

## PROGRAM



## COCAL GATINEAU (QUEBEC) 2024

When: August 8-9, 2024

Where: Gatineau, Quebec

### Context

The Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour (COCAL) is a network of North American union activists who have worked for over 30 years to defend higher education rights and improve work conditions for contingent academic labour. Bringing together activists from numerous unions across the United States, Mexico, English Canada and Quebec, COCAL promotes the sharing of information and strategies to strengthen our capacity for action.

The XV<sup>th</sup> COCAL conference's aim is to focus on the many threats to contingent academic labour and the means we can use to mobilize against them. These threats, derived directly from the commodification of knowledge, threaten our work conditions, our representation in universities, colleges and community colleges, our academic freedom, our research potential and community service, and even our profession. In fact, these obstacles experienced by lecturers are rooted in a higher education system eroded by capitalist and managerial values that contribute to reinforcing precariousness rather than combating it. This capitalist values system also has repercussions on collegiality and academic freedom, essential rights that have been undermined in many universities and colleges across numerous countries in recent years.

To reverse this trend, collective action remains our most formidable tool for bringing about the changes needed to support free, egalitarian and pluralistic education. Through a variety of themes, COCAL attendees will be invited to exchange and debate ideas and positions that could form the core of a manifesto drafted by the delegates or contribute to the organization of a North American Day of struggle and mobilization.

**THURSDAY AUGUST 8, 2024**

**9:30 to 10:45**

**OPENING OF THE XV<sup>th</sup> COCAL CONFERENCE IN GATINEAU - Welcome**

**Grande salle - C0072**

**From the organising committee (9:30 to 9:50):**

- ❖ Vice President of FNEEQ-CSN - Christine Gauthier
- ❖ Chair of CAUT - Nick Papatheodorakos
- ❖ President of SCCC-UQO - Marie-Josée Bourget

**From the invitees (9:50 to 10:45):**

- ❖ President of COCAL International - Glynnis Lieb
- ❖ Provost of UQO - Murielle Laberge
- ❖ President of CSN - Caroline Senneville
- ❖ President of CCSNO-CSN - Alfonso Ibarra Ramirez
- ❖ COCAL Representative for Mexico - Bertha Rodríguez
- ❖ COCAL Representative for the United States - Chris Cox

**[BREAK: 10:45 to 11:05]**

**11:05 to 15:30**

**THEME 1 - Collegiality, academic freedom and the political voice of contract teaching staff at universities: putting an end to sidelining**

Several important questions lay at the heart of this theme. For example, what are the main obstacles to the political participation of university lecturers? How can governance mechanisms support or hinder lecturer engagement (e.g. authoritarian governance, sidelining lecturers' political voice)? How can we better protect freedom of expression and academic freedom in the university for contract workers? How does being a non-permanent group have particular implications for democracy and power within universities? What are recent examples of abuse of power by governments and management in higher education with regard to precarious university staff?

**11:05 to 12:30**

**CONFERENCE: Open access and self-management: countering from within the capitalist dismantling of the contemporary university**

**Grande salle - C0072**

- ❖ By Dalie Giroux, essayist, labour activist and professor at the University of Ottawa

**Summary:** The growing insecurity of academic employment is one of the most fundamental and long-standing aspects of the neo-liberalization of the university. By its very definition, this process is a direct attack on the university's historic mission. This presentation will discuss (1) the different forms that this process of neo-liberalization is taking today, (2) the meaning and contemporaneity of the historic university mission, and (3) the radical demands for open access and self-management that are the pillars of concrete collective action to ensure the continuation of this mission.

Followed by a **PLENARY SESSION**

**Facilitator:** Marianne Di Croce, lecturer at Département de philosophie de l'UQAM and philosophy professor at Cégep de Saint-Jérôme

**[LUNCH: 12:30 to 2:00]**

**Lunch and Learn with Joe Berry and Helena Worthen**

**Grande salle - C0072**

*"Why the Contingent Faculty Movement needs a Broader Higher Ed Labour Movement: Historic challenges to academic freedom"*

**2:00 to 3:30**

**PRESENTATIONS: recent news on democracy and abuse of power in universities**

**Grande salle - C0072**

**Presenters:**

- ❖ Mexico : Yuri Jiménez, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN), and Arturo Ramos, COCAL México:  
*"Academic labour and power structures in Mexico: The case of UPN"*

