



THE INSTRUCTOR

Spring 2019

Welcome Message

Karen Harper, Communications Officer

Hello CUPE 3912 members! This newsletter features our ongoing events and concerns, plus some new faces and ideas. We have held a few more workshops this past year including panel discussions for Fair Employment Week in October and a live-streamed online teaching workshop in March. This newsletter has articles on precedence, shared governance, Mayworks, scholarship opportunities for your kids, retirement and more. You can also read the bios of our new staff and executive members.

If you are interesting in being part of the executive, we will be holding elections for half of our executive members (elected for 2-year terms) at our upcoming Annual General Meeting, where we will also discuss and vote on other important issues (e.g., the CAUT defense fund – see my article). We are also planning more pub nights and the annual family picnic.

See you at the AGM!
Karen Harper

Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Upcoming Events.....	1
What is retirement for part-time instructors?	2
CAUT Defense Fund	3
Shared Governance.....	4
New Faces	4
What is precedence?	6
Student Evaluations	8
Life Hacks for Online Teaching	8
Opportunities	9
Mayworks Halifax.....	9
AGM Poster	10
Fair Employment Week .	11

Upcoming Events

Annual General Meeting: Please join us at our AGM on **Tuesday, April 16th, 3:00pm** in the **Private Dining Room in Loyola Building at SMU** (poster on page 10). This meeting is particularly important as we will be holding elections.

Pub Nights: We continue to have monthly or bi-monthly pub nights. Come join us for some food and drink courtesy of CUPE 3912! Next pub night is **Wednesday, April 10th, 4:30pm at Vinnie's, MSVU**. Come celebrate the end of classes!

Did You Know?

As a member of CUPE 3912, you or your child can apply for a **bursary or scholarship for attending university, trade school or community college** from CUPE NS or the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour (NSFL).

Applications for the **NSFL** are due July 12; see <http://nslabour.ca/for-union-members/education/workplace-education/bursaries/> for more information.

This year's **CUPE NS** awards have already been announced by email and had a deadline of March 15 (see <https://novascotia.cupe.ca/2019/01/24/check-your-mailbox-for-cupe-ns-awards-scholarships-and-bursary-applications/>).

“We must find out how we can try to do a small change and do it.”

- Annette Henry,
Recipient of the CAUT 2018 Equity Award

What is Retirement for Part-Time Instructors?

Celebrating Retiring Part-Time Instructors like Gwyneth Jones

I once mentioned looking ahead to retirement to someone who replied, “*what would you retire from?*” because my career is variable with teaching 0-4 courses per year. The concept of retirement from a regular tenured professor position is straightforward. Once the university convinces a full-timer to leave with a generous retirement package (which I assume means lots of money), he/she agrees, they throw a party to celebrate, then the full-timer takes a year to clear out their office and finish supervising students. After that, some retired full-timers then join our ranks and teach some courses.

For us part-time instructors, we may decide not to apply to teach any more courses, or perhaps we are no longer hired and eventually give up trying. We are probably already kicked out of our office or we quietly disappear, and we certainly don't get any retirement package. But when especially our long-standing CUPE 3912 members decide to stop teaching after a successful career (at least in terms of teaching quantity and quality, definitely not money), I think their contribution to their university, their profession and especially to their students should be celebrated.

One of our members who is about to retire (probably) is **Gwyneth Jones**. She plans to retire after this semester. Gwyneth has been teaching in the Biology Department at Saint Mary's University since 1988. She has taught



too many different courses to keep track and has accumulated over 65 FCE precedence points. She is a well-respected instructor to whom many more junior instructors go to for advice. She has also conducted research and been on the Animal Care Committee at Saint Mary's. She contributed to an assessment of the Atlantic Mud-piddock, a threatened marine bivalve, for the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

On behalf of Biology part-time instructors and CUPE 3912, I wish her relaxation and enjoyment on her farm in her retirement!

Photo caption (left): Gwyneth Jones working on her farm

Who Else is Retiring???

CUPE 3912 would like to celebrate the retirement of any its members who are retiring this year at a future pub night.

Since it is difficult or impossible for us to know who they are, please email Karen Harper at communications.cupe3912@gmail.com if you know someone who is retiring.

CAUT Defense Fund

By Karen Harper, Communications Officer

At the upcoming CUPE 3912 AGM, I plan to put forward a motion that CUPE 3912 joins the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Defense Fund. The CAUT Defense Fund is like insurance. We contribute to the fund (we can even decide how much) and if we go on strike, we get benefits such as strike pay. As a CUPE local, we can still contribute to the CAUT Defense Fund and we would get strike pay

"if we go on strike, we get benefits such as strike pay"

from both CUPE and the Defense Fund. There are other benefits too such as financial assistance to member unions to cover costs of mediation and arbitration, lobbying to generate enhanced media coverage and sending visitors from member unions to join a strike. Here more about it at the AGM or check out <https://defencefund.caut.ca/>.

