

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

Ellen Muehlberger, associate professor of Near Eastern studies, with tenure, associate professor of history, with tenure, and associate professor of classical studies, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of Near Eastern studies, with tenure, professor of history, with tenure, and professor of classical studies, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2008	Indiana University, Bloomington
M.A.	2001	Indiana University, Bloomington
B.A.	1995	Western Michigan University

Professional Record:

2015 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Department of History, and Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan
2009 – 2015	Assistant Professor, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Department of History, and Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan
2008 – 2009	Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies, DePauw University

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Muehlberger’s teaching is highly successful and student evaluations of her courses, from introductory as well as advanced courses, are exemplary. She has taken on the 200-level introductory lecture course in Middle East Studies (MES) and not only rebuilt the curriculum and enrollments, but she has also displayed her admirable breadth of knowledge by teaching across centuries and subject areas. Since 2015, she has served on eleven doctoral committees, two of which she chaired and two of which were external to UM. As the director of graduate studies in MES, Professor Muehlberger improved the mentoring and feedback systems for graduate students and implemented a program to speed new Ph.D. candidates toward completion of their first chapters. She initiated an investigation into ways to prepare graduate students for non-academic careers by broadening the scope of graduate education, receiving Mellon funding to explore this problem, and developing ways to address it.

Research – Professor Muehlberger belongs to a leading group of contemporary scholars who look toward Coptic and Syriac texts as key documents of late antique Christianity alongside the traditional canons in Greek and Latin. As a result, what once was considered “marginal” now has its place in “mainstream” research, showing the ways that ideas and texts circulated, built upon each other, and diverged across a broad, developing Christian space. Her new book, The Moment of Reckoning, impresses by virtue of its lean and elegant presentation. In the convergence of traditional patristics with the social and intellectual, it offers a timely argument about beliefs, morality, and the religious justification of violence, which is certain to initiate a sustained debate across the humanities.

Recent and Significant Publications:

The Moment of Reckoning: Imagined Death and Its Consequences in Late Ancient Christianity,  
Oxford University Press, release date March 1, 2019.

Practice, volume 2 of The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings, Cambridge University  
Press, 2017.

“The morphing portrait of a church father: Evidence from the *de morte* (PG 4886) attributed to  
John Chrysostom,” *Eirene: Studia Graeca et Latina*, 52, 2016, pp. 407-419.

“The legend of Arius’s death: Imagination, space, and filth in Late Ancient Historiography,”  
*Past & Present: A Journal of Historical Studies*, 277, 2015, pp. 3-29.

Service – Professor Muehlberger has a strong track record of service within the university and  
within the scholarly community, domestically and internationally. She has gone above and  
beyond the requirements of her home units and has sought out ways to work toward equity in a  
variety of academic contexts. In MES, she has served as the director of graduate studies for two  
years. In History, she has served on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. She is also  
an elected member of the Executive Committees in both departments. She currently serves on  
the editorial boards of *Studies in Late Antiquity* and *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, and she  
recently served on the editorial board for *Marginalia*. She is also serving as one of four editors  
of the massive, six volume Cambridge Editions of Early Christian Writings.

#### External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“One of...[Muehlberger’s] main qualities is her knowledge of...oriental languages which enable  
her to study texts of different cultural areas of late antiquity and to put them in dialogue with well-  
known texts. In several publications less known texts are presented and studied, whose  
contribution to our understanding of the topic discussed is not marginal.”

Reviewer (B)

“Muehlberger is a leader in the field internationally in bringing Coptic and Syriac materials into  
view, both through her scholarly writing and through critical projects of editing and translation  
such as are represented in the Cambridge Edition series. I cannot overstate how important this  
work of translation and editorial curation is for transforming the field as it is taught at all levels.”

Reviewer (C)

“Muehlberger is a highly trained and skilled historian, cultural critic, and philologist. This is  
evident in all her publications, which are impressive in their engagement with manuscripts and  
original language sources, even those that have remained unpublished until her work on them has  
brought them to light. ...Muehlberger is very well networked within the discipline. She has a  
strong academic reputation (everyone knows her and speaks highly of her work)...”

Reviewer (D)

“...[Professor] Muehlberger continues to operate at the forefront of the field and is, indeed,  
changing its parameter, as befitting the leader that she is. Her awards, fellowships and  
invitations speak for themselves. ...I would like to congratulate the departments for having such  
an astute, productive, imaginative, and wonderful colleague.”

Reviewer (E)

“...Muehlberger is a serious academic, a great contributor to the field of late ancient studies. From reading her teaching statement in relation to the sections of her publications that treat ancient education and *progymnasmata*, I find it easy to believe that she is a thoughtful pedagogue who seeks to demystify the classroom and who demands that students take ancient texts and their own scholarly labors seriously...making it clear how to succeed at this task in a busy postmodern world. I found myself learning deeply from her writings, grateful to be taught by this scholar.”

Reviewer (F)

“The body of work is thus coherent, accomplished, and at the same time promising for the future. Muehlberger already appears as a scholar to be reckoned with, a reputation that will be solidified permanently by the publication of the new book. I used to call Ellen Muehlberger a rising star in our field, but I can no longer say that. She is risen.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Muehlberger is establishing herself as a leading scholar in early Christianity, nationally and internationally. She is widely respected for her historical and philological work. Her new book and her translations from Coptic and Syriac are at the center of a significant change in her field. She is a truly outstanding teacher and a widely respected leader in the implementation of the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in her units and beyond. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Ellen Muehlberger be promoted to the rank of professor of Near Eastern studies, with tenure, professor of history, with tenure, and professor of classical studies, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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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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