

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

Derek W. Vaillant, associate professor of communication studies, with tenure, and associate professor of history, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of communication studies, with tenure, and professor of history, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1999	University of Chicago
M.A.	1993	University of Chicago
B.A.	1987	Yale University

Professional Record:

2014 – present	Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Michigan
2004 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies, University of Michigan
1998 – 2004	Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Vaillant is a dedicated teacher who values student learning and expects vigorous engagement from students with the course materials. His instruction style is traditional and thorough, ensuring that students are grounded in the history and conceptual basics before moving onto current topics. During the past five years, he has taught a wide range of courses, including a 100-level freshman seminar, a 200-level lecture, an elective 300-level lecture, two 400-level elective seminars, a 400-level capstone seminar, and an 800-level graduate seminar. Professor Vaillant makes specific efforts to enrich student learning experiences. For instance, some of his upper-level courses incorporate a dedicated library site, which he develops with the help of the department’s specialist librarian. These sites are designed to help students access digital course resources.

Research – Professor Vaillant is a media historian whose work mainly concerns the history of radio broadcasting. His first book, Sound of Reform (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), documents musical progressivism and didactic use of music, and uncovers the cultural-political significance of popular music among urban reformers and immigrant communities in Chicago between 1873 and 1935. His second book, Across the Waves, presents transatlantic radio interactions between the United States and France between 1931 and 1974. His research through extensive archival work in the United States and France, presents an interesting history of the transatlantic radio exchange between the United States and France. His work is groundbreaking in its topic and scope; one of rare original monographs on French broadcasting in English-language scholarship; and grounded in solid empirical findings and case studies. Both of Professor Vaillant’s published book and his current book project, “Lazarus, AM/FM,” significantly challenge the established scholarship of the history of radio and expand the field.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Across the Waves: How the United States and France Shaped the International Age of Radio,
University of Illinois Press, 2017.

“Lazarus.FM: Can the endangered sounds of Detroit be saved?,” *Sounding Out!* March 12, 2015,
1200-word invited blog submission, <http://soundstudiesblog.com>, 2017.

“At the speed of sound: Techno-aesthetic paradigms in U.S.–French international broadcasting,
1925–1942,” *Technology and Culture*, 54(4), 2013, pp. 888–921.

“The police de l’air: Amateur radio and the politics of aural surveillance in France, 1921–1940,”
French Politics, Culture & Society, 28(1), 2010, pp. 1-24.

Service – Professor Vaillant is a dedicated citizen to the department and has been part of the departmental leadership team a number of times. There were significant changes in recent years with respect to departmental faculty governance structure, curriculum revamp, and by-laws revisions. As a colleague, leader, and mentor, Professor Vaillant has been integral to the well-being of the department and garnered much respect from his colleagues. He served as the vice chair of the history division of the International Communication Association. After a two-year term as the vice chair, Professor Vaillant will become the chair of the division. As the national preservation director of the Radio Preservation Task Force (RPTF), an initiative of the Library of Congress, Professor Vaillant has been working at the forefront of identifying and preserving radio and sound archives that are at the risk of being lost, an effort that should benefit current and future scholars of radio broadcasting.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“In France, he brought us his knowledge on the history of the American radio, its development, its specificities. We are also grateful to him for having been able to carry to [the] United States, in numerous meetings and publications, the profits of works he was able to lead in France. Thus, he contributes to a better mutual knowledge of our universes and our experiments in media and radio History.”

Reviewer (B)

“The reviewer...characterized...comments as a ‘friendly debate’ and the book as a ‘jewel-like study’ that should make the readers ...think about a big picture. ... Were there other kinds of non-U.S. broadcasting circulating around, say from Italian or Japanese short-wave radio amateurs? What are the other domestic as well as international sources of U.S. middle-brow cultural programming from the 1950s, and of alternate, radical programming from the 1960s? ...Vaillant has moved empirically and as a radio practitioner-teacher-activist in the heartland onto some very interesting global terrain.”

Reviewer (C)

“Derek has earned a national, and indeed international, reputation in the leading cohorts of US scholars doing historical analysis of the cultural spaces in which audience formations intersect with the politics of nationality – and, with his most recent book, with transnationality. Derek’s work is known for its depth and nuance, demonstrating the ability to cut through complex tangles of interconnected elements to produce analyses that are concise, insightful, and clearly communicated.”

Reviewer (D)

"...[Across the Waves] will be of interest to scholars of broadcasting history, international relations and cultural globalisation, as well as general readers interested in Franco-American relations. The book is timely inasmuch as there has been a recent growth in scholarly interest in transnational cultural histories of broadcasting in a field where local and national histories have long been the norm. And, of course, it will be a valuable corrective to the Anglo-American bias of most cultural histories of broadcasting published in English."

Reviewer (E)

"Derek has already made a substantial contribution to the fields of media history, cultural history, and communications studies. His new book will secure his international reputation in these areas."

Reviewer (F)

"Derek provides important contributions and leadership to the disciplines, to professional organizations, and increasingly to public communities and initiatives. His past research accomplishments are outstanding and demonstrate he is among the most accomplished media historians in the USA, indeed, in the world, at comparative stages of their careers."

Reviewer (G)

"The other major contribution of Across the Waves...remains Vaillant's reimagining of radio as international. Vaillant's model will convince more scholars, American and international, to move beyond the nationalist paradigm for Radio Studies. It makes perfect sense that his next project would go in the opposite direction, to make the same argument on a different scale, by looking at the importance of radio localism. Both stories...are ones that are ignored if you don't change the paradigm of the field. Professor Vaillant is a paradigm changer."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Vaillant's contributions of original, high-quality, generative scholarship, and his service-minded attitude, make him an enormous asset to Michigan. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Derek W. Vaillant be promoted to the rank of professor of communication studies, 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

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