- ❖ Québec : Benoît Lacoursière, President of the Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN):  
"Political economy of academic freedom: when a law isn't enough"
- ❖ Québec: Robert Soroka, President, Concordia University Part-time Faculty Association (CUPFA):  
"Best practices to help your union wield influence while becoming more contributory to your university's community"
- ❖ United States: Chris Cox, Associate Vice President, Racial And Social Justice, North, California Faculty Association (CFA):  
"Precarity and Power in Tumultuous Times: Higher Education Labor Organizing in the US"
- ❖ Canada: Kristine Smitka, Vice President of the Association of Academic Staff University of Alberta (AASUA):  
"The Second Tier of Precarity"

**[BREAK : 3:30 to 3:50]**

**3:50 to 5:30**

## **THEME 2: Enriching Rather than Fragmenting the Work of Contingent Academic Labour: Analysis and Solutions**

Based on this broad theme, which has a direct bearing on the work and recognition of contingent academic labour, this workshop will consider various solutions for enriching and recognizing of the work, as well as a discussion on how to obtain better work conditions to support their integration within the higher education community. Between the hardships experienced and the untapped potential, it seems increasingly necessary to review their place at university and college.

At the end of the following five workshops, the large-group plenary session will provide an opportunity for delegates to take a variety of positions that will highlight the real work of contingent academic labour.

### **Workshops**

#### **Different rooms**

#### **Workshop 1 - Precarious Intellectuals Rather than Teaching Professionals**

##### **Room A0108**

Contingent academic labour or lecturers are confined to the role of "teaching professionals" available on demand, and this stigma represents a problem for

their recognition and longer-term integration into the higher education community as faculty. So how can we break down this siloed view of contract lecturers' contribution to the institutions? How can we achieve greater recognition of their role as intellectuals who can and must contribute to scientific and political debates at university? How can we reverse the managerial discourse and highlight the real condition of these people and the social and professional losses associated with it (e.g. lack of consideration for scientific expertise; dismissal of points of view in decision-making)? What are the threats to the higher education teaching profession, especially for those on contract?

- ❖ Juan Barajas, FES Acatlán UNAM, and María de los Ángeles San Roman, FES Cuautitlán UNAM:  
*"The multi-work of the new generations of academics"*
- ❖ Teresa Ruiz, UAQ:  
*"The multiple forms of academic precariousness and adaptation to change"*
- ❖ Elizabeth Pérez, FES Acatlán UNAM:  
*"Continuing education for women teachers. Diversifying knowledge to broaden academic horizons."*
- ❖ Sarika Bose, University of British Columbia Contract Faculty Committee (UBCFA):  
*"Recognizing the Work of Contract Academics in the Current Academic Climate"*
- ❖ Maude Chartier-Desjardins, Association québécoise pour l'équité et l'inclusion (AQEIPS):  
*« University professionals' experience of the challenges they face, as well as their expertise, to contribute to the development of inclusive policies, giving them a place at the heart of the debate»*

## **Workshop 2 - Research Ambitions and Potential for Contingent academic labour: A Reality that Exists!**

### **Room A0110**

The way contingent faculty work is organized at the university means that there is a great deal of invisible work, the contributions of which are not always fully recognized. The same applies to graduate student work as contingent academic staff.

The involvement of contingent academic labour in research is most often fragmented and unpaid scientific activities (e.g. writing scientific articles, acting as research chair, revising articles or chapters). What is the state of research for them?

How can we support their commitment to research? What are the most promising political demands to ensure the development of their expertise and careers as scientists? What is the state of negotiated working conditions in this area?

- ❖ Nathalie Blanchet et Olivier Aubry, SPPEUQAM:  
*"Research and creation as contract instructors, the example of UQAM"*
- ❖ Karen Harper, Saint Mary's University:  
*"Research potential for contingent faculty: How to make ambition become reality in Canada"*
- ❖ Lorenza Rosa Manoatl, Cocal México:  
*"Retiring as part-time professors with no recognition for the work of research, tutoring and thesis direction. The struggle for a decent pension and the need to continue looking for part-time work"*

### **Workshop 3 - Precariousness in Higher Education and its Impact on Health and Trajectories**

#### **Room A0111**

Intellectual work that is limited to fixed-term contracts can pose a risk to psychological health in the workplace. Given that intellectual work requires a significant investment of time, much of it unpaid, invisible and unrecognized, it's not surprising to observe long-term negative impacts on the health of people with precarious status. As such, what recent union surveys or scientific research have brought to light these insights on precariousness and health in academia, and what do they teach us? What are the consequences of deteriorating working conditions in teaching and research for people with precarious status? What are the health risks for contingent academic labour who make a long-term commitment to their institution? What is the impact on their professional trajectories? What are the main psychosocial issues that need to be addressed to support the health of these academic faculty in the workplace? What are the solutions in terms of occupational health and safety? What are the responsibilities of our employers, universities, colleges and community colleges?