Shared Governance

By Karen Harper, Communications Officer and Delegate for CAUT Council

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is starting a campaign on SHARED GOVERNANCE.

Check out the video:

<https://www.caut.ca/campaigns/shared-governance>

From the CAUT website: “For decades, shared governance has been at the heart of how universities run. In fact, university boards are typically mandated by law to include relevant stakeholders (academic staff, administrators, students and members of the public) in their decision-making process.



But shared governance is under attack.

University and college boards are increasingly controlled by corporate



appointees with little understanding of important academic matters. Decision-making powers are concentrated in the hands of a few – who act behind closed doors – while the voices of academic staff and other key stakeholders are being weakened or silenced.

It shouldn't be this way. Academic staff, speak up and be heard!"

Of course, the situation for part-time instructors is even worse. CUPE 3912 continues to seek shared governance for our members at our universities. In May I will attend an information session at CAUT Council on 'Governance Matters' to find out how CUPE 3912 can better advance collegial governance in universities and colleges.

New Faces in CUPE 3912

Welcoming Janet Fu, Subin R. Cheri, Elissama De Oliveira Menezes and Ivan Okello

Janet Fu

Treasurer, CUPE 3912



I am a part-time faculty member at Mount Saint Vincent University. Prior to joining Mount, I have been teaching at multiple university in Canada for

over two decades. As a researcher, I have published much of my works. As a faculty, I have been lecturing abundant courses, supervising gradates, undergraduates, teaching assistants, and internship students.

Other than my academic works, I also worked at an accounting firm for years. In addition to that, I also worked at multiple

Canada Government agencies for a while. Those experiences prepare me well to take this role as a treasurer of CUPE 3912. I look forward to working with you.

Subin R. Cheri Kunnumal Rajendran
VP for TAs on Studley Campus at Dal,
CUPE 3912
 PhD student, Dept. of Chemistry (Dal)



I have been a teaching assistant at Dalhousie University for the last three years. I teach analytical chemistry and my research revolves around bioproduct development. I am passionate about issues related to graduate students and teaching assistants.

Elissama De Oliveira Menezes
Database Developer, CUPE 3912



I am an international master candidate in the Marine Management Program at Dalhousie who is interested in ocean, science, interdisciplinarity, communication, and technology. My academic background is in Oceanography which I studied part in Brazil, where I am from, and part in New York City through a scholarship by the Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program.

My most remarkable academic experience was an internship at the University of Manoa,

Hawaii conducting a biomonitoring study. I have also worked for Greenpeace in their vessel Rainbow Warrior. I have worked as a Teaching Assistant and Marker at Dalhousie University in three courses and I enjoy very much the experience of sharing and acquiring knowledge in the learning process. I am very curious and interested in the ways that technology can facilitate daily tasks and improve processes and that is what I hope to bring to CUPE 3912 as a database developer. My work consists of developing a user-friendly system for managing membership contact information allowing easy access to statistical membership data. I am currently accessing Excel files with the data from the different institutions and analyzing how I can standardize the different data framework. I hope my work will provide CUPE 3912 with a systematic tool to manage its database that better represents its members.

Ivan Okello
TA Organizer, CUPE 3912



Ivan is a recent graduate of the International Development Studies program at Dalhousie. He originally moved from Uganda to Halifax and enjoys learning about new cultures. He currently works as a TA at Dalhousie with an interest in Gender studies, Development debates in African contexts and hopes to transition into a teaching career.

What is Precedence?

By Carmel Forde, VP Dalhousie Part-Time Instructors

What is Precedence?

Precedence is like “seniority”, and is treated as such at each of the universities: Dalhousie, Saint Mary’s, and Mount Saint Vincent. If you have precedence you must be considered for work at the universities, in order of precedence. If Jo has 15 courses at Dal, Sam has 13, and Anand has 10, and all apply, and each is qualified to teach ENGL 1000, then Jo is going to be offered the coursework first. If Jo turns it down, the next person in line will be Sam, and if Sam turns it down, Anand will be offered the course. Familiarizing yourself with the Collective Agreements at the universities at which you work is really helpful to understanding your rights and duties. Precedence is a status and once acquired, it provides the possibility of challenging issues of unjust hiring practices in a given department. Note that qualifications may override precedence in determining hiring only when two members have equal precedence.

Teaching as a Grad Student

“But I’ve taught several courses at Dal already, as a grad student, and I still don’t have precedence!!!”

