

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

Approved by the Regents
May 20, 2010

Megan L. Sweeney, assistant professor of English language and literature, and assistant professor of Afroamerican and African studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, and associate professor of Afroamerican and African studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2002	Duke University
M.A.	1997	Pennsylvania State University
B.A.	1989	Northwestern University

Professional Record:

2004 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature and the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS), University of Michigan
2002 – 2004	Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of English and the Women's Studies and Gender Program, Georgetown University

Summary of Evaluations:

Teaching – Professor Sweeney's repertoire of undergraduate and graduate courses serves important curricular needs in English, CAAS, women's studies, and American culture, where her courses are routinely cross-listed. Among other things, her classes address issues of race, gender, identity, and justice in a wide range of literary and cultural contexts, emphasizing encounters with diversities of viewpoint, background, and personal experience. Student evaluations are very strong in spite of their descriptions of her as a "tough grader" and of her classes as "challenging." Her teaching statement expresses the principles that animate her teaching—she desires to create opportunities for a series of "encounters with difference" (unfamiliar characters, histories, cultures, and ideas) which will spur students to question their assumptions and heighten their awareness of the particular positions they occupy in the world.

Research – Professor Sweeney's work on literature and reading among women prisoners establishes her as a major contributor to an established interdisciplinary feminist conversation on gender and incarceration in the United States. That her work is in rigorous conversation with that of more senior scholars outside of literary studies is a strong testament to the value and achievements of her interdisciplinary approach. Forthcoming from the University of North Carolina Press (2010), Professor Sweeney's study, *Reading is My Window*, is a brilliant addition to the interdisciplinary field of penal studies, because it brings together humanities research on the construction of female identity through literacy, and the equally burgeoning social science scholarship on women, gender, and incarceration.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Reading is My Window: Books and the Art of Reading in Women's Prisons, University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming 2010.

"Reading and reckoning in a women's prison," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 50(3), 2008, pp. 304-328.

"*Beard v. Banks*: Deprivation as rehabilitation," *PMLA*, 122(3), 2007, pp. 779-783.

"'Something rogue': Commensurability, commodification, crime, and justice in Toni Morrison's later fiction," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 52(2), 2006, pp. 440-469.

Service – Professor Sweeney has completed a considerable array of service assignments for English and CAAS, as well as serving as an elected member of the University Senate Assembly. She is an elected member of the English Department's Executive Committee and she is or has been a member of many other committees in both units, including: the English Graduate Admissions Committee, the Joint Program in English and Education Committee, the English Graduate Third Term Review Committee, the CAAS Curriculum Committee, and a Latino/a Search Committee in the Program in American Culture. Her service to the broader profession includes reading for several journals in her field as well as for the Oxford University Press.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

"Professor Sweeney's work is impressive for its scope, depth, originality, and synthetic grasp. Everything she writes...shows a brilliant analytical mind at work in arenas ranging from gender, genre, reader reception and race, to criminology and public policy. ...[*Reading is my Window*] casts light, provokes discussion, and sets new standards for the field."

Reviewer (B)

"My inclusion of Sweeney then, in the first circle of the much more advanced scholars, with well-established reputations, is a testament to the importance of her work; I place Sweeney within the group of more advanced scholars because of the intellectual heft of her project and its contributions to a number of fields of inquiry."

Reviewer (C)

"...Sweeny is careful not to romanticize her subjects or inflate the implications of her work. ... I am confident that the publication of...[*Reading is My Window*] will establish Sweeny as a leading scholar in penal studies, feminist studies, literacy studies, and African-American studies."

Reviewer (D)

"...one can easily see the ways in which Professor Sweeney's contributions both enliven and challenge scholarship on literacy. Her work will have an impact on other monographs of its kind in the field of American Studies."

Reviewer (E)

"...she is a conscientious and thorough scholar whose prose is clear and often graceful, not to mention remarkably free of the lexical and rhetorical 'tics' with which professional writing is sometimes hobbled."

Reviewer (F)

"Taken as a whole and in its individual, interlocking parts, Megan Sweeney's project is extraordinary, and I do not use that work lightly. ... The intellectual energy, ethical commitment, and critical sophistication that have created this prodigious body of work are everywhere apparent within it."

Reviewer (G)

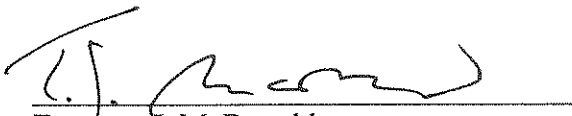
"...Sweeny has proven herself to be a deft, able, dedicated scholar whose work is, and I must underscore this, irreproachable in every respect: it is intelligent, engagingly well-written, highly articulate, well-researched—both immensely important and immensely interesting work, charting new ground in reader-response studies..."

Reviewer (H)

"No one even comes close to what she has done in understanding how and why and to what ends prisoners read. ...[*Reading is My Window*] will be the best, field-making, book on reading in prison thus far published; it will also be on my list of the top ten most important books published on imprisonment in general in the last ten years. I do not accord it this value lightly."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Sweeney's work establishes her as a major contributor to her field. She has compiled a strong teaching record and her service record is excellent. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that assistant professor Megan L. Sweeney promoted to the rank of Associate Professor of English language and literature, with tenure, and associate professor of Afroamerican and African studies, 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 2010