



ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES  
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ATLANTIQUE

*Award for Excellence in Teaching*  
*2017*  
*Distinguished Teaching Award*

**DR. ANDREW PARNABY**

Dr. Andrew Parnaby is an associate professor of History in the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Cape Breton University. Because of his passion for history and his ability to engage and inspire students in study of the discipline, Dr. Parnaby is assigned courses at the 1000 and 2000 levels. In these courses, he models and makes explicit an historian's "habits of mind." At the core of his teaching philosophy is the belief that students must have opportunities to practice these habits and *act* like historians. Through unique course designs, innovative approaches to teaching, and community partnerships, Dr. Parnaby helps his students develop the critical thinking skills to go beyond an accumulation of facts to interpret evidence, gain deep insights, and collectively create new knowledge.

Among Dr. Parnaby's teaching methods is storytelling. His colleague, Don Nerbas, explained how through stories, often rooted in questions about everyday experiences and objects, Dr. Parnaby "sets students on a journey to earlier and foreign times and weaves together the tactile experiences of the everyday with the broader structural and ideological setting that animated human endeavour in those times." Problem-solving and in-class colloquia and debate clubs are also characteristic of Dr. Parnaby's teaching approach. A former student recalled how he fostered "a supportive and academic atmosphere in which students developed critical thinking and analysis skills as well as learning to express our thoughts and opinions to a group of peers."

Dr. Parnaby has developed unique assessments that allow students to meet learning outcomes in ways that go beyond traditional formats. For example, his oral history course is oriented towards a single group project resulting in the creation of a "people's museum." The museum project is designed to highlight the historical contributions of ordinary people across a range of experiences and activities and to demonstrate the historical similarities and differences between peoples, cultures and communities. Assignments for other courses have students examine historical documents and participate in historical research and community-based projects in local museums and archives, at National Historic Sites, and with indigenous communities. While these experiences develop students' technical and professional skills, according to Dr. Parnaby, one of the unintended benefits of these approaches is "the positive sense of discovery that is generated."

Dr. Parnaby's innovative methods to engage and motivate students, his enthusiasm for his discipline, and his commitment to developing the history program and BA degree at Cape Breton University have earned him the CBU Alumni Association Award for Distinguished Teaching in 2011 and again in 2016. Students and colleagues, at Cape Breton University and beyond have benefitted from his dedication to teaching, and all agree that Dr. Andrew Parnaby is a worthy recipient of the 2017 Association of Atlantic Universities' Distinguished Teaching Award.