

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

Melanie R. Yergeau, 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 Arts.

Academic Degrees:

2011	Ph.D.	The Ohio State University
2007	M.A.	DePaul University
2005	B.A.	Geneva College
2002	A.A.	New Hampshire Technical Institute

Professional Record:

2011 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan
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Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Yergeau has been a very successful undergraduate and graduate teacher. Her courses, which cluster around the intersections of writing, rhetoric, and disability, are deeply informed by her scholarly knowledge and her mindfulness of pedagogical theory. Her unusually thoughtful and creative syllabi are designed to meet defined learning goals for students, who regularly express appreciation for the relevance of the assignments to their educational goals as writers and prospective teachers. Students consistently describe Professor Yergeau as passionate, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic, as well as helpful, accessible, and understanding. She currently chairs or co-chairs four dissertation committees; she is also serving or has served on eleven additional doctoral committees and is on three external dissertation committees.

Research – Professor Yergeau is a specialist in the subfield of rhetoric and composition, and she has devoted her scholarship to rethinking fundamental categories and assumptions of rhetorical theory. Her recent work notes that historically, theories of mind and medicine have presumed that because autistic people cannot understand the effects of their words on their audience, they are incapable of rhetoric and are therefore not fully human. In response, Professor Yergeau proposes that autistic, or neuroqueer, rhetoric constitute forms of expression that must be taken seriously. She then explores this rhetoric, describing a synesthetic rhetoric, a rhetoric of being and acting in the world. The work, which includes an in press book from Duke University Press, has positioned her as a leading figure in the fields of rhetoric and composition as well as disability studies. Her exceptionally strong publication record suggests that she will continue producing high-impact, high-quality work that will transform conversations in the discipline.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness, Duke University Press, under contract.  
“e.pluribus plures: DMAC and its keywords,” with C. Boyle, et al., *Computers and Composition*, 36, 2015, pp. 1-15.  
“Clinically significant disturbance: On theorists who theorize theory of mind,” *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 33(4), 2013, <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3876/3405>.

Relationships and Sexuality: A Handbook for and by Autistic People, with E. Ashkenazy (co-ed.), sponsored by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, Autism NOW, and The Arc, 2013 eBook.

Service – Professor Yergeau has successfully taken on a heavy service burden at the department, university, and national levels, and she has developed a reputation as a strong and effective advocate for disabled students and scholars. Her responsibilities have included service on the departmental Executive Committee, three Center for Research on Learning and Teaching committees, and the Advisory Committee for the provost’s Seminar on Teaching. She also serves on three editorial boards, has edited a journal, and has been a member of ten national committees in the fields of composition, digital studies, and disability studies.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“I’ve come to associate summer with reading the kind of safe, turgid, and predictable professional writing that authors submit when up for tenure. What a breath of fresh air, then, to encounter the work of Melanie Yergeau! Unexpected, bold, confrontational, and often brilliant, Yergeau’s work is anything but boring or predictable. ... I think Authoring Autism is a tremendous book: powerfully written, drawing knowingly on a wide and diverse body of theoretical sources, and making a fresh and important argument. ... Her writing is important and original, and it positions her to become a major figure in the field of disability studies.”

Reviewer (B)

“...working across disability studies and composition studies is Yergeau’s primary strength, and her case is impressive in that she has clearly established herself as expert in both fields... By pathologizing typically autistic behaviors, various institutions, establishments, and the general public deny such behaviors intentional and persuasive force, and consequently many autistic people’s engagement with public concerns and conversations is elided. Yergeau critically interrogates how this process occurs, using queer work on the critique of normalization and normalizing regimes as one of her important theoretical frames. ... This is intellectually clever and compelling. It keeps open the possibility of learning from experiences outside the norm, even while questioning the constriction of ableist [sic] norms of identity and communicative ability.”

Reviewer (C)

“I believe the academy is full of wonderful scholars, but there are a select few that I consider it unambiguously important to support: the work they do is so thoroughly valuable that they deserve venues of permanence. Yergeau is one of these scholars. ... As a reader, I had the chills that accompany the realization I am in the presence of a thinker who is devoted to changing, inverting, and challenging the ‘reality’ of conventional wisdom.”

Reviewer (D)

“...Dr. Yergeau is the leading scholar [of her cohort] in the intersection of rhetoric, writing, and disability studies, and her scholarship has already redefined the possibilities for this interdisciplinary junction. ... I would rate all of the major essays as well as her book manuscript as *outstanding* scholarship. The candidate has published in every top tier journal across her disciplinary engagements, establishing a cohesive, ambitious, and very successful research agenda, building momentum across her probationary years.”

Reviewer (E)

“My summary evaluation of Professor Yergeau is that she is one of the most productive early-career faculty that I have seen in my reviews of tenure and promotion cases and as a department chair. With regard to her peer group, there is little doubt that she is at the leading edge. ... Her work is angry, funny, smart, and deeply rhetorical. ... Her argument has me reconsidering commonplaces in our field and, of course, some of my own work. The scholarly work that I value the most is the work that unsettles me and helps me learn. This book does both.”

Reviewer (F)

“Yergeau singlehandedly opens autism to an entirely new level of understanding and analysis. Her work will be read broadly and cited widely across a number of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and medical sciences. ... This will be a landmark text in Disability Studies and beyond.”

Reviewer (G)

“As a junior faculty member, Prof. Yergeau sits on or has sat on thirteen dissertation committees... Thirteen is an impressive to borderline abusive number of committees to be on as a junior faculty member, and it shows how much she is sought after at her institution and beyond. It doesn't surprise me. For anyone studying rhetoric and autism, she is simply the must have scholar on the committee, no question. ... Prof. Yergeau is an extremely engaging writer. I don't doubt that Authoring Autism will catapult her to the position of public scholar, with audiences within the academy and without. On nearly every page there is something quotable, and analytically startling, true, and clear, all at the same time.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Yergeau is an established leader in her fields who will continue to produce outstanding research over the course of a long career. Her contributions to the teaching and service missions of the college have been exemplary. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Melanie R. Yergeau be promoted to the rank of associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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

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