

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

Susan Y. Najita, assistant professor of Asian/Pacific American Studies, Program in American Culture, and assistant professor of English Language and Literature, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Asian/Pacific American Studies, with tenure, Program in American Culture, and associate professor of English Language and Literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2001	University of California, Santa Barbara
M.A.	1995	University of Hawai'i, Manoa
B.S.	1989	University of Wisconsin, Madison

Professional Record:

2001 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature and Program in American Culture, University of Michigan
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Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Najita is a confident and dedicated instructor whose syllabi testify to a rigorous schedule of assignments and high expectations for writing. Student evaluations have grown steadily stronger and individual comments are enthusiastic. Most of her courses have been cross-listed or are meet-togethers, which befits their interdisciplinary nature. Three of her classes have been taught collaboratively. In 2003 she played a central role in the development of a minor in Pacific Island American Studies in the Program in American Culture, and several of her courses make a major contribution to this curriculum. She is a mentor to students and student groups in Asian/Pacific Islander Studies, and serves as faculty advisor to student publications and to a student group that tutors English as a second language.

Research – Professor Najita's book, *Decolonizing Cultures*, engages two distinct readerships. One is located in the emergent field of Pacific literary and cultural studies, and the other comes to the work through interests in the transnational circulation of culture in colonial and post-colonial situations. She makes important and original contributions to both bodies of writing. She has also published two articles in important journals, three articles in anthologies, and three reviews. She is currently working on a new scholarly book, *Troubled Waters: Reading the Politics of Gender and Sexuality in the New Pacific*, and has done substantial research for *Imagining the New Oceania: Writers, Writing, and Decolonization*, an anthology of interviews with key Pacific novelists and poets.

Recent and significant Publications:

“Pleasure and colonial resistance: Translating the politics of Pidgin in Milton Murayama’s *All I Asking for Is My Body*,” in *Our Americas: Political and Cultural Imaginings*, S. Shukla and H. Tinsma (eds.), Radical History Review Series, Duke University Press, forthcoming.

Decolonizing Culture in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction,
Routledge, 2006.

“History, trauma, and the discursive construction of race in John Dominis Holt’s *Waimea Summer*,” *Cultural Critique*, 2001.

“Family resemblances and narrative fetishism: Critical cultural nationalism in *The Piano*,”
ARIEL, 32(1), 2001.

Service – Professor Najita has worked tirelessly to further the study of Pacific literatures and cultures within its different intellectual and institutional contexts in the department, the program, and the University, as well as nationally. As a key faculty member with an ethnic studies appointment, she effectively serves three active units: English, American Culture, and Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies. In each context she has balanced basic service commitments in all of these units, working on undergraduate curriculum, graduate admissions, program review, and instructor review. Recently, she was elected to two important Modern Language Association of America committees.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“Susan Najita is an emerging scholar in an emerging field of study with tremendous potential for growth. Her work, so far published in several essays [and] ... a book manuscript, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific*...is intelligent, insightful, and well-measured in its approach. In reading a number of Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and Oceania writers for the ways in which they tackle the traumatic legacies of European colonization in their fiction, Najita manages to blend literary analysis and critique with a historical perspective.”

Reviewer (B)

“...she is clearly embarked on what will be a highly productive and impressive career. ...*Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific* at once contributes a new chapter to the study of non-national and indigenous anglophone [sic] literature while simultaneously asking us to change the paradigms by which we divide the field of analysis. That seems to me a remarkable and challenging endeavor for any book, let alone a first one.”

Reviewer (C)

“...Najita has proved to be a careful, capacious reader as well as a committed and conscientious scholar. Her love of literature refuses to succumb to reductive needs of various ideologies, even as she probes the limits of critical theory at the point of textual application. She is a painstaking researcher as well, whose background shows she can negotiate a full range of Anglo-American periods and genres as well as minority emergences in Asia Pacific with distinction and care.”

Reviewer (D)

“...I know of no one as expert in her interdisciplinary studies of Pacific Islands literature as Susan Najita... I also know of almost no one I have evaluated in recent years who matches her work in quality at this point in their careers. ... For once I can state unconditionally that I find that the candidate would be successfully promoted and tenured at my institution.”

Reviewer (E)

“Dr. Najita *writes* extremely well, vigorously and lucidly, and with informed scholarship about her field. Her forthcoming book will be a significant, *original* contribution to its field...”

Reviewer (F)

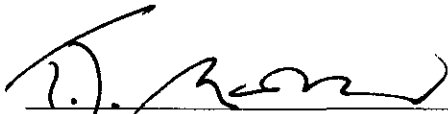
“Najita’s methodological approach is supple and engaging. ...I am confident that her work will take its place among a distinguished group of scholars [of her generation] who are developing transnational approaches to American literary criticism... Professor Najita’s cross-cultural and transnational scholarship represents the wave of the future.”

Reviewer (G)

“I know of no one of her generation working in Pacific literary studies who shows her promise... She is a scholar of first-rate achievement and potential, an original and powerful voice in her field, and a person who is thoroughly appropriate for a top university like Michigan.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Najita is emerging as a leader in the field of Pacific Island American studies. Her teaching and service work are very strong. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Susan Y. Najita be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Asian/Pacific American Studies, with tenure, Program in American Culture, and associate professor of English Language and Literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Terrence J. McDonald
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor,
Professor of History, and Dean
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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