

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

Joshua M. Pasek, assistant professor of communication studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of communication studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2011	Stanford University
M.A.	2009	Stanford University
B.A.	2005	Pomona College

Professional Record:

2011 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies, University of Michigan
2011 – present	Faculty Associate, Center for Political Studies, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
2016 – present	Core Faculty, Michigan Institute for Data Science, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluations:

Teaching – Professor Pasek is a thoughtful and well-prepared teacher, who is generous with his time and energy for his students. A great deal of care goes into each syllabus, assignment, lab, and lecture he designs. The word “design” is appropriate here because each week builds on the next – each person’s role is carefully orchestrated and all of it builds toward a deeper, richer understanding of the material by the end of the term. A particular strength of Professor Pasek’s teaching is his intrinsic understanding of methodological approaches – along with their respective strengths and weaknesses – and how he works those into every curriculum, bringing students along in this understanding. Moreover, as with his research, he applies these methodological approaches to current, real-world topics in the political discourse. Courses he taught and designed, such as “Social Media and Politics” (COMM 422) and “Debating Politics and Science” (COMM 467), demonstrate practical applications of communication studies theory and methodology to upper-level undergraduate students while focusing on urgent social problems. Students leave these courses better prepared to question and interpret the vast amount of mediated data presented to them. He puts this same kind of effort and devotion into graduate student education. Professor Pasek is a generous collaborator, as well as time spent helping graduate students to refine their methods, research, and writing.

Research – Professor Pasek is a scholar of public opinion and a research methodologist who focuses on political communication that encompasses a wide range of subfields. Within his methodologically focused work, he is especially good at finding pressure points on canonical ways of approaching problems, and pressing on those until he finds an area for improvement and innovation, and thereby discovering new insights. His research portfolio is impressive. His journal placement is good and includes venues in communication studies that are quantitatively inclined as well as with general appeal. He also publishes in interdisciplinary journals that deal

with public opinion and methodology, such as *Public Opinion Quarterly* and *Electoral Studies*, to name a few.

Recent and Significant Publications:

- “It’s not my consensus: when individuals know and reject the scientific majority,” *Public Understanding of Science*, in press.
- “What motivates a conspiracy theory? Birthers, partisanship, and anti-black attitudes,” with T. H. Stark, et al., *Electoral Studies*, 40, 2015, pp. 482-489.
- “Misinformed about the affordable care act? leveraging certainty to assess the prevalence of misperceptions,” with G. Sood and J. A. Krosnick, *Journal of Communication*, 65(4), 2015, pp. 660-673.
- “Can marketing data aid survey research? Examining accuracy and completeness in consumer file data,” with S. M. Jang, et al., *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 78(4), 2014, pp. 889-916.

Service – Professor Pasek has an extensive service record at Michigan and to the wider community. Within his department, he has generously given his time in the redesign of core curriculum courses. He serves as the parliamentarian, a living index of the department bylaws and handbook. He has been instrumental in an overhaul and reconciling of the meeting and voting rules in both volumes as well as a resource for current interpretation. Recently, he and two colleagues from his department participated in Michigan’s Teach-Out Series: Fake News, Facts, and Alternative Facts – one of four courses to pilot the Academic Innovation series on the edX online education platform. This mini-course required Professor Pasek and his colleagues to put forth a great deal of work above and beyond their regular appointments. His external service is plentiful, and includes serving as an at-large board member for the Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research (2015-present), and previously as an at-large board member for the Information Technology and Politics section of the American Political Science Association (2014-2016). Professor Pasek has also reviewed for leading communication journals and leading interdisciplinary journals, such as *PLoS ONE* and *Science*.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“Throughout his career...he has moved from one problem to another, staying current and addressing contemporary issues of relevance in politics, while bringing important theoretical tools to bear and thereby advancing our understanding of the applicability of theory. ... Professor Pasek has a great sense of how to apply key theories to relevant problems and to keep the topical focus of his work fresh.”

Reviewer (B)

“... He has emerged as a world leader when it comes to the study of social media and public opinion. Indeed, he was selected for the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s task force on the topic, and it is quite rare for scholars [in his cohort] to be on such task forces.”

Reviewer (C)

“For a project I developed last year...we needed to implement survey weights so we could improve the quality, representativeness and generalizability of our data. After seeking for different solutions and approaches, Josh’s freely available research tool was the definitive

solution to our problem. This line of work he has developed...generates an invaluable academic contribution beyond what a more conventional peer reviewed journal publication path may reveal. Thus, I wholeheartedly commend this line of work as well. It qualitatively speaks about the impact in the field of an influential and collegial researcher.”

Reviewer (D)

“...I would consider Professor Pasek’s most significant substantive contributions to be those that help in our understanding of public opinion attitudes, especially as they relate to our measurement of those attitudes. I especially like his forthcoming POQ article about the perceived credibility of public opinion polls. ... Polling scholars and experts tend to evaluate polling credibility based on design of the survey, vendor track record, and the transparency of the methods used. ...Pasek and his co-authors show that public opinion about polling credibility instead reflects biased information processing. People find credible those polls that support their pre-existing beliefs and discount those that do not.”

Reviewer (E)

“...I feel very comfortable concluding that Professor Pasek would be welcomed onto our faculty and his overall record would compare highly favorably to our most productive people at a comparable career stage. I admire his ambitions, industriousness, research skills and the breadth of his conceptual and theoretical work. It is truly unique and impressive.”

Reviewer (F)

“Dr. Pasek has also become a leading authority on the relative strengths and weaknesses of traditional polling methods... ...[The questions he raises] are central to debates among communication scholars today about the best ways to study public opinion as technologies dramatically change the information and opinion environment. While the questions at stake may seem arcane, they are critical to the future of social science research.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Pasek’s research ingenuity and quality with lasting relevance and impact along with his trajectory as an increasingly prolific and prophetic scholar make him an enormous asset to this university. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Joshua M. Pasek be promoted to the rank of associate professor of communication 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 2018