# Showcase Feature: Dr. Heather Nichol

**2 minutes, 35 seconds in length**

Dr. Heather Nichol – Professor, Geography Department speaking:

So, I'm Heather Nichol and I work in the Geography Department. I'm a human geographer which means that what I study is the human interactions and the human side of geography.   As opposed to the physical geographers who would look more at soil, and wind and physical processes.

The study of Canada across the disciplines at Trent provides a very fertile ground for studying Canada because it's Canada is multidisciplinary.  You can't capture it by any one point of view. A geographer can't capture Canada, a sociologist can't capture Canada and what it means.  And I that, particularly in my work, the way in which the study of Canada is approached, the breadth and the interdisciplinarity but also the critical lens is really important. I mean, why study ourselves if we don't really criticize ourselves too. And I think I find that I appreciate that very much about the approach to the study of Canada at Trent. That it's not all "Rah Rah Canada", you know "Canada is so great, Canada is so wonderful. Here, let us describe it to you…" It's more about understanding ourselves, you know, understanding where we are going, who we are, and how can we use that understanding of Canada in ways that really, I think, make a difference to people.   And certainly that perspective is shared with the students and I think that students really appreciate that way of understanding. Not ‘Canada the Great,’ ‘Canada the Nation State,’ ‘Canada the Country that's so important in the world,’ but Canadians as a people who have choices to make.

So, I've just written a new book and you know, it’s a product of my trying to understand our relationship, our political relationship, to the U.S. and to try and understand all of these different ideas that have been put forward about that relationship. Well, "Canadians are just like Americans," "Americans are dominant over Canadians," "Canadians hate Americans," "Americans think Canadians aren't as good."  I mean, there are all of these ideas floating around about that relationship.  And what I thought would be interesting was to take a specific site - as a political geographer, take a specific site - like the border, the Canadian border with the U.S. and think about how that site has loaded onto it all of these symbols, all of these ways of thinking, about our relationship to our continental partners and how that relationship evolves and changes over time.