Suppose you do a PhD in the English department at Dal. During the course of

your degree, according to Article 14.12b as a doctoral student one is entitled to up to twelve (12) credit hours of Part-Time Academic teaching during their doctoral program at Dalhousie University. But the article goes on to say “*precedence shall not*

be credited for any Part-Time Academic appointments under Article 14.12(b).” This means that the courses which you teach as a grad student that fall under 14.12(b) do not count toward precedence. You could, then, teach several courses and not have precedence, since those courses were not in the ordinary competition for work, but within an “excluded category” in the collective agreement.

Acquiring Precedence

“I’ve been teaching for years at Dal, and I don’t appear on the precedence list!” It is quite possible to teach a class each year for 20 years, and still not be on a precedence list. In the Dal collective agreement, Article 16 covers probation, precedence and priority.

Acquiring precedence is not automatic. At each university there is a probationary period, often a period of approximately two years, during which an instructor must teach at least several courses successfully, and then one might acquire precedence at that university. However, if, for example, one teaches at Dalhousie every year, but only 1 class (.3) at the same time of year, precedence cannot be acquired as there will be insufficient courses within a two-year period.

“Contract faculty accrue precedence at each university separately”

Contract faculty accrue precedence at each university separately –

so no matter how long you have worked at SMU, if this is your first course at Dalhousie, you will start from a point where you haven’t got precedence, and work to acquire it. Each university has similar, but not identical, criteria by which one acquires precedence.

Precedence is held throughout the university in which it is acquired, meaning that it is not limited to the department in which one most frequently teaches. Suppose you teach philosophy, gender and women's studies, and political science. Over the years, all of those teaching assignments accrue into one number that represents your precedence points.

Each university has separate requirements for establishing precedence for a member. In the collective agreement it is phrased in this way:



"A new Part-Time Academic shall be on probation until they have taught Part-Time Academic work assignments equivalent to nine (9) credit hours extending over at least two academic years."

Procedures governing precedence differ at each institution, so members should always check their institution's collective agreement first. At MSVU, though, one must teach 4 half courses (or 12 credit hours) in a period of two years to acquire precedence.

How do I Know my Precedence Status?

If you have taught at Dal, SMU, or MSVU in a particular department, the department in question (and human resources) tracks the work done by you. If a department chooses to hire you to teach three courses over a period of two years then you can acquire precedence at Dal.

Over the years at CUPE 3912, the executive members have successfully fought unjust hiring patterns in quite a few departments, and gained money and points of precedence for various members who were passed over when they actually had precedence.

Members can check their status at the following link:

<https://3912.cupe.ca/rights-and-protection/precedence/precedence-lists/>

Precedence and How it Affects Pay

At each of the three universities there is a graduated rate of pay that correlates to the amount of precedence points one accrues over the years of teaching assignments, until one reaches the cap for that scale. At Dal,

stipend changes happen at 8 half-credit courses, and at 20, at which point one reaches the top of the scale.

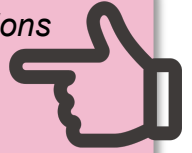
"If one does not teach for three years following the last course assignment, one can lose one's position in the precedence listing"

Losing Precedence

If one does not teach for three years following the last course assignment, one can lose one's position in the precedence list. There are other mechanisms by which the administrations at the various universities can also dismiss a member, even if they do have precedence. Check out the articles on discipline and discharge in the collective agreements. At Dalhousie, e.g., the collective agreement covers discipline and discharge in article 13.

Don't like student evaluations? Think they might be biased?

Check out the report of the *Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA)* on student questionnaires: <https://ocufa.on.ca/assets/OCUFA-SQCT-Report.pdf>



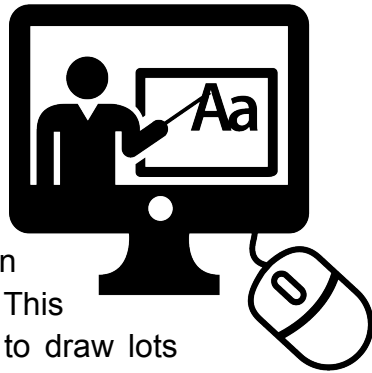
Some highlights from OCUFA's report:

- ✓ student questionnaire scores fail to accurately reflect teaching quality;
- ✓ student questionnaire results are skewed by many factors outside an instructor's control, including class size, time, subject, and the professor's race, gender, or accent;
- ✓ results are not suitable for determining faculty pay, promotion, tenure, or contract renewal;
- ✓ current practices facilitate the harassment of faculty, compromise educational quality and are not an appropriate metric for determining university funding

