

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

Juhn Y. Ahn, assistant professor of Asian languages and cultures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

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| Ph.D. | 2007 | University of California, Berkeley |
| M.A. | 2003 | University of Michigan |
| B.A. | 1999 | University of Michigan |

Professional Record:

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| 2011 – present | Assistant Professor, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan |
| 2006 – 2011 | Assistant Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto |

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Ahn is an effective teacher who has taught a wide range of undergraduate classes, from large lecture courses (e.g., Introduction to Buddhism, and Zen: History, Culture, Critique), to smaller lectures and seminars on various aspects of Korean history, contemporary culture, and the history of science. He has expanded and developed the department’s pan-Asian and Korean studies offerings at the 200- and 300-level, participated in Korean studies distance-learning initiatives funded by the Korea Foundation, and enhanced the department’s study-abroad offerings. Undergraduate students credit him with creating an open atmosphere and with facilitating peer teaching. Professor Ahn has been a resource for graduate students across the university, acting as a preliminary examiner and directing independent studies for both M.A. and Ph.D. students.

Research – An expert on premodern Korean history and Buddhism, Professor Ahn’s work is both theoretically sophisticated and precise in historical and philological detail. He is a translator of great aptitude, rendering works from classical Chinese, Japanese, and Korean into accessible English, with a mastery of doctrinal, historical, political, and medical vocabularies in each of these languages. This linguistic and technical depth underlies his published works, all of which delve into classical texts and contexts, and tease out thematic resonances between traditions. His important new book, Buddhas and Ancestors: Wealth, Religion, and Family in Fourteenth-Century Korea, persuasively challenges accepted understandings of the transition between the Koryō Dynasty and the Chosōn Dynasty, when Buddhism was supplanted by Confucianism. Professor Ahn is a skilled storyteller who has demonstrated that he can open up obscure and arcane material, animating it for a broader audience. This rare talent is central to a humanities division and a college that are committed to strengthening their public mission.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Buddhas and Ancestors: Wealth, Religion, and Family in Fourteenth-Century Korea, Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute Series at Columbia University and the Korean Studies of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies Series, University of Washington Press, in press, expected May 2018.

Transgression in Korea: Beyond Resistance and Control, University of Michigan Press, in press, expected February 2018.

Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 7-1, Gonggan Collections I, J. Jorgensen (ed.), J. Y. Ahn (translator), published by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012, xxvii, 646 pages.

“The merit of not making merit: Buddhism and the late Koryŏ fiscal crisis,” *Seoul: Journal of Korean Studies*, 23(1), 2010, pp. 23-50.

Service – Professor Ahn has distinguished himself through his service to the department and his leadership within the university community. He served as a member of the departmental Curriculum Committee (2011-2013), where he had an active role in the conception, planning, and launch of four new pan-Asia large lecture courses. He restructured the capstone course and redesigned the honors major. Most recently, he took on the role of interim director of the Korean Language Program (2015-2016). Professor Ahn has served on the Executive Committee of the Nam Center since his first year at Michigan and has contributed significantly to the increased visibility and rapid growth of Korean studies, including organizing a large international conference titled “Transgression as a Secular Value: Korea in Transition?” Outside of Michigan, Professor Ahn has worked on the steering committee of the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religions and on the Committee for the Publication of Korean Buddhist Texts in Seoul.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“...[Ahn] ranks alongside the best scholars in his field not just in North America but globally. His work will not only be taken seriously by other scholars but will change the way the history of Buddhism in Korea is perceived.”

Reviewer (B)

“...the more carefully I read his work, and the more I considered his oeuvre as a whole and his overall research trajectory, the more Professor Ahn emerged for me as someone who deservedly, and without hyperbole, may be called brilliant. ...I am convinced he will ultimately emerge as one of the most innovative and influential scholars of his generation.”

Reviewer (C)

“Dr. Ahn writes clearly and engagingly. I enjoyed reading through the materials provided for this review. ... One of the great strengths of this manuscript, in my view, is the author’s critique, cogently argued and supported by substantial evidence, of the conventional interpretations of the decline of Buddhism as the result of a Neo-Confucian inspired anti-Buddhist movement or as the outcome of a fiscal crisis created by the corruption of Buddhist institutions.”

Reviewer (D)

“...I enthusiastically support Juhn’s tenure. The upcoming book ‘Buddhas and Ancestors’ will certainly put him in the rank of leading scholars in the field of Korean studies. There is no doubt that he will inspire many in the field for years to come.”

Reviewer (E)

“...Professor Ahn has produced a number of publications, including two book-length works. He has a forthcoming edited volume, Transgression in Korea: Beyond Resistance and Control, which has been accepted for publication by the University of Michigan Press. This work showcases a distinctively different set of his intellectual interests, as its component chapters as a whole examine subversion in contemporary South Korean society and culture from various angles.”

Reviewer (F)

“...Dr. Ahn has a very high standing the field of East Asian Buddhism—few are as dexterous as he in crossing the boundaries that separate East Asian Buddhist traditions, and his work is quite remarkable not only for this, but for his ability to delve deeply into materials of the Buddhist traditions of each country, and for the different methodological approaches he applies in each instance. In each case, he has new and interesting things to say. This is quite remarkable, especially for someone at his stage in his career. There are others who may display equal prominence in one of the three areas, but no one I know at his stage comes close to tackling all three with the adroitness, depth, and sophistication that Dr. Ahn exhibits.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Ahn is a rising star in the field of premodern Asian history, with considerable strengths in both Korean history and Buddhist studies. He is a scholar with the rare talent of bringing the results of his research to a wide audience. That skill is also evident in his teaching, where he has established himself as one of the most highly regarded teachers in the department. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Juhn Y. Ahn be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, 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 2018