

Dear Chair and Faculty of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures,

On December 3rd, 2020, the German and Yiddish Graduate Student Association (GYGSA) alongside contract student educators of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures (Teaching Assistants and Course Instructors) held their first meeting for the 2020/2021 Unit 1 bargaining session. As a result of this meeting, the GYGSA voted to endorse this letter and formally request that the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures acknowledge receipt and endorse the following statement:

The department chair and the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures acknowledge that Unit 1 of CUPE 3902 (Teaching Assistants, Course Instructors, and Invigilators) is beginning its bargaining process with the University of Toronto. CUPE 3902's main priorities for this round of bargaining are to improve workload standards, foster inclusion and anti-oppression at U of T, increase compensation and job security, and promote (mental) health and safety. The Department supports our students' attempt to demand a fair, safe, and equitable workplace at the University of Toronto. Specifically, the Department pledges to 1) reject any policies of academic continuity passed by University administration, 2) not hire any contract labour to replace striking workers and 3) refuse to compel any students to perform educational labour independent of labour decisions made by the Union with financial compensation from budgetary lines that were not already dedicated to wages, or by use of threats to academic completion. By taking this stance, the Department acknowledges the importance of unionized student labour to its teaching operations and upholds their right to a good faith bargaining climate. The Department wishes its Unit 1 employees an equitable bargaining round regardless of potential labour disruptions and will contribute to fostering a supportive environment.

The graduate student educators of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures greatly appreciate the support that the chair and departmental faculty have given to graduate students formally and informally in the past. Furthermore, this statement will show an acknowledgement by an organ of the employer that its members are bargaining with a platform in compliance with current Bill-124 regulations that minimize the ability of the union to bargain for significant gains. Such support recognizes the new bargaining reality in a way that fosters faith in employer's commitment to bargain in good faith. Once again, we believe the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures can lead by example by advocating for an equitable university.

Best wishes,

On behalf of the Unit 1 Workers of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures,
The German and Yiddish Graduate Student Association
December 12, 2020