Life Hacks for Online Teaching workshop

By Shiva Nourpanah and Bonita Squires

Life Hacks for Online Teaching: How to Make it Work for You was the first (but hopefully not the last!) event of its kind run by CUPE 3912. We've put a lot of thought and energy into coming up with topics and ideas for events that would be relevant, engaging, useful and accessible to our 3000+ members, many of whom are in different provinces. This particular topic seemed to draw lots of interest and suggest this is an important topic to address again. Learning the new-to-us technology of livestreaming an event was certainly a challenge which we tried to overcome by many hours of practice. Despite the technical hiccups that still occurred on the big day, *Life Hacks for Online Teaching* received a higher turnout than many other CUPE 3912 talks, which together with the positive and warm feedback we received, will



encourage us to run another workshop/roundtable discussion in the near future on this important topic.

Here are some things we learned from the experience:

- ✓ We are all teachers, and we want to discuss teaching and learn from each other. A roundtable event format where participants come to engage in pedagogical discussion is called for.
- ✓ Collaboration with other faculty and department groups can be fruitful, and may even result in our message reaching a broader audience.
- ✓ No matter your experience, through collegial discussion, you never know when you might stumble across an idea for your teaching which leads to an "aha!" moment. For example, in our question-answer period after the talk, I learned about third-party assessments for cases of suspected plagiarism, which I had not known about beforehand.

Opportunities to Get Involved

By Karen Harper, *Communications Officer, CUPE 3912*

Join Us in Making Plans for Action

There will be a federal election this year and I would like to see CUPE 3912 put university funding on the agenda. More funding for universities would help students and instructors alike. What can we do? Meet our MPs (and also MLAs)? Join with other faculty unions to strengthen our voice? Promote the CUPE Post Secondary Education 'Our Time to Act' campaign? Bring your ideas to our AGM (or email communications.cupe3912@gmail.com) and we'll discuss a plan for action.

Attend Labour Movement Events

Are you interested in attending the CUPE NS Convention? or the CLC Labour Education School? If so, let me know by email (communications.cupe3912@gmail.com).

If there is interest, we can vote on sending members to these events at our AGM.

Join Other Labour Organizations

The Halifax Labour Council is often looking for committee members and there is a 2019 Call for Committees from the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour. Nomination letters will be received for: Anti-Racism/Human Rights Committee; Committee on Political Action; Education Committee; International Solidarity Committee; Occupational Health and Safety/Workers' Compensation Committee, and Young Workers' Committee (35 years old and younger). All letters of nomination are to be submitted from affiliated organizations and not the individual person. Please contact me by email (communications.cupe3912@gmail.com) if you are interested.

Mayworks Halifax Celebrates 10 Years!

By Sébastien Labelle

Ten years ago, the Mayworks Halifax Festival of Working People and the Arts began as a modest project. A single cultural event to mark International Workers' Day, otherwise known as May Day. Since then, the festival has grown into Nova Scotia's largest social justice themed arts festival with an extensive curated series of performances, panels and exhibits. With its 10th anniversary program in 2019, the festival is setting course for its largest program yet featuring an entire month of cultural activities. Scheduled events include a choir performance of protest songs, a panel on the working conditions of film animators, commemorations of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, interdisciplinary performances about climate change, a play about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, film screenings, music concerts and more. The festival runs May 1st to June 1st in multiple Halifax venues. A full program of events and online ticket sales can be found at www.mayworkshalifax.ca.



Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, April 16th
3:00 PM

Loyola Private Dining Room (L298)
Saint Mary's University

All members are welcome!

We will be holding elections for the following positions:

- VP - Dal Truro Campus
- VP - Teaching Assistant at Dal Studley Campus
- VP - Part-time Instructors at MSVU
- VP - Instructors at The Language Centre at SMU
- Secretary - Treasurer
- Communications Officer
- President

If you are interested in standing for election for any of these positions, please contact us.



Fair Employment Week - October 2018



We had two successful panel discussions at the Central Library on *How Networking Can Help Us “Make It Fair”* and *Promoting Research Opportunities for Contract Academic Staff*. Thanks to all speakers especially guests Suzanne MacNeil from the Halifax Labour Council and Adam Sarty from Saint Mary’s University, and to Teresa Workman from ANSUT for help with organizing the events.

Photo caption: Karen Harper presents “Promoting Research Opportunities for Contract Academic Staff”



Who are the ~3,000 members of CUPE local 3912?

- part-time faculty at Dalhousie, Saint Mary’s and Mount Saint Vincent Universities, including clinical instructors and lab demonstrators
- teaching assistants and markers/demonstrators at Dalhousie University
- instructors at the TESL Centre at Saint Mary’s University

CUPE 3912

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