PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

John C. Cheney, assistant professor of American culture, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of American culture, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:
Ph.D.	2011	University of Southern California
M.A.	2009	University of Southern California
B.A.	2005	American University

Professional Record:
2011– present	Assistant Professor, Department of American Culture, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:
Teaching – Professor Cheney has a strong record as an instructor at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in a variety of classroom formats. He designed the foundational course, "Digital Culture," which is now a mainstay of the digital studies curriculum, and he regularly offers core courses in that program, including the core course for the minor in digital culture. He was instrumental in the writing and successful approval of the graduate studies graduate certificate in digital studies, which accepted its first cohort in 2017-2018 and anticipates a larger cohort next year.

Research – Professor Cheney's scholarship speaks to contemporary quandaries about the relationship between digital worlds and social identities. He makes signal contributions to these questions in his two highly regarded peer-reviewed articles and his recent monograph. He has already had an impact in the field of digital studies, with much critical attention and invitations to present at prestigious national and international venues since the publication of his book, We Are Data, by New York University Press, a premier press in cultural and media studies. Professor Cheney is an emerging leader in the field and recognized for smart theoretical interventions and sophisticated analysis of algorithmic identities and models. The book is written in an accessible and spirited style and has attracted a great deal of media attention, including interviews on CSPAN and NPR. His book smartly captures the dissimulating and fluid construction of algorithmic identities through a style of argumentation that is pervasive and recursive, with persuasive specific examples throughout. For this book, style and substance are closely intertwined, an approach that makes Professor Cheney's book truly original and creative, which are qualities lauded by the letter writers.

Recent and Significant Publications:
Infidel Mathematics: A Theory of Revolutionary Objects, with J. Joque, Verso, under contract.
We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves, New York University Press, 2017.

"Jus algoritmi: how the NSA remade citizenship," *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 2016, pp. 1721-1742.

"A new algorithmic identity: Soft biopolitics and the modulation of control," *Theory and Culture & Society*, 28(6), 2011, pp. 164-181.

Service – Professor Cheney has served his appointing unit and the Digital Studies Program effectively both as an advisor to the minor and as a member of the Digital Studies advisory committee. He has raised the visibility of the Digital Studies Program across campus and has contributed to making it a much sought-after undergraduate minor with the Department of American Culture. He has also served on the steering committee for the Humanities Collaboratory and is a member of the Digital Environments Collective.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)
"Dr. Cheney-Lippold's work takes a critical cultural studies approach to the relations between the self, data, and technological mechanisms in social and historical contexts. His work displays great depth and detail, demonstrating an expertise in understanding the technical side of mediated communication balanced with its socio-cultural effects. … In addition to being a pioneer in algorithm studies, I would argue that he has written one of the most sophisticated and synthesizing books in that area as well. I would classify him as one of the top scholars in the cultural studies of technology."

Reviewer (B)
"…John manages to blend a social understanding of the human issues at stake with a technical understanding of the systems involved. Many scholars are able only to do one half of this equation well; blending the two requires both the expertise and the finesse to [do] justice to both, without it becoming too dense in one direction or the other. He stands out as the best among all of this work at doing this (including my own), and it is an accomplishment I find very important, as part of the project of bringing sociological and humanistic attention to complex sociotechnical systems."

Reviewer (C)
"From my knowledge of the area of digital media studies, Dr. Cheney-Lippold's work compares very well to that of other scholars at his career stage. …it is clear his work has made a solid impact so far. … No doubt, Dr. Cheney-Lippold's work will continue to have substantial influence [in] the fields of digital media studies… At my institution…he would certainly be granted tenure. I think you are lucky to have such an intelligent…scholar among your ranks."

Reviewer (D)
"Because the field is young, and Dr. Cheney…is industrious, capable, and engaged in unique and important contributions to the field (namely his first book and suggested next projects), I see him as a developing and contributing professional who has delivered and will continue to deliver exactly what is expected of him as a scholar at a major research University: finely rendered, highly-placed scholarship that connects to and moves forward the critical questions of his (new) field."

Reviewer (E)
"He has clearly developed a reputation as an outstanding scholar who contributes to multiple disciplinary fields. ... I am convinced that were he a faculty member [at my institution], he would receive tenure and promotion based on this dossier. ... I find his approach to understanding complex intersections between identity, digital media, and power relations, wholly unique and refreshing. ... It is clear to me that he is a major new voice in technology and information studies, media studies, communication, and digital media, and I look forward to the publication of his next book."

Reviewer (F)
"…he works on some of the most important and impact-heavy issues in this field… …both the TCS and the IJoC article[s] are of high quality and make solid contributions to scholarship. Each also anticipates some of the key arguments made in the 2017 book. In fact, I have used John Cheney Lippold's work in my own research and writing and I have recommended the articles to others, particularly my PhD students."

Reviewer (G)
"If I were putting together a list of works that illuminate the contemporary dilemmas brought about by the algorithmic construction of society, I might well include Professor Cheney's article 'Jus Algoritmi.' ... As for the book, its publication with a major press is a big plus that signals appreciation by key decisionmakers. …the book's core arguments…are presaged in the author's two published articles. *We Are Data* goes beyond those articles by deepening its learned approach to its topic, with quotations and citations from many cultural studies scholars and philosophers. This is a welcome aspect of the work, which will likely get a fair amount of attention due to its imprint and important topic."

Summary of Recommendation:
Professor Cheney is an accomplished scholar who has been recognized for building and expanding the field of digital studies. His contributions to the teaching and service missions of the college have been substantial. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor John C. Cheney be promoted to the rank of associate professor of American culture, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

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

May 2018