PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan-Dearborn
College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters

Sally Howell, assistant professor of history, Department of Social Sciences, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of history, with tenure, Department of Social Sciences, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D. 2009  University of Michigan, Program in American Culture
M.A. 2002  University of Michigan, Program in American Culture
Honors B.A. 1985  Davidson College, Middle East Studies

Professional Record:

2009 – present  Assistant Professor of History, University of Michigan-Dearborn
2006  Graduate Student Instructor, University of Michigan
2005 – 2006  Rackham Pre-doctoral Fellow, University of Michigan
2002 – 2004  Graduate Research Assistant, University of Michigan
2001 – 2002  Research Associate, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Teaching: Professor Howell is rated excellent in teaching. She has taught eight different preparations, including the bookends of history majors’ experience—a survey course in American history and the senior research seminar. They also include a course on American identities and courses related to Arab and Muslim American history—Intro to Arab American Studies, Immigration, History of Islam in the U.S., Middle Eastern Diasporas, and Issues in Arab American Identity. Professor Howell has also enhanced the college’s curriculum. She has created three courses—Intro to Arab American Studies, History of Islam in the U.S., and Middle Eastern Diasporas in Europe and the Americas—and was instrumental in developing the Arab American studies minor.

Students praise the knowledge and enthusiasm that permeate Professor Howell’s teaching and inspire them to delve deeply into course material. They consistently remark that Professor Howell opened their eyes to new perspectives on history and, especially, the Arab American experience, changing the way that they view these phenomena. After her first year of teaching, scores in her student evaluations have usually been comfortably above 4 (5 being most positive), and she has often exceeded disciplinary and departmental means for questions related to instructor knowledge, effectiveness in teaching, overall instructor, and overall class. Peers report her classes are well-designed and her presentation and classroom management meet expectations.

Research: Professor Howell is rated excellent in research. Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past (Oxford, 2014), the most impressive of her works, locates itself at the intersection of American studies, immigration studies, religious studies, and urban studies. Professor Howell uses press and archival resources and insights from 56 interviews to argue that successive waves of Muslim immigrants to Detroit attempted to establish “new” religious communities at the expense of older ones deemed inauthentic or insufficiently devout only to find themselves “compromising” with the pragmatic and cultural realities of assimilation.
This fine monograph is one of several impressive research contributions Professor Howell has made since joining the faculty in 2009. She is a contributing editor to two edited volumes, with a total of one single-authored and six co-authored chapters. She also authored a chapter in the prestigious Cambridge Histories series on Islam in America, a chapter on Islamophobia, and a peer-reviewed article on the charitable giving of American Muslims after 9/11. Each publication covers different research questions and demonstrates her success and promise as a highly productive scholar.

Recent and Significant Publications:


Authored/Co-Authored Chapters:


Authored/Co-Authored Chapters:


Howell, Sally, and Amaney Jamal. “Belief and Belonging.” 103-134.

Service: Professor Howell is rated excellent in service. She has served on history’s governing faculty and the Center for Arab American Studies Advisory Committee and was critical in developing the Arab American Studies minor. She serves as CASL’s representative to the Faculty Senate (2013-2016), has collaborated with local institutions to develop collections and curate exhibits, helped recruit and host a number of campus speakers, and provided considerable professional service as a manuscript reviewer and an external dissertation committee member.
External Reviewers:
Reviewer A: “Given Professor Howell’s prolific publication record, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to working with community members and other academics in the Detroit area, I would predict that she will continue to be a productive and important scholar. Her record to date establishes her as among a select few who have made indelible contributions to the study of Arab and Muslim Americans, and thus to the study of the United States as a whole.”

Reviewer B: “Her publications are exemplary for offering incisive ethnographic observations within larger theoretical and/or historical frameworks of ethnicity and migration in American history ... No other scholar has the same command of this history and the intricacies of intra-communal relations among Arabs and Muslims as Professor Howell.”

Reviewer C: “The book Citizenship and Crisis, for which Howell is co-editor, will prove to be one of the most important books on the post September 11 experience for Arab and Muslim Americans ... Howell is co-author of two chapters ... Their interpretations of these data [are] intricate and masterful and show their depth of knowledge of these communities.”

Reviewer D: “Based on my own work on Arab-American history, and intimate knowledge of the field as it has developed over the past 30 years, I can unequivocally describe Professor Howell’s overall work, but most particularly Old Islam, as one of the most groundbreaking scholarly productions I have read over the past decade.”

Reviewer E: “I have not encountered an Assistant Professor with this level of public intellectualism, pioneering scholarship, active research agenda, and dynamic teaching in my fifteen years of being in the academy ... She has presented at the leading national organizational conferences ..., been an organizer of a ground-breaking workshop at Princeton, and she has participated in numerous smaller conferences that included scholars working at the cutting edge of Middle Eastern migration studies. She is undoubtedly poised to continue to develop the impressive research and teaching profile and to acquire greater international recognition.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Howell is a talented classroom instructor who stimulates intellectual curiosity. Her research addresses critical issues and is recognized as contributing significantly to the scholarly field by external reviewers. Her outreach efforts and on-campus service directly contribute to the University’s goals to serve the metro Detroit region and provide the highest quality education to its students. We are very pleased to recommend, with strong support of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters Executive Committee, Sally Howell for promotion to associate professor of history, with tenure, Department of Social Sciences, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters.

Martin J. Hershock, Dean  
College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters

Daniel Little, Chancellor  
University of Michigan-Dearborn

May 2015