté has supervised two post-doctoral fellows and a team of 14 undergraduate student researchers to interview secondary school teachers, undergraduate students, and UTM faculty on their experiences related to failure in the learning process.

In summary, Dr. Laliberté is a critically reflective and impactful instructor who excels at cultivating an inclusive learning space for her students. She personifies excellence and inclusion, and demonstrates excellence in teaching as seen through her pedagogical innovations, outstanding approach to classroom instruction, and dedicated mentorship of students. Dr. Laliberté is incredibly deserving of the Canadian Association of Geographers Award for Excellence in Teaching Geography.