

Approved by the  
Regents  
May 21, 2015

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
COLLEGE OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS

Sean R. Silver, assistant professor of English language and literature, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Art.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D. 2008 University of California, Los Angeles  
B.A. 1994 Claremont McKenna College

Professional Record:

2009 – present Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature  
University of Michigan  
2008 – 2009 Lecturer, University of California, Los Angeles

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Silver has offered courses that enrich and expand the curriculum. His teaching has been characterized by its remarkable range and innovative pedagogical methods, and by the size of his classes. Early in his teaching career at Michigan, Professor Silver began to teach large enrollment core courses of the undergraduate English major. His teaching has made him the linchpin of the undergraduate course offerings in Restoration (1660-1714) and 18<sup>th</sup> century literature, a period deemed by many students to be dry and inaccessible. He is devoted to making this material come alive for the students. His addition of visual and digital technology in the classroom has produced excellent results and led him to apply for and receive a Teaching with Technology Institute Course Development Grant for his “Games and Literature” course. Many students describe this course, which brings game theory to the teaching of literature, as one of the most thought-provoking experiences they have had at the university.

Research – Professor Silver’s research focuses on the history of ideas; specifically ideas about the workings of the mind in Britain from the Restoration through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since arriving at Michigan in 2009, Professor Silver has completed a book, published four scholarly articles, with two more forthcoming and two under review, and co-edited a forthcoming anthology. His scholarship has received significant recognition with a major prize from the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies for one of his articles, and a research fellowship from Michigan’s Institute for the Humanities. With the forthcoming publication of his first monograph by University of Pennsylvania Press, more accolades are expected to follow.

Recent and Significant Publications:

The Mind is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought, University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 2015.

“Hooke, Latour, and the thesis of extended cognition,” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, forthcoming 2015.

“The social construction of ‘social imaginaries,’” *Cultural Critique*, forthcoming 2014.

“Pale Fire and Johnson’s Cat: The anecdote in polite conversation,” *Criticism*, 53(2), 2011, pp. 243-266.

Service – Professor Silver has performed an exceptional amount of service in his department, including the Executive Committee, the Salary Committee, and the Graduate Admissions Committee. He has been the co-coordinator of the Eighteenth-Century Studies Group and co-chaired the Junior Faculty Forum for three years. He has also organized a Guest Scholar Workshop – a series of workshops that permit doctoral students to invite to crucially influential scholars to campus.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“Professor Silver is one of the most intellectually ambitious academic thinkers I have encountered in a long time. ... I believe it [The Mind is a Collection] will make a very strong impact on the field of eighteenth-century studies, the history of museums, and the history of science and technology more generally.”

Reviewer (B)

“...*The Mind is a Collection* is an original and provocative work that breaks new ground in eighteenth-century studies. ... The book is extremely well researched, and Professor Silver orchestrates effectively a vast amount of secondary material drawn from art history, philosophy, and aesthetics to elucidate his arguments. It is a truly significant work of interdisciplinary scholarship that I will encourage my colleagues and graduate students to read.”

Reviewer (C)

“The range of Professor Silver’s reference, embracing disquisitions on art, medicine, aesthetics, scientific prosthesis, gaming and obstetrics, not to mention literary theory...is vast and for the most part magisterial. ...his career will be notable for an expanding stream of ideas of immense benefit to his students and colleagues alike.”

Reviewer (D)

“...one of the most energetic, inventive, and promising scholars [of his cohort] in the field of eighteenth-century studies. ... the range of Professor Silver’s articles seem[s] to me indisputable evidence that I’m reading a scholar who will be productive throughout his career and will write *many* books; this is a dossier that is simply fizzing with ideas and arguments and intellectual energy.”

Reviewer (E)

“...[The Mind is a Collection] is deeply learned work, but it is also playful and blatantly enamored of its period. I can’t imagine a better work to introduce a friend to the sheer zaniness of Enlightenment thought.”

Reviewer (F)

“...as I have read through his file, I have become convinced that he will be one of the most prominent voices of his generation in eighteenth-century scholarship...he already exhibits a maturity and range in his work that is very uncommon for a scholar at his career stage.”

Reviewer (G)

“The arguments advanced in The Mind is a Collection dive to the heart of important recent debates in eighteenth-century studies and in academia more generally... The book’s range of reference is simply dazzling. ... On the basis of his scholarship, I recommend without reservation that Sean Silver be granted tenure.”

Reviewer (H)

“What is remarkable about his work...is Silver’s ability to ‘talk across,’ not only across British literary periods but across national literary boundaries and humanities subfields generally. ... Silver’s work also seems very likely to stand the test of time, in that it is clearly written, supremely thoughtful, and strongly argued.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Silver’s dossier presents an impressive record of original, exacting interdisciplinary research on important and timely subject matter. He has compiled a strong record of excellence as a teacher and has made important contributions in service to his department. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Sean R. Silver be promoted to the rank of associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



---

Andrew D. Martin  
Dean, and Professor of Political Science  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

May 2015