

The logo for OCUFA, consisting of the letters 'OCUFA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background behind the text is a dark blue geometric shape that tapers to the right. The overall page background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of green, teal, and dark blue.

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations  
Union des associations des professeurs des universités de l'Ontario

# **2020-2021 OCUFA Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards**

Citation for Dr. Dragana Obradovic



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## **Citation for Dr. Dragana Obradovic**

*Prepared by Kayla Weiler, Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario*

The OCUFA Teaching Excellence Award committee is offering a 2020-2021 award to Professor Dragana Obradović for her excellence of content creation, course delivery and dedication to students. Professor Obradović is exemplary in teaching multiple languages and cultural studies, where her vibrance and creativity create a classroom that is welcoming, thought-provoking, and engaging.

Professor Obradović excels in her course development and material creation, and has been fundamental in restructuring the Department of Slavic Studies to better reflect language pedagogy and the ethno-national, political, and social changes to the post-Yugoslavia region. Dragana has taught and developed nine exceptional undergraduate courses. Her approach to teaching involves cross-cultural nuances in a wider context, rather than solely within the narrow framework of the politics of the 1990s. She has moved to modernize the pedagogic principles of the study of South Slavic languages which is reflected in her work on course redevelopment. Her focus is to better reflect the region and geopolitics, but also provide an intellectually stimulating learning environment that encourages critical thinking.

Due to the national politics of the South Slavic region, there are no current textbooks that teach all three languages of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian (BCS). Professor Obradović singlehandedly designs the materials for all levels of study (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) with ingenuity and careful political consideration. She includes cultural devices using cinema, literature, and diaspora radio to navigate learning outcomes in the courses, and provides nuanced content in the textbook materials that reflects the political context of the three languages. Her materials specifically developed for the study of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are used at other universities in North America as textbooks and course packs. By using student feedback and incorporating it into ongoing review of courses, Dragana added more content about LGBTQA+ and Roma people, as well as locating more translated material written by women. Her course development is ongoing and informed by her own academic research as well as valuable student feedback.

Throughout the letters of recommendation, students expressed how Obradović's classes are not just enjoyable, but help students critically think about their world view and develop skills in an interdisciplinary way. A former student, Maya Blumenthal mentions, "Professor Obradović works incredibly hard to make sure her classroom is an inviting and friendly space. Both classes I took with her included students from a variety of disciplines, even though they were niche topics (which speaks to Professor Obradović's reputation)." By listening and connecting with each student, Obradović has successfully created a classroom environment that is welcoming to students from different disciplines and students new to South Slavic studies.

Obradović's teaching style fosters an intellectually stimulating classroom environment that connects the study of the structure of language, such as grammar fundamentals, to the social and political uses of languages, such as (including gendered language and the social-political aspects of gender). Her courses begin with reading assignments and build up towards longer essays. Students have greatly benefitted from her insight on essay topics and collaboration with students to find challenging and stimulating topics that explore students' interests.

Professor Obradović also provides excellent training to the teaching assistants for her courses, encourages professional development, and cultivates intellectual and personal support for her students. Obradović inspires students to continue their studies and provides informal supervision for undergrads on grad school applications or personal research, which is uncommon at the undergraduate level. She has also provided assistance to organize study abroad semesters to former Yugoslavia countries and Eastern Europe for experiential and immersion learning opportunities.

Testimonials from Professor Obradović's colleagues speak to her active commitment to student engagement and critical thinking. They expressed their admiration for Dragana's commitment to interdisciplinary and unique learning styles within the reconstruction of the Department of Slavic Studies and reimagining course content/structure. In reference to the study abroad semesters and research trips to Serbia and Macedonian; "Obradović created unique opportunities for students to engage in real ways with the countries we study. The classroom is not isolated from the contemporary issues faced by these countries"

Professor Obradović has excelled at course development and content creation, all with the student and their learning at the core of her work. She opens pathways for interdisciplinary ways of learning and invites her students to explore these pathways with her—it is inspiring to see such dedication to student development and achievement.

The OCUFA Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards Committee concurs and is pleased to present a 2020-2021 Teaching Award to Professor Dragana Obradović. Congratulations!