

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

Sarah E. Moss, associate professor of philosophy, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of philosophy, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2009	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
B.Phil.	2004	Oxford University
A.B.	2002	Harvard University

Professional Record:

2013-present	Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan
2009-2013	Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Moss consistently receives strong evaluations from students in all her courses, from the introductory survey of philosophy to advanced offerings in epistemology. She has created two exciting new courses: Applied Epistemology—Race, Ethnicity and Knowledge (PHIL 384), and Formal Methods (PHIL 413), a popular course that teaches undergraduate and graduate students a range of important formal philosophical methods beyond logic. She is a thoughtful teacher who shows students how complex philosophical theory can be applied to real-world issues such as racial profiling. Professor Moss has served on four dissertation committees.

Research – Professor Moss is internationally recognized as a leading epistemologist, whose innovative work has set the agenda for future research in the field, especially in formal epistemology. She has developed a mathematically rigorous framework for unifying traditional and formal epistemology that answers the two principal outstanding questions about the relationship between these branches of the theory of knowledge: how beliefs are related to credences, and how probabilistic beliefs can count as knowledge. Professor Moss has applied her framework to solve important problems internal to epistemology, as well as to assess the epistemic standing of socially significant practices such as racial profiling and the use of statistical evidence to meet legal standards of proof. She has continued to generate novel solutions to important epistemic problems after the recent publication of her blockbuster book, Probabilistic Knowledge.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Probabilistic Knowledge, Oxford University Press, 2018.

“Time-slice epistemology and action under indeterminacy,” in Oxford Studies in Epistemology, J. Hawthorne and T. Szabó Gendler (eds.), 5, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 172-194.

“Credal dilemmas,” *Noûs*, 49(4), 2015, pp. 665–683.

“On the semantics and pragmatics of epistemic modals,” *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 8(5), 2015, pp. 1–81.

Service – As director of graduate studies, Professor Moss identified several major initiatives to improve Philosophy’s graduate program, including providing greatly improved sets of advice to help students move from coursework to independent research, updating and clarifying the regulations for the Ph.D. program, and, most importantly, supporting the careers of several women in the department through skilled and caring coaching that is attuned to internal regulations concerning progress to degree.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“[Professor Moss’s] work on epistemic vocabulary, leading up to and extending beyond the book, puts her at the vanguard of a small movement which has made this an absolutely central topic in contemporary philosophy of language. ...Moss is a world-class philosopher, doing research that is widely recognised as being at the forefront of her fields.”

Reviewer (B)

“...I consider Sarah to be one of the very best philosophers in the world, full stop Sarah’s work is always highly original, deeply insightful, and masterfully written and crafted. In a world full of papers/books that offer (at best) incremental advances and minor tweaks, Sarah’s written works are refreshingly bold, deep, and edifying. Indeed, every paper/book of hers I have read has changed the way I think about the topic in question... Every single thing she has written is (imho) a masterwork — both in terms of its originality and creativity, and also in terms of its lucidity and probative value. Sarah is (for me) one of the few must-read philosophers.”

Reviewer (C)

“All of Moss’s work is of the highest quality: every paper I’ve read or heard her present has been clear, insightful, and interesting. The book is no exception. ... It’s a lovely display of how interesting, creative ideas can be rigorously and satisfyingly developed in a precise technical framework. ...the book is an outstanding contribution to the field, and is already being recognized as such. ...I expect it to set the standard for work in formal epistemology for years to come. ... I regard her as an outstanding scholar and as one of the best philosophers in her generation. Moreover, my judgment is widely shared: Moss already has national and international prominence in the UK and Europe...”

Reviewer (D)

“Sarah is one of the truly outstanding formal epistemologists of her generation... ...*Probabilistic Knowledge*, which constitutes part of her promotion file, will set a major component of the agenda in formal epistemology for the coming ten or twenty years. ... Two features that run through Sarah’s work are its richness and scholarly quality. Sarah draws on very careful and deep readings of the current literature, allowing her to link her work to many different debates. Her papers are also brimming with ideas. They do not take the approach of simply presenting a single idea. Rather, while all have a single overarching thesis, which drives them forward, they also have a rich array of underlying theses and suggestions and conjectures and arguments that add up to an extremely rich piece of philosophy. This makes her work really stand out from most others in her area.”

Reviewer (E)

“The quality, quantity, and influence of her work reaches the highest levels of professional achievement. She would deserve promotion in any Philosophy Department in the world. ...[*Probabilistic Knowledge*] is not merely an original, ambitious book pulled off with rigour, clarity, and honesty. It is the sort of book that both stretches and binds together the whole breadth of philosophy. ... *Probabilistic Knowledge* lays out a startlingly powerful case for a root-and-branch revision of the philosophy of mind and its epistemology. It is thus a truly important book in theoretical philosophy.”

Reviewer (F)

“I regard the quality of her work rather generally as outstanding, in the boldness, originality, and sweep of her ideas, combined with the detail and rigour of her arguments for them, and the clarity and engagingness of her presentation. That is confirmed by the fact that she publishes largely in the very top international journals of philosophy... She also makes ingenious applications of her very general and abstract framework to specific practical issues, including the role of statistical evidence in legal proof and racial profiling, and of individual experience in decision-making. Her approach is both mathematically elegant and supported by a wealth of telling examples. ...I am confident that many of the ablest of the generation of epistemologists and philosophers of language will be engaging with her ideas for many years to come, given the freshness, technical power, and precision of her account, its deep-rooted motivation, and its practical connections with contemporary political issues. Internationally, in the areas in which she works, she is one of the highest-profile philosophers of her generation.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Moss is a world-class epistemologist who has made pioneering contributions to formal and applied epistemology, setting the agenda for future research in the field. She is a popular and effective instructor across a wide range of courses, who greatly enhances the department’s curriculum and has improved regulations and coaching of graduate students. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Sarah E. Moss be promoted to the rank of professor of philosophy, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Elizabeth R. Cole, Interim Dean
Professor of Women’s Studies, Psychology,
and Afroamerican and African Studies
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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