

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

Maya Barzilai, assistant professor of Near Eastern studies, and assistant professor of Judaic studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Hebrew literature and Jewish culture, with tenure, Department of Near Eastern Studies, and associate professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2009	University of California, Berkeley
M.A.	2002	Hebrew University of Jerusalem
B.A.	1998	Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Professional Record:

2009 – present      Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Barzilai has taught a wide and impressive range of undergraduate and graduate courses, creating five new courses and thoroughly revamping two courses since her arrival at Michigan. Whether her courses are housed in the Departments of Near Eastern Studies (NES) or Judaic Studies, they have extended their reach to a considerable number of other departments and programs. These include courses cross-listed in the Departments of Screen Arts and Cultures, American Culture, Germanic Languages and Literatures, and Comparative Literature. Professor Barzilai brings a high degree of dedication and engagement to her teaching, including a clear focus on subject matter, teaching methodologies, and pedagogical approaches. Her student course evaluation scores are consistently high, placing her most of the time in the top 50% and at times in the top 25% of responses university-wide. Professor Barzilai has mentored undergraduate and graduate students, advised a prize-winning honors thesis in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, and served on five Ph.D. committees.

Research – Professor Barzilai is emerging as a major scholar of modern Hebrew, Yiddish, and German literatures. She is engaged in research that significantly contributes to the current scholarly conversations on the multilingual environment of modern Jewish literature and culture and on its relationships with national cultures more broadly. Her work is distinguished by close attention to aesthetic form and an investment in the historical, political, and social contexts of literature and visual culture, both canonical and under-represented. Professor Barzilai's book, Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters, and her articles on modern Jewish literary responses to war and violence are both insightful and original. Her ongoing study of German translations from Hebrew and Hebrew translations from German shows promise of an ongoing research agenda which is already reflected in two sophisticated articles on the dialogue between Hebrew and German literatures. Professor Barzilai is also working to expand her interdisciplinary reach into extensive study of screen arts and German literature.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters, New York University Press, 2016, ISBN: 9781479889655.

“Translation on the margins: Avraham Ben Yitzhak and Yoel Hoffman,” *The Journal of Jewish Identities*, 7(1), 2014, pp. 109-128.

“S. Y. Agnon’s German consecration and the ‘miracle’ of Hebrew letters,” *Prooftexts*, 33(1), 2013, pp. 48-75.

“Reading *Camera Lucida* in Gaza: Ronit Matalon’s Photographic Travels,” *Comparative Literature*, 65(2), 2013, pp. 200-219.

Service – Professor Barzilai has performed an extensive amount of service, having served on departmental committees in three different units. In NES, she has served on the Curriculum, Colloquium, Graduate Program, and Undergraduate Advising committees. Her work on the Curriculum Committee involved revamping and reviewing the department’s curriculum. She also served on lecturer search committees and a Hebrew Program Review. In Judaic Studies, Professor Barzilai has served on the Executive Committee, the Steering Committee of the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, and a search committee. In Germanic Languages and Literatures, she presented and attended departmental colloquia, and she served as an advisor for an honor’s thesis.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“Her accomplishments thus far suggest that she is poised to make important contributions to her fields. I am especially pleased regarding her serious and sustained interest in comparative and interdisciplinary research. She is one of a relatively small number of scholars who are helping to bring Hebrew literary studies into a multidimensional conversation with other languages and media.”

Reviewer (B)

“...Barzilai has not just met a high standard when it comes to the amount of scholarship she has produced and where she has published it. She has also produced an important and original body of scholarship. Just as importantly, there seems to be every reason to assume that she will continue to do so in the future.”

Reviewer (C)

“I would like to add that Prof. Barzilai’s Teaching Statement is a masterpiece that should be distributed among all; her pedagogical insights and profound understanding together with her sensitiveness to the actual practice is one of a kind. ... Prof. Barzilai is one of the best among her peers; her excellent work thus far promises many more well-researched, and original, studies, which will undoubtedly contribute immensely to the scholarship in her fields of interest.”

Reviewer (D)

“In prose that is never overburdened or jargoned, Barzilai covers an astonishing amount of ground in this monograph. It is an impressive scholarly debut that gives promise of important work to come.”

Reviewer (E)

“Reading Professor Barzilai’s Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters...has been an immensely rewarding experience, rich in interpretive insight and abundant in analytic and archival discovery.”

Reviewer (F)

“...she is an excellent, driven and inspiring scholar. Her work is original, meticulously researched, and intellectually challenging. ... I am convinced that Professor Barzilai has the potential to become a leading voice in the fields of twentieth-century Hebrew, German, and Yiddish literature and visual culture over the coming years.”

Reviewer (G)

“Maya Barzilai is a very productive scholar but more importantly, a patient and rigorous one, and her work is of a caliber that I think is quite strong for one in the first few years of an academic career. The University of Michigan is very fortunate to have such a creative, energetic, and multifaceted intellectual and colleague, someone who is clearly contributing to the stature of comparative literature, Jewish Studies and related programs.”

Reviewer (H)

“I was very impressed with Dr. Barzilai’s work: it is solid and serious as well as meaningful. I found myself reading her dossier with a growing interest and was delighted to discover such a fresh and current thinker who writes simply and directly yet insightfully as well and unencumbered by jargon.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Barzilai’s intellectual reach contributes significantly to a cohort of scholars studying Jewish literatures in comparative perspective. Her teaching portfolio exemplifies the interdisciplinary missions of her units. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Maya Barzilai be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Hebrew literature and Jewish culture, with tenure, Department of Near Eastern Studies, and associate professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



---

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

May 2017