- ❖ Bertha Rodríguez, Secretaria General, President of AAPAUNAM:  
*"Union bargaining from the perspective of women's leadership"*
- ❖ Billy Flores-Medero, Facultad de Ingeniería UNAM:  
*"Abuses of administrative power to influence academic trajectories"*
- ❖ Christine Gauthier, Vice President of FNEEQ-CSN:  
*"The impact of job insecurity on career development: identifying risk factors for lecturers"*

## **Workshop 4 - The Meaning of Work for Contingent Academic Labour: Lack of Recognition, Loss of Meaning, Lack of Support and Networks. What are the Solutions?**

### **Room C0420**

There are major threats facing contingent academic labour, particularly with regard to their place and future in higher education. Indeed, the fierce competition imposed by the elitist university system can have consequences for the meaning of work, recognition and the sense of belonging. Faced with uncertain prospects at the university or college, it's important to reflect on the subjective experience of precariousness and the meaning of work. How can we achieve greater recognition for contingent academic labour? What are the union strategies for breaking down isolation and supporting sustainable integration into a higher education career? How can we negotiate a permanent place for contingent academic labour and support the stabilization of their employment? How can we join forces to reverse the trend?

- ❖ David Milroy, founding member of COCAL (California):  
*"The One-Tier model as a solution to the problems of precarious teachers?"*
- ❖ Valérie Roberge, course lecturer at Université Laval, Labor Relations Agent at the SCCCUL:  
*"The desire to please and the need for recognition: the challenges of internal narration"*
- ❖ Mtro. José Alfredo Sosa Benítez and Dr. Juan Bravo Zamudio, Executive Committee, AAPAUNAM:  
*"University unionism and the new challenges for the stability and integration of part-time professors"*

## **Workshop 5 - Academic Freedom and Professional Autonomy: Precariousness and speaking out on sensitive issues**

### **Room C0426**

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency imposition of stopgap distance learning, several administrations have sought to normalize the state of exception by making unconventional online teaching permanent. The equally arbitrary and mercantile introduction of artificial intelligence into higher education threatens the integrity of the teaching profession, through the fragmentation of "tasks", the Taylorization of teaching and the outsourcing of the "production" of "knowledge". However, what threatens academic freedom and intellectual autonomy is less technology than managerial conceptions of higher education, such as quality

assurance, the ideology of the knowledge economy or new public management. This authoritarian approach to university management has a particular impact on precarious professors and lecturers, who have less representation in the institutions' decision-making bodies and can be dismissed more easily. Beyond the necessary denunciation and documentation of these threats, this workshop is intended as a forum for seeking solutions to counter them. How can we ensure that the integrity of the teaching profession is respected in a context of upheaval in the workplace, and in the face of the risk of automation of certain tasks? What about the protection of copyright and material produced by these precarious staff? What mechanisms can we put in place to counter employer arbitrariness, which not only seeks to impose content and teaching methods but also summarily suspends or dismisses dissident positions, as in the case of solidarity with Palestine?

- ❖ Judy Olson, California Faculty Association (CFA):  
*"Achieving Senate Representation for Part-Time Faculty Members at CSU Los Angeles"*
- ❖ Ronnie Joy, Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE 301:  
*"Academic freedom, sanctions and firing of precarious academic staff who express solidarity with Palestine and Gaza"*
- ❖ Robert Johnson and Luc Angers, APTPUO:  
*"What can unions do to counter threats to academic freedom and professional autonomy in the age of the image-driven university? The case of Uottawa."*
- ❖ Romain Vanhooren, SCCC-UQO:  
*« Do contract academic staff feel adequately protected since the introduction of the Act respecting academic freedom in Québec? »*
- ❖ Lilia Abarca, Escuelas Normales:  
*"Perspectives on teaching in the Normal Schools (teacher training colleges)"*

**5:30**

**Group photo and delegation photos**



**FRIDAY AUGUST 9, 2024**

**9 to 10:30**

**(CONTINUED) THEME 2: Enriching Rather than Fragmenting the Work of Contingent Academic Labour: Analysis and Solutions**

**PLENARY SESSION - Solutions for better working conditions and greater recognition of contract work:**

**Grande salle - C0072**

\*Spokespersons for each workshop.

- ❖ Putting forward solutions at different levels to enrich the work of precarious university teaching staff.
- ❖ Taking a stand in favor of valuing the real work of precarious teaching staff: adopting a manifesto and a set of principles, reaffirming the essential role of contract staff.

