

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan – Flint
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of English

Erica R. Britt, assistant professor of English, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of English, with tenure, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2011	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
M.A.	2007	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
M.A.	2004	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
B.A.	2002	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
A.A.	2000	University of Florida

Professional Record:

2011–Present	Assistant Professor of English, University of Michigan-Flint, Michigan
2008-2011	Teaching Assistant, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois
2006-2008	Research Assistant, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois
2002-2004	Teaching Assistant, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, North Carolina

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Britt is a dedicated teacher who effectively delivers on her commitment to the principles of student-centeredness and collaboration for her teaching as she seamlessly combines her teaching with her research and community engagement activities. Over the course of her career at the University of Michigan-Flint, Professor Britt has taught seven different undergraduate courses and three unique graduate level courses. Since the fall of 2011, Professor Britt has participated in three Teaching Circles, Reaching Across Disciplinary Boundaries (2012-13), Teaching for Equity (2013-13), and Alchemy of the Soul (2015-16); and was also awarded a Catalyst Course Design grant in 2011. Professor Britt's expertise and commitment to her students is also reflected in her serving as the co-supervisor for a Master's Thesis. She has also mentored two graduate student research assistants and ten undergraduate students through the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program – all through her Vehicle City Voices project. Not only do these activities underscore her commitment to her students, they also integrate her scholarly pursuits with her teaching and community engagement.

Research – Professor Britt is a sociolinguist and discourse analyst who explores the role of the African American Language in the American public sphere. In her 2011 publication, “‘Can the Church Say Amen:’ Strategic uses of Black Preaching Style at the State of the Black Union,” Professor Britt utilizes qualitative methods of conversation analysis to describe the linguistic features that participants of the 2008 State of the Black Union employed in their speeches. Professor Britt's approach also provides a compelling sociocultural interpretation which allows one to more fully understand the speakers' style. In her 2016 publication, “Stylizing the Preacher: Preaching, Performance, and the Comedy of Richard Pryor,” Professor Britt extends her methodology to an analysis of comedic performance and argues that by utilizing the linguistic features of African American preachers, comedians are able to contest the *status quo*. In addition to Professor Britt's theoretically and methodologically sophisticated research on African American Language which she has also presented at six different peer-reviewed national conferences, she has a second stream of research that is timely, relevant and impactful. For a number of years, Professor Britt has been deeply engaged with her community in her oral history project,

Vehicle City Voices. This is scholarly activity documents the discursive construction of identity within in Flint, Michigan – a city experiencing deindustrialization, economic inequalities, and environmental racism. The results from Professor Britt's research has been published by the University of Pennsylvania's Linguistic Data Consortium, an esteemed online archive with its own unique vetting process. Professor Britt's publications in a top tier journal for sociolinguistic research, in addition to her oral history project in Flint, have clearly established herself as a respected sociolinguist.

Recent and Significant Scholarly Activity:

Peer-Reviewed Publications

- Britt, E. (2016) Styling the Preacher: Preaching, Performance, and the Comedy of Richard Pryor. *Language in Society*, 45 (5): 685-708
- Britt, E. and T. Weldon (2015). African American English in the Middle Class. In S. Lanehart (Ed.), Oxford Handbook of African American Language. (pp. 800-816). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Britt, E. (2011). Can the Church Say Amen': Strategic uses of Black Preaching Style at the State of the Black Union. *Language in Society*, 40(2): 211-233.

Peer-Reviewed Conference Presentations

- Britt, E. Revolutionary Contradictions: An Investigation of Constructions of Race and Gender in the Performances of Richard Pryor. *Panel: Media and Marginalization: Disrupting Dominant Narratives of Gender and Race in Public Space*. The American Anthropological Association (AAA) conference. Minneapolis, MN. November 20, 2016
- Britt, E. Preaching, Performance, and the Comedy of Richard Pryor. American Dialect Society (ADS). Portland, Oregon, January 8, 2015
- Britt, E. Pryor's Preachers: An Examination of the Construction and Reconfiguration of Preaching Style in the Comedic Performances of Richard Pryor. The American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL). Portland, Oregon. March 24, 2014
- Collardey, E. and E. Britt. Enough is Enough! A Case Study Approach as a First Step in Eradicating Institutional Microaggressions, Bullying, and Harassment. 23rd Annual Equity In the Classroom Conference. Detroit, Michigan. April 9, 2013
- Allen, K., E. Britt, T. Currie, and D. Thomas-Jackson. Authenticity Through Our Linguistic Experiences. 25th Annual National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE). New York, New York. June 2, 2012.

