

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

Barbra A. Meek, assistant professor of anthropology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of anthropology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2001	University of Arizona
M.A.	1998	University of Arizona
B.A.	1991	University of Akron

Professional Record:

2001 – present      Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Meek has taught numerous courses at all levels. Her lecture courses and seminars have been offered in socio-cultural and in linguistic anthropology, and include interdisciplinary courses cross-listed with the Departments of Linguistics and Psychology and with the Program in American Culture. She has taught general “gateway” courses and courses that present and model her specific research expertise. All are essential not only to the Department of Anthropology, but also to the University’s goals in establishing a broad Native American studies curriculum.

Research – Professor Meek is a scholar who is fast becoming a major intellectual force in Anthropology and in Native American studies. Her research is based on a long-term and ongoing ethnography with Kaska, a Northern Athabaskan people of the Yukon, and is developing into a major critique and repositioning of programs to revitalize endangered indigenous languages. Her book, “*We are Our Language*”, is forthcoming from the University of Arizona Press. Her articles have appeared in top-tier journals and she has received two major external fellowships, a Woodrow Wilson Career Enhancement Fellowship and a research fellowship from the National Endowment of the Humanities.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“*We are Our Language*”: *An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community*, University of Arizona Press, in press.

Language ideology and Aboriginal language revitalization in the Yukon, Canada,” in *Revealing Native American Language Ideologies: Beliefs, Feelings, Practices, Policies*, P. Kroskrity and M. Field (eds.), University of Arizona Press, in press.

“Respecting the language of elders: Ideological shift and linguistic discontinuity in a Northern Athabaskan community,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 17(1), 2007, pp. 23-43.

“And the Injun goes how!: Representations of American Indian English in (white) public space,” *Language in Society*, 35(1), 2006, pp. 93-128.

Service – Professor Meek has built a fine record of service. She has served on the departmental Executive Committee and as first-year advisor for the linguistic anthropology graduate students. She has been active more broadly in student mentoring and in extra-curricular enrichment activities. She is engaged in collaborative undertakings across the College, especially in her role as a voting faculty affiliate of the Native American Studies (NAS) Program. She has been extensively involved in Native student recruitment. She is a member of the Ojibwa Language Committee in NAS and has served on the Exhibit Museum’s task force, on a junior faculty panel at Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, and on the roster of lecturers for the Learning in Retirement Program.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“...I would say there are two projects that Professor Meek has completed that would be worthy of consideration in a 'top 10' list of important, landmark contributions in Linguistic Anthropology. ...the in-press book *We are our language...* and the 2007 JLA [*Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*] article 'Respecting the language of elders...' Her work is pioneering in pointing the way to more complex models of language shift and of language renewal—ones that properly recognize the diversity of outcomes and the interaction of social forces of social groups within native communities and the policy makers of nation-states.”

Reviewer (B)

“As a linguistic anthropologist, Dr. Meek maintains subspecialties in the fields of language endangerment and of language socialization. The two subspecialties have historically been handled separately, and by tradition involve different sets of literatures and subdisciplinary assumptions. Dr. Meek is unusual in having perceived the points of interface between these two subspecialties and in having exploited them to produce an original and productive synthesis.”

Reviewer (C)

“Her research is well-informed ethnographically and theoretically, demonstrating an innovative range of concepts that fit together coherently and productively. To my knowledge, no one else has investigated her central issue – the ways in which sociolinguistic practices designed to preserve heritage language can have unintended outcomes– in such depth. Her earlier articles... demonstrate her capacity for formal analysis of semantic and grammatical systems. ... The pieces indicate her future intellectual commitment to interactive, synergetic analytic thinking, without essentializing data or going for the single easy category.”

Reviewer (D)

“Without question, I support Dr. Meek... Her scholarly credentials, as presented in this portfolio, are already impressive and she has a clear plan for her research over the next stage of her career. ... Her fine-grained examination of the bureaucratic discourse surrounding language revitalization efforts is critical to understanding the successes and failures of these programs.”

Reviewer (E)

“Dr. Meek has published in significant journals...they speak to audiences in several disciplines... Her conference presentations and contributions to edited collections further attest to the respect her work has attained...”

Reviewer (F)

“Professor Meek’s work...asks questions that could only be posed by someone with a deep interest in language and ethnography both. ... In linguistics, the study of language revitalization is burgeoning... This book should help linguists assess their goals in undertaking work on language revitalization, and will be regarded as a fine contribution to the study of language revitalization with its micro-study of a single community.”

Reviewer (G)

“Meek’s work is meticulous and thorough. Crossing disciplinary borders, she brings a dauntingly comprehensive command of the literature in both linguistics and anthropology. ... Her insights are unique. I regularly assign her articles to my students, both undergraduate and graduate. I will certainly make her book a staple of my courses for many years to come.”

Reviewer (H)

“I am currently involved in half-a-dozen evaluations of tenure candidates in linguistic anthropology at major universities, and Dr. Meek’s work is definitely the most interesting in theoretical terms and certainly the equal of the other work I am reading... The book especially should really cement her reputation...”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Meek’s research and writing has produced very important work. She is a very strong instructor and has made outstanding contributions to the University community. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Barbra A. Meek be promoted to the rank of associate professor of anthropology, with tenure, in the 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

May 2008