

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

Barbra A. Meek, associate professor of anthropology with tenure, and associate professor of linguistics, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of anthropology, with tenure, and professor of linguistics, without 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:

2009 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Michigan
2008 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan
2001 – 2008	Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Meek teaches a range of undergraduate and graduate courses, some of which are in rotation with others, that crucially extend the department’s offerings in linguistic anthropology, engage with the wider college through cross-listings, and uniquely contribute to the range of departmental offerings that fulfill the race and ethnicity requirement. In particular, Professor Meek offers courses that concern North American indigenous peoples’ cultures, histories, and languages, as well as broader courses on language and society. Her course design and teaching at all levels demonstrates a balanced commitment to theoretical and empirical materials appropriate to level, makes strong use of her own research and stature in the field of Native North American linguistics and, where appropriate, highlights ethical and political dilemmas that bring scholarship into engagement with histories of exploitation and contemporary human rights issues. Professor Meek’s undergraduate offerings are particularly vital to the university’s commitment to inclusion and diversity in this regard. The evaluations she receives from students are well within the general range of our associate and full professor faculty, and, as with many faculty members, improve as the course material overlaps more directly with her own research.

Research – Professor Meek’s scholarly work focuses on language endangerment and revitalization, media and institutions that engage with indigenous languages (such as films and schools), and covert racism and racialization involving Native Americans. In all of these areas, language is a key factor in (re-)producing social inequality. Professor Meek concentrates on the unexpected and subtle ways this happens and takes an ethnographic approach to these linguistic issues, addressing them in fine-grained and sensitive detail that always attends to the national and global contexts involved. Professor Meek has become nationally and internationally recognized for her innovative work. Her research has been supported by both internal and external grants, among them a Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant, a National Science Foundation workshop grant, and a Michigan Humanities Fellowship –

all significant awards that were received post-tenure and signal her scholarly standing and visibility.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“The politics of language endangerment,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, N. Bonvillain (ed.), Routledge, 2015, pp. 447-462.

“She can do it in English too: Acts of intimacy and boundary-making in language revitalization, Special Issue: *Endangered Communities*, P. V. Kroskrity and N. Avineri (eds.), *Language and Communication*, 38, 2014, pp. 73-82.

“The voice of (white) reason: Enunciations of difference, authorship, interpellation, and jokes,” in *Confronting the Past and Constructing the Present: Language Ideology and Identity*, S.T. Bischoff, et al. (eds.), John Benjamins Publisher, 2013, pp. 339-363.

We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community, University of Arizona Press, 2010, paperback edition 2012.

Service – Professor Meek’s service – departmental, university, and disciplinary – is extraordinary. She has served on the Department of Anthropology’s Executive Committee (2008-2015), was the director of graduate studies, and associate chair, among many other departmental and interdepartmental committees. As Faculty Diversity Ally in the department (2013-present), member of the Rackham MORE committee 2011-present), and serving on the LSA ADVANCE Advisory Board (2014-2017), Professor Meek has been committed to enhancing the diversity of faculty and graduate students in LSA. Outside the university, her record includes manuscript reviewing for many journals and presses, national-level committees, a National Science Foundation sponsored workshop, organizations focused on indigenous peoples, and most importantly, service indigenous communities themselves. This impressive record makes important contributions to the university’s commitment to diversity and inclusion.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“By all measures—productivity, intellectual leadership, influence—she has already achieved seniority within linguistic anthropology. Her book has had a transformative effect on the study of language shift and revitalization, her state-of-the-field essays...testify to the authority and command she holds within the field... She is a credit to your department and your university...”

Reviewer (B)

“She is one of the leaders in the field of the ethnography of language shift, maintenance and revitalization, and her work has had an important impact in this area, especially the exploration of the ways in which bureaucratic processes largely foreign to indigenous societies interact with local efforts at linguistic and cultural maintenance in unexpected and surprising ways.”

Reviewer (C)

“Her work is ground-breaking (from my standpoint as a linguist) for its careful ethnographic focus on issues that are extremely important to linguists, who continue to treat language as if it could be separated from speakers. Meek’s research shows that it cannot.”

Reviewer (D)

“I would regard her as the pacesetter in all of academia when it comes to the production of critical ethnographic studies of language revitalization activities in the Americas. No scholar manages as well to incorporate big picture political economic context while still capturing fine-grained interactional details of language revitalization processes and the micro-cultural delivery and reception of revitalization pedagogies in the classroom as does Professor Meek. Her work on the Kaska is the benchmark for all scholars working to better understand the dynamics of language documentation and language revitalization in all their complexity.”

Reviewer (E)

“Over more than 15 years of her academic career, Dr. Meek has advanced the field theoretically, methodologically, and in terms of on-the-ground language revitalization practice. Her publication record is strong and her contributions to linguistic anthropology and applied linguistics continue to grow. There is no question that she will continue to develop as a nationally and an internationally recognized scholar. I am therefore pleased to provide my very strong and positive evaluation of her file.”

Reviewer (F)

“...her work is of consistent high quality, and it is well cited in the anthropological linguistics literature. She is one of a small group of people who are keenly interested in the area of language endangerment and revitalization from an anthropological perspective, and her work is highly respected in this area.”

Reviewer (G)

“I consider Professor Meek a highly accomplished linguistic anthropologist who has made important and influential contributions to research on Native American languages and communities, as well as the representation of Native Americans in the dominant culture.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Meek has a record of exemplary scholarship, important research, and innovative publications that have raised the field in which she works to new levels of excellence. Her teaching is consistent with her scholarship in its high standards and her record of service is extraordinary. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Barbra A. Meek be promoted to the rank of professor of anthropology, with tenure, and professor of linguistics, without 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

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