

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

Kathryn Babayan, associate professor of Iranian history and culture, with tenure, and associate professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of Iranian history and culture, with tenure, and professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1993	Princeton University
M.A.	1987	Princeton University
M.A.	1983	Georgetown University
B.A.	1981	Wellesley College

Professional Record:

2011 – present	Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Michigan
2002 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Middle East Studies, University of Michigan
1996 – 2002	Assistant Professor, Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan
1992 – 1995	Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of North Texas

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Babayan is much admired as a teacher and mentor, who gives generously of her time, and has an unusual talent for listening to students and helping them develop and learn to articulate their own thoughts. Mentorship was a crucial component of her leadership at the Armenian studies program where she oversaw a fellowship program and a series of student-driven workshops, several of which resulted in edited volumes. Professor Babayan’s teaching has been central to Middle East Studies development of its Iranian Studies Program, but she has also taught in a wide range of other areas, and her courses relating to gender and sexuality in the Islamic world have, in particular, been important additions to the MES curriculum.

Research – Professor Babayan is a historian of early Modern Iran, focusing in particular on Iran under the Safavid Dynasty. Trained at Princeton, she came to Michigan in 1996 and was promoted to associate professor, with tenure, in 2002. Her first book, a sweeping cultural history of charisma, kingship, and mystical religiosity, continues to be used as an essential contribution, and established her as an innovative critical voice in Iranian studies. Since then, she has pursued new avenues of scholarly exploration, often in fruitful collaboration with others, like the role of Armenians in Iranian history and the history of sexuality. At the center of the promotion dossier is a study of the city of Isfahan, for which Professor Babayan draws together much of her earlier work and more recent research, bringing together mysticism and power, friendship, gender and sexuality.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Special Iran Issue, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Guest Editor, Spring 2019.

“Shah Isma’il,” *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, Princeton University Press, 2013.

“The Safavids in Iranian History, 1501–1722,” *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, T. Daryaee, ed., Oxford University Press, 2012.

“The Cosmological Order of Things in Early Modern Safavi Iran,” *Book of Omens: The Falnama*, M. Farhad, ed., Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Exhibition Catalogue, 2009.

Service – Professor Babayan has an outstanding record of service, which is most evident in her many years of leadership of the Armenian studies program. She not only raised significant new funds, she also turned the program into the most vibrant hub of Armenian studies in the country by intertwining academic work with Armenian arts and performances.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“All of Professor Babayan’s work has the mark of an imaginative historian, with an eye for details that lead to compelling stories. In reading her work, I always have the sense of being taken on a journey through the materials, with the author acting as a guide with a gentle, discerning touch. Her portrayals of people tend to be sympathetic in ways not evident in writing from other scholars and even in plain readings of the original sources.”

Reviewer (B)

“Professor Babayan will easily be promoted at my home institution... I would place her at the top rank of her cohorts without any doubt and recommend her promotion to the rank of professor with tenure at the Department of Middle East Studies and Department of History at the University of Michigan.”

Reviewer (C)

“Hundreds, if not thousands of such anthologies can be found in manuscript collections in Iran and around the world, but they are poorly catalogued. Their contents are sketchily indexed when they are indicated at all, and the Iranian archive is all but inaccessible to Western researchers. Kathryn has taken advantage of her access to Iranian libraries to explore how the residents of early modern Isfahan fashioned themselves into citizens of their new cosmopolitan world.”

Reviewer (D)

“Focusing on the cultural and social history of the Persianate world, her first book, *Mystics, Messiahs, and Monarchs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* argued that the sacredness of Safavid monarchs drew sustenance less from scriptural sources of Shi’a Islam than from broader processes of social memory, devotional practice, and popular myths to offer a much needed revised understanding of early modern Muslim kingship. Now a classic, her book has challenged the dominant narrative of the rise of Muslim empires in the early modern period and questioned the legalism and doctrinal basis of Islamic institutions of rule.”

Reviewer (E)

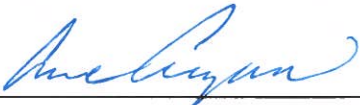
“...for the past decade and more Kathryn Babayan has been largely focused on another large and ambitious project, namely on numerous majmu‘a (anthologies) that are housed in a variety of collections, including in Tehran’s most prominent public libraries. This forms the basis for her forthcoming book, which is entitled *The City as Anthology: Eroticism and Urbanity in Early Modern Isfahan*. Located at the crossroads of urban history, gender history, literary history, and religio-cultural history, this work promises to be a landmark not only in Iranian history but more broadly.”

Reviewer (F)

“As regards teaching, Dr. Babayan has taught a good number of interesting and essential courses on history of Iran and Islam. Some of them should be adopted by other historians.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Babayan is one of the most important and innovative voices in Iranian studies. Her history of sustained collaboration contributes to her impact. She has successfully mentored graduate students formally and informally, and shaped a new generation of scholars. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Kathryn Babayan be promoted to the rank of professor of Iranian history and culture, with tenure, and professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Anne Curzan, Dean

Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of
English Language and Literature, Linguistics
and Education

Arthur F. Thurnau Professor

College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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