

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

John A. Whittier-Ferguson, associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1990	Princeton University
B.A.	1977	Kenyon College

Professional Record:

1996 – present	Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan
1990 – 1996	Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Whittier-Ferguson is a dedicated and innovative presence in the classroom and has been an award-winning instructor throughout his career. He has taught a wide variety of courses from small graduate seminars to sizeable undergraduate lecture classes. His excellence across all these classes is measured by strong student evaluations and even more so by their comments – students repeatedly describe him as the best professor they have had and his courses as the best they have taken at the University of Michigan. It is not surprising that Professor Whittier-Ferguson has been a regular recipient of teaching awards (three LSA Excellence in Education Awards, a Class of 1923 Memorial Teaching Award, an Amoco Foundation Teaching Award, and most recently an Arthur F. Thurnau Professorship). His pedagogical passion reaches beyond his own courses to embrace a deep commitment to the department's teaching culture. He co-designed a now required pedagogy course for GSIs in the English department, and he continues to work to strengthen the teaching in the department via liaisons with CRLT and his on-going observation of classes taught by GSIs. He also maintains an active and engaged community presence via public lectures at local libraries, schools, and churches.

Research – Professor Whittier-Ferguson's forthcoming book, Mortality and Form in Late Modernist Literature (Cambridge University Press), is a wonderful and necessary contribution to the central debates of modernist studies, even as it stakes out its own territory and approach. The book gives one a sense of the pressures imposed on writing and literary form by the seemingly permanent trauma of war. The outside letter writers attest emphatically to the strong and lasting contribution that this work will make to the field. Colleagues expressed great excitement about the next book-length project that Professor Whittier-Ferguson proposes, which takes as its subject the relationship of modernism to cruelty. Since his promotion to the associate rank, Professor Whittier-Ferguson has also published ten essays and reviews, and he continues to publish in pre-eminent journals in his field (*Modernism/Modernity*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and *The James Joyce Quarterly*).

#### Recent and Significant Publications:

Mortality and Form in Late Modernist Literature, Cambridge University Press, under contract.

“Repetition, remembering, repetition: Virginia Woolf’s late fiction and the return of war,”

*Modern Fiction Studies*, 57(2), 2011, pp. 230-253 (DOI: 10.1353/mfs.2011.0039).

“The modernist epic,” The Cambridge Companion to the Epic, C. Bates (ed.), Cambridge

Companion to Literature series, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 211-233.

“‘Always a war poet’: Randall Jarrell and the returns of twentieth-century war,” *War, Literature, and the Arts*, 21, 2009, pp. 109-123.

Service – Professor Whittier-Ferguson has provided excellent service to his department in an unusually extensive variety of administrative and leadership capacities. He has served on the departmental Executive Committee and that of the Sweetland Writing Center, directed the department’s Writing Program, ran the English Honors Program, and held numerous other committee assignments. Beyond the department, he has been a member of the Collegiate Curriculum and Enrollment Advisory Group (2010-2012), the University of Michigan Press Board (2012-present), and the CRLT/Humanities Institute Committee for the “Certificate +” program (an initiative to promote and certify graduate students in teaching with digital media).

#### External Reviewers:

##### Reviewer (A)

“In modernist studies, Prof. Whittier-Ferguson has a strong and steadying presence. His scholarship is well-known and, more importantly, well-regarded. ... *Mortality and Form* will be, I predict, a galvanizing book in the field.”

##### Reviewer (B)

“...[*Mortality and Form*] is a complex, beautifully written, copiously researched, and finally illuminating study of four modernist writers at their most difficult moments of the twentieth century.”

##### Reviewer (C)

“His work has made, and continues to make, major contributions to some of the most significant areas in recent and contemporary literary studies, including genetic criticism and manuscript studies, and the relationships between historical contexts and literary forms.”

##### Reviewer (D)

“...[*Mortality and Form*] represents a substantial contribution to our knowledge of literary modernism, it is consistently well written and adeptly and engagingly argued. ...it is hard to imagine how this project will not qualify as a record of meaningful scholarly accomplishment...”

##### Reviewer (E)

“In my view, he not only has added a second major strand of scholarly achievement to the achievements of his earlier career, he has confirmed an international reputation and would be promoted to full professor in any major research institution in the country.”

Reviewer (F)

"Each generation needs gifted scholars who can bring literary works to life in all their wondrous, vital power for new readers. John Whittier-Ferguson ranks with the best such scholars. His engaging book carries the intellectual passion apparent in his teaching record into a comparative analysis that casts new light on a crucial aspect of modernist literature... ..students to experienced scholars, readers will find this a valuable, thought-provoking study."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Whittier-Ferguson has amassed an impressive record of scholarship, teaching, and service. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor John A. Whittier-Ferguson be promoted to the rank of professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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Susan A. Gelman

Heinz Werner Distinguished University Professor,  
Professor of Psychology and Interim Dean  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

May 2014