

## **2022 Hessian Merit Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Sessional Instructor**

*Heather Barnick (Sociology and Anthropology)*

Presented by: Amy MacFarlane

In the words of one student, “Heather has proven no student is unteachable”.

As a sessional instructor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for the past 4 ½ years, Heather Barnick’s breadth of knowledge has in the words of a colleague been “crucial to holding together the department.” Described as ethical, respectful, intellectually exciting, and accessible to students, Heather does not shy away from bringing the complexities of inequities and injustice into her classroom. Furthermore, she is committed to and invested in decolonizing the curriculum in her discipline.

Heather’s self-described teaching philosophy includes “approaching the classroom as a collaborative and imaginative space and encouraging students’ critical thinking and curiosity”. Based on student feedback, Heather achieves this and more. Students describe Heather as a warm, enthusiastic, and engaging instructor who cares deeply about her students. Through high standards, innovative teaching techniques and creative assignments, she motivates and encourages students to be successful. One student shared, “believe it or not, you will always want to be in Heather’s class. You would never want to miss out on anything” while another student wrote ““I purposefully take courses when I see she is teaching them.”

In Heather’s submission for this award, she noted that she has been looking for ways to build bridges between university education and the wider community. To this end, she was the successful recipient this year of an Experiential Learning Initiative Grant to support a student-organized symposium on the topic of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images. This online panel discussion took place in late April. Heather is committed to making an impact outside the classroom as well as within.

Heather describes “the classroom as a space of possibility because it offers rare opportunities to keep alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and being alive.” It is evident that students appreciate and benefit from Heather’s effort to create such a space.

In the words of her Department Chair, UPEI is “fortunate to have this truly beautiful human being and brilliant teacher on this campus.” I am honoured to present the prestigious Hessian Merit Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Sessional Instructor to Ms. Heather Barnick.