

Approved by the
Regents
May 21, 2015

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
COLLEGE OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS

Maria L. Aarnio, assistant professor of philosophy, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of philosophy, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

D.Phil.	2010	University of Oxford, University College
B.Phil.	2005	University of Oxford, University College
M.A.	2002	University of Helsinki

Professional Record:

2010 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan
2007 – 2010	Fitzjames Research Fellow in Philosophy, Merton College

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Aarnio has a strong teaching record that reflects her instructional style, which alternates brief lectures with opportunities for active learning and embodies sound pedagogical technique. She developed “Environmental Ethics” into a model-applied ethics course and a mainstay of the department’s undergraduate introductory offerings. She earned high student evaluations in most of her courses, and has worked assiduously and successfully to improve the others. She has been advising several graduate students on their pre-prospectus research, an indication that she will soon be playing a major role in graduate supervision.

Research – Professor Aarnio’s main field of research is epistemology – the theory of knowledge – which is one of the most active subfields of philosophy, attracting many of the leading minds in the discipline. In a series of prominently placed recent and forthcoming articles, Professor Aarnio has made major contributions across a wide range of central topics of current discussion in both traditional and formal epistemology. Practically every major paper she has written has been a surprising, original, and significant contribution. She has consistently placed her articles in leading journals, and her major papers are cited at least once (and several more than once) by external reviewers as among the most significant works in epistemology in recent years. Professor Aarnio’s research profile is extraordinary and her current research in progress, which is continuing to pursue diverse topics through papers, is highly promising.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“I’m onto something! Learning about the world by learning what I think about it,” *Analytic Philosophy*, forthcoming 2014 (winner of the 2014 Sanders Prize in Philosophy of Mind).
“Is there a viable account of well-founded belief?” *Erkenntnis*, 72(2), 2010, pp. 205-231.
“Knowledge and objective chance,” with J. Hawthorne in *Williamson on Knowledge*, P. Greenough and D. Pritchard (eds.), Oxford University Press, 2009.
“Single premise deduction and risk,” *Philosophical Studies*, 141(2), 2008, pp. 157-173.

Service – Professor Aarnio has served judiciously and conscientiously on three faculty search committees and could easily step in to chair such committees in the future. She also served on the department’s Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) Evaluation Committee, where she provided discerning feedback to GSIs on their teaching.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“...she is an inventive, rigorous thinker whose work constitutes a powerful and provocative challenge to the current consensus in the field. I expect her work to increasingly attract attention. Indeed, I regard it as required reading for anyone working in contemporary epistemology. She should obviously be tenured.”

Reviewer (B)

“...Aarnio is one of the most exciting philosophers at any career stage currently pursuing work in epistemology. In a string of first-rate publications, she has done much to advance our understanding of many of the central questions of this central subfield. ... Of the seven articles I have mentioned, I would rate five...as being ‘among the most significant’ articles that have recently appeared in epistemology.”

Reviewer (C)

“...she is very much a rising star in the field, and there is no one at her approximate career stage whose work is of greater significance or more impressive. ...”

Reviewer (D)

“Her work is terrifically bold, insightful and intellectually creative. ...she is already a force to be reckoned with in a series of major current debates, and that her work has opened up intriguing new territory around familiar battlegrounds. ... Together with ‘Knowledge and Objective Chance’ and ‘Unreasonable Knowledge’...[‘Higher-Order Evidence and the Limits of Defeat’] would figure in my list of the most significant recent articles in epistemology.”

Reviewer (E)

“Aarnio’s scholarly work to date has been excellent. I would judge that she is one of the very best in her rough cohort... Her papers are original, careful, and sophisticated. ... Taken together, her papers make a substantial contribution to the contemporary literature. ... ‘Single Premise Deduction and Risk’ would be on the shortlist of the very best articles in epistemology to appear in the last decade or so. This paper is illuminating and persuasive.”

Reviewer (F)

“Aarnio has developed a powerful outlook in epistemology that takes the topic beyond several modes of discourse that have shaped the field for decades. ...she would easily be promoted [at my institution] not only to tenure but to Full Professor, on the strength of her many substantial contributions to epistemology.”

Reviewer (G)

“...Aarnio’s research is world-leading. Its quality is of the highest order. And its range is super-impressive... ...her paper ‘Is There a Viable Account of Well-founded Belief?’ challenges the

very idea of well-founded belief. And it is hard to over-state what a fundamental thing is being challenged in this paper. ...she has located deeply perplexing aspects of tradition in which I work. And her critique of that tradition has deeply re-shaped my thinking about it. This is something that has only happened to me once or twice in my career.”

Reviewer (H)

“...I found Maria’s arguments completely convincing, and so I’m inclined to view her paper [on peer disagreement] as the single most important and authoritative work on this highly contentious topic. ...I find Maria’s work to be genuinely inspiring. It is a bracing and thrilling example of how good epistemology can be when it is done at its best.”

Reviewer (I)

“She is internationally recognized as in the leading group of epistemologists of her generation. ...Maria’s work will continue to spread, because she has distinctive and unorthodox things to say...”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Aarnio has a path-breaking and influential research program in epistemology, which has been admired by leading philosophers in her field. She is an excellent teacher who is constantly improving and her service is conscientious and effective. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Maria L. Aarnio be promoted to the rank of associate professor of philosophy, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Andrew D. Martin
Dean, and Professor of Political Science
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

May 2015