**Facilitation by Carole Neill, President of the Conseil provincial du secteur universitaire, Canadian Union of Public Employees - FTQ**

**[BREAK: 10:30 to 10:50]**

**10:50 to 12:30**

**THEME 3: PANEL: Commodification in the Context of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Online Teaching**

**Grande salle - C0072**

In a context of commoditization of higher education, the massive use of technology in teaching is undermining and transforming its central mission. Faced with the intensive use of online teaching and the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI), there is an urgent need to counter the threat of the Amazonification of education. For example, how can we ensure that online learning remains an adjunct and limited tool in very specific contexts, rather than a tool to make universities and colleges more profitable? What are the positive, structural union examples that have countered the capitalist aims of these institutions (e.g. limiting group size)? How can we ensure that the fundamental mission of universities and colleges is not hijacked for the purposes of the labor market or for the sake of simple profitability?

In a similar vein, based on a client-centric vision, we are seeing more and more strategies to increase institution revenues, such as the development of very short, lucrative courses, or higher tuition fees for international students. How can we counter this commercial utilitarianism? What are the values and means we can use to counter this strict subjection to the job market, and thus ensure the pursuit of the fundamental mission of universities, colleges and community colleges?

How can we protect the integrity of teaching quality, and students and teachers in this context? How can we reverse the capitalist trend of for-profit mass graduation and the race for student registration numbers to maintain and revalue the importance of human relations in supporting students' pedagogical development?

### **Presenters:**

- ❖ Québec: : Comité école et société FNEEQ-CSN  
*"Resisting the dehumanisation of education"*
- ❖ Québec: Marianne Di Croce, lecturer at Département de philosophie de l'UQAM and philosophy professor at Cégep de Saint-Jérôme  
*« Teaching and AI: what are we losing? »*
- ❖ Canada: Dr. Glynnis Lieb, Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE 3911:  
*"The Realities of AI in Post Secondary Education: Getting In Front of Instead of Resisting Change"*
- ❖ Mexico: María Teresa Lechuga and Arturo Ramos, Coordinators of COCAL México  
*"Risks and opportunities in academic work faced with the arrival of artificial intelligence. Towards new forms of job insecurity?"*

### **PLENARY SESSION**

Statements in favor of free, equitable and pluralistic education

Principles for the adoption of a manifesto

**[LUNCH: 12:30 to 2:00]**

**2:00 to 3:30**

**THEME 4: ROUND TABLE: “The key elements for a historic union mobilization”:**

**Grande salle - C0072**

For this theme, the COCAL organizing committee wishes to bring together various accounts of landmark inter-union struggles for rights in higher education (e.g. tuition rights and accessibility of education, financing and mission of universities, protection of academic staff).

In recent years, there have been some historic examples of mobilization in support of education workers' rights. From coordinated bargaining between unions, to the foundations of Anglophone and Francophone education networks and international mobilization, it's important to demonstrate the strengths of working in broad coalitions. Such inter-union mobilizations are often necessary to reverse trends and achieve major gains. Not to seek to coalesce actors is to accept fragmentation. So what are the success factors for these mobilizations? How can we sustain major struggles? What are the most inspiring recent examples in higher education? How can we put an end to working in silos? How can we build a genuine inter-union university movement and work together on the same struggles? How can we reject the capitalist university imposed on us and promote a free, open and democratic university?

**Four case studies :**

- ❖ Québec: Sylvain Marois and Claude Fortin, co-organizers of the EGES  
*“The États généraux de l’enseignement supérieur (EGES) as an example of inter-union mobilization”*
- ❖ United States: Joe Ramsey, HELU  
TBD
- ❖ Mexico: Presentation coordinated by Teresa Ruiz, COCAL Mexico  
*“Different and unequal, but not disconnected. The construction of solidarity in the case of COCAL Mexico”*
- ❖ Canada: Sarika Bose, University of British Columbia Contract Faculty Committee (UBCFA)  
*“Stronger Together: Mobilizing Locally”*

**[BREAK: 3:30 to 3:50]**

**3:50 to 5:00**

**PLENARY SESSION: "Continuing to mobilize"**

**Grande salle - C0072**

**Facilitation by the organizing committee**

- ❖ PROJECTION - Vinny Tirelli, Founder of COCAL International and Course lecturer at the City University of New York:  
*"COCAL over time. History and future of a cross-border union community"*
- ❖ PRESENTATION - Sylvain Marois and Ricardo Peñafiel:  
*"The importance of international mobilization"*
- ❖ International mobilization of university campus in support of the Palestinian people: presentation by Kaveh Boveiri (University of Montreal) on the situation in Québec, followed by a discussion period with delegates from all regions
- ❖ A look back at the proposal adopted during COCAL 2022 and the creation of an action committee for international mobilization
- ❖ Continuation and end of the adoption of manifesto positions

**6:00**

**Solidarity Social**