Service – Professor Britt has a distinguished record of service that is characterized by her desire to seek out opportunities for service that create a climate of inclusion and build strong connections with the community. At the department level, Professor Britt is a keen advocate and participant for the assessment of student learning. She also currently serves on the Masters of Arts English Language and Literature Assessment Committee. Beyond her departmental service, Professor Britt has become a much-sought after participant for significant service roles throughout the university. As a member of the university's Diversity Council between 2012 and 2015, Professor Britt helped organize a panel entitled Access to Education: The Present and Future of Higher Education Affirmative Action which prompted a conversation about the importance of (and shifting role of) affirmative action policies in public universities. Between 2014 and 2016, Professor Britt served on the University Outreach and Engagement Faculty Advisory Committee, and the UM-Flint Women's Commission in which she explored ways that the university could better support the working lives of women and provide professional support networks for women in our community. Professor Britt has also served as a facilitator for discussions during the 2016-17 academic year in connection with the campus' Common Read Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates. During the 2017-18 academic year, Professor

Britt is leading discussions of Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow*. Professor Britt has also contributed to her local and professional communities by serving on the Board of Directors of the Beecher Scholarship Incentive Program (BSIP) from 2014-2015 and prior to that appointment, Professor Britt worked with BSIP and the Greater Flint Educational Symposium Planning Committee to secure funding, plan the submission process, organize the program and secure supplies. For her professional community, Professor Britt continues to serve as a reviewer for the Linguistic Society of America and the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): "Of greatest importance herein, Dr. Britt has produced a strong – indeed, superior – record of research and publications in top tier journals that are comparable to the best scholars in the field of sociolinguistics, including assistant professors throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Australia... Readers of this letter should note the detailed linguistic analyses contained in these publications, including extensive phonetic, phonological, morphological, and other extensive linguistic details, all produced with a degree of scientific precision that is consistent with the finest scholarship in the field. ... Dr. Britt has produced a record of research and publication that is superior to many highly regarded sociolinguists who already hold tenure as associate professors elsewhere... The essential point is that Dr. Britt's publications in top-tier journals that compete globally for articles are consistent with, or superior to, those produced by other candidates I have reviewed favorably for tenure within the past three years."

Reviewer (B): "Professor Britt is an expert in African American English (also referred to as African American Language) and particularly in African American discourse, and she is a rising star in this field. I can think of no other researcher at her career stage working in this area who so seamlessly brings together technical linguistic analysis with insightful sociocultural interpretation. It is clear from the materials I reviewed that Professor Britt has developed an innovative and important research program that is broad and humanistic in scope, scientifically rigorous, deeply engaged with sociocultural issues, and richly interdisciplinary in its audience and implications. ... It is remarkable that not one but two of Professor Britt's publications appear (only a few years apart) in *Language in Society*, the premiere and extremely selective international journal for sociolinguistic research. This early record of excellence is a strong positive indication of Professor Britt's future scholarly trajectory."

Reviewer (C): "Dr. Britt's research brings an important perspective to the study of AAL by making at least three crucial contributions. First, she is committed to not merely describing AAL linguistic features but to examining what speakers achieve when adopting these features... Second, Dr. Britt's focus on a specific 'black preacher style' as opposed to a more general 'African American language' reflects an important theoretical assumption about how language conveys ethnic meanings... A final contribution of Dr. Britt's work comes from her sophisticated attention to the complex voicing structures that speakers can perform—that is, she attends to the fact that speakers can shift between one's 'own' voice and that of a social 'other,' for example, in stylized quotations in narratives."

Reviewer (D): "The candidate's work focuses on language in the African American community... More specifically, the work emphasizes performance and the construction of identity among African Americans, an area that is relatively understudied... The work presented shows that the candidate is able to build on findings from previous research in order to produce novel and significant new insights that contribute to scholarship in her field. ... [Stylizing the Preacher] involves the intriguing layering of an overt preacher performance over the conscious performance by a comedian of an African

American working class male. In examining this multilayered presentation of personae, the paper makes a contribution to constructionist work in sociolinguistics.”


Reviewer (E): “[In Stylizing the Preacher,] Erica is the first to combine attention to the genres of Black preaching and comedy in one paper, and she does so very skillfully. I admired her approach to it through the theoretical lens of stylization and performance, which, as she notes (p. 688), allows her to see linguistic variations as contesting the status quo, and revealing powerful insights into ‘the dynamic nature of language use.’ ... [‘Can the Church Say Amen:’ Strategic uses of Black preaching style at the State of the Black Union,] ... is a relatively rare expertise among researchers on African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or African American Language (AAL), and I welcome it!”

Reviewer (F): “All three are solid research publications in top-level, refereed journals or, in the latter case, a prestigious handbook, *The Oxford Handbook* on African American Language. The first two articles use a discourse-analytic perspective to look at one of the most essential dimensions of African American speech—the performance register in general and, in particular, in preaching and comedic style, both essential speech events in the African American community.” ... Both of her published articles in *Language and Society* make an important contribution to the research literature on African American speech on a discourse level... In this context, Dr. Britt’s research makes an important contribution to the full range of the varieties and styles of English used by African Americans.”

Summary of Recommendation:

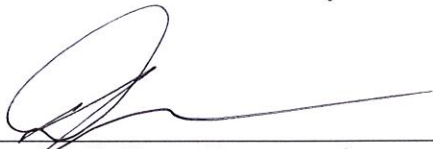
Professor Britt has demonstrated the requisite excellence in teaching, scholarly achievement and recognition, and service to her community, university and department. I am pleased to recommend Erica R. Britt for promotion to associate professor of English, with tenure, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences.

Recommended by:

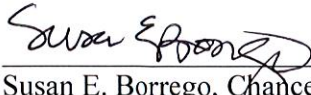


Susan Gano-Phillips, Dean
College of Arts and Sciences

Recommendation endorsed by:



Douglas G. Knerr, Provost and
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs



Susan E. Borrego, Chancellor
University of Michigan – Flint

May 2018