

# **Shanti Fernando, PhD**

**Associate Professor and Political Science Program Director, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities at University of Ontario Institute of Technology**

Oshawa, ON, CA

Political expert stems cycle of inequity and inequality through community and policy development

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## **Description**

One of the most influential ways of stemming the cycle of inequity and inequality is through the telling of human impact stories of either those who have experienced these firsthand, or those who have demonstrated ways to improve communities. Shanti Fernando, PhD is a prolific storyteller who has dedicated her career to giving a voice to those who don't have one. As the Political Science Program Director and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, her research agenda is grounded in Canadian politics and policies that support community development including adult education, mental health supports, immigration and settlement policies, anti-poverty and social service policies.

Dr. Fernando advocates for evidence-based policy making that engages communities in questioning systemic discrimination and the interconnectedness of policies. For example, policies that increase support for adult education, infrastructure, affordable housing, social services, disability services and health services can all be part of a holistic anti-poverty strategy. Her collaborative research also explores the intersection between immigration and disability. She leads an interdisciplinary research team examining ways to improve adult supported education programs run by Canadian psychiatric hospitals. Along with her UOIT research team, she has helped create some of the few studies on supported education conducted in Canada.

Growing up, she envisioned herself a writer and storyteller, and became fascinated with political stories. She earned her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English and Political Science from the University of Toronto, her Master of Arts in Political Studies from the University of Guelph, and her Doctorate in Political Studies from Queen's University. Dr. Fernando spent four years as Assistant Professor in Political Science at York University in Toronto, then as an Assistant Professor of Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. She authored the well-known book *Race and the City* in 2007 in order to raise awareness of racism and its historical legacy in Canada.

She came to UOIT in 2008 where she contributed to the establishment of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities' Community Development Program (now the Political Science program). For her research and community outreach, Dr. Fernando received the 2012 Extraordinary Partner Award from the Canadian Mental Health Association in Durham Region.

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## **Industry Expertise**

Education/Learning, Employment Services, Program Development, Public Policy, Research, Social Services, Training and Development

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## **Topics**

Adult Education and Literacy, Anti-Poverty and Social Support Policies, Canadian Politics, Community Development, Critical Disability Policy, Democratic Theory, Equity Policy, Immigration, Labour Market Integration, Mental Health Supports, Race and Racism, Supported Education

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## **Affiliations**

Association of Canadian Studies, Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, Canadian Disability Studies Association, Canadian Ethnic Studies Association, Canadian Political Science Association, Canadian Sociological Association, European Society for Research in Adult Education

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## **Past Talks**

### **The Medium is the Message: Mediated Learning and Mental Health**

European Society for Research on the Education of Adults Access, Learning Careers and Identities Conference

### **De/Constructing Exclusionary Immigration Law and Policy, Past and Present**

Annual Conference of Canadian Disability Studies Association

### **Finding Hope Through Education: Student Experiences of Supported Education**

Canadian Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Congress of the Social Science and Humanities

### **SSHRC Insight Development Results: Relation to Literacy and Adult Education in Ontario**

Festival of Literacies

### **Adult Educators as Community Developers**

2016 Annual Conference of Canadian Association Studies of Adult Education

### **Education Interrupted: Learning Careers of Adults Living with Mental Illness**

European Society for Research on the Education of Adults Access, Learning Careers and Identities Network Conference

### **From Patient to Student: Study of a Canadian Hospital Supported Education Program**

1st European Conference on Supported Education

### **Is Knowledge Power? An Exploration of an Historical Normative Framework for Literacy Policy, Adult Education and the Economy in Canadian Communities**

Warwick Lifelong Learning Annual Conference

### **Still on the Margins: English Language Learning and Mental Health in Immigrant Psychiatric Patients**

Ireland International Conference on Education

### **Keep Stop Start: Assessing a Supported Education Program for Persons Living with Mental Illness**

The Hawaii International Conference on Education

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## **Education**

**Queen's University**  
PhD Political Studies

**University of Guelph**  
MA Political Studies

**University of Toronto**  
BA (Hons) English and Political Science

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## **Accomplishments**

### **Chair, Board of Directors, Literacy Network of Durham Region**

The Literacy Network of Durham Region provides literacy and basic skills support and resources for Employment Ontario stakeholders through research, public education, community planning, professional and community capacity development.

### **2012 Extraordinary Partner Award, Canadian Mental Health Association Durham Region**

Dr. Fernando received the award for her expertise and counsel as a grant reviewer for the organization.

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