

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

Ruth Tsoffar, associate professor of women's studies, with tenure, associate professor of comparative literature, with tenure, and associate professor of Judaic studies, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of women's studies, with tenure, professor of comparative literature, with tenure, and professor of Judaic studies, without tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1993	University of California, Berkeley
M.A.	1985	University of California, Berkeley
B.A.	1981	Haifa University, Israel

Professional Record:

2017 – present	Associate Professor of Judaic Studies, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies
2008 – 2017	Associate Professor of Judaic Studies, without tenure, Frankel Center for Judaic Studies
2006 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Comparative Literature and Department of Women's Studies
2006 – 2009	Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology
2005 – 2008	Faculty Associate, Center for Japanese Studies
2005 – 2006	Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology
2002 – 2003	Director, Hebrew Program, Department of Near Eastern Studies
1999 – 2006	Assistant Professor, Hebrew Language and Culture, Department of Near Eastern Studies
1994 – 1999	Assistant Professor, Languages and Literature and Middle East Center, University of Utah
1983 – 1994	Teaching Associate and Lecturer, Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Tsoffar regularly teaches courses that contribute to the core curriculum in comparative literature and women's studies. Her course titled "Feminist Political Thought" is required for women's studies majors and minors. She also developed a "Women and the Bible" course that is cross-listed with Judaic studies, and that has served as an important staple of humanities instruction for women's studies students. In the Department of Comparative Literature, she introduced a course on "Home, Homeland, and Homelessness" that appeals to diverse undergraduate students. Her pedagogy is engaged, passionate, and demanding, and it is aimed at facilitating students' deep engagement with literary and cultural texts. She has also taught two graduate seminars and served on four dissertation committees.

Research – Professor Tsoffar is an innovative interdisciplinary scholar who has extended the study of Hebrew literature into anthropology, cultural studies, biblical studies, and gender studies. Her award-winning first book, *The Stains of Culture* (2006), introduced the concept of

“ethnoreading” and that is further elaborated in her second book, *Life in Citations: Biblical Narratives and Contemporary Hebrew Culture* (2019). The original conceptual framing, detailed textual analysis, and scholarly range of this book make it a major achievement. Since her promotion to associate professor in 2009, she has also published six articles.

#### Recent and Significant Publications:

*Life in Citations: Biblical Narratives and Contemporary Hebrew Culture*, Studies in Comparative Literature, Routledge, September 2019.

“Manifest Ha-Plitut-Arabeskot shel Anton Shammash” “The refugee’s manifest: Arabesques by Anton Shammash,” in *Pitaron Kolshehu Lishtikah (A sort of solution to silence: Modern Arab Literature in Hebrew)*, O. Grinberg, H. Hever, and Y. Ashkenazi, eds., Tel Aviv: Olam Hadash, 2018, pp. 98-131.

“Dissected Identity: Mizrahi Women, Space and Body, Part II,” *HAGAR Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities*, 7(2), 2007, pp. 35-66.

“Forget Baghdad (2003): Jews and Arabs—the Iraqi Connection,” in *North African and Middle Eastern Cinema*, Wallflower Press/Columbia University Press: London, 2007, pp. 257-65.

Service – Professor Tsoffar has been actively engaged in DEI initiatives as a Rackham Diversity Ally in both units, working to improve climate issues as they arise. She has served on the Executive Committees in both units, as well as on appropriate departmental committees. She served for a year as the director of graduate studies in Comparative Literature, and she regularly contributes to scholarly and pedagogic events.

#### External Reviewers:

##### Reviewer (A)

“...*Life in Citations* is a major accomplishment. It constitutes a brilliant contribution to scholarship and a remarkable intervention toward an understanding of Hebrew and Israeli literature and culture. It offers a groundbreaking analysis of Israeli Jewish subject formation, and of Zionist politics, a major reconsideration of the Zionist appropriation and activation, and reshaping, of the Jewish tradition.”

##### Reviewer (B)

“...[Professor] Tsoffar has produced a deeply thoughtful new book, using the concept of embodiment in a way that adds to and goes beyond other authors’ use of this concept.”

##### Reviewer (C)

“The book is replete with subtle, intimate, almost loving understandings of Israeli culture, which nevertheless undermine deep-seated pre-assumptions and undo accepted reading conventions. Tsoffar offers a contemporary (academic) masterpiece on Israeli culture.”

##### Reviewer (D)

“...[Professor Tsoffar] always takes the unexpected, not-travelled road, sees the unique and the outstanding point where others follow routine trajectories, and then comes up with new, original, and fresh points of view and foci of study.”

Reviewer (E)

“...Tsoffar combines a sophisticated theoretical cultural theory with an insightful and subtle interpretation of cultural artifacts. In addition, her work evinces a proper balance between academic standards and commitment to social justice.”

Reviewer (F)

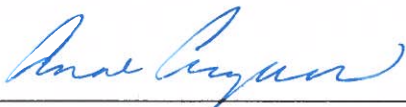
“Dr. Tsoffar’s book both substantiates the basic insight of the importance of citations, intertextuality, and biblical allusions...to modern Hebrew literature and turns this insight into an entirely new direction, one which explores the corporeal reverberations of intertextuality.”

Reviewer (G)

“Dr. Ruth Tsoffar has contributed meaningfully to the development of a historically informed and theoretically sophisticated discourse concerning Hebrew literature and culture as well as to the ethnography of Middle Eastern diasporas. Her interdisciplinary work combines careful scholarship with visible commitment, demonstrating an impressive sensitivity to the specific locations and contexts within which she writes.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Tsoffar is a highly original scholar who contributes importantly to the undergraduate teaching in both of her units. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Ruth Tsoffar be promoted to the rank of professor of women’s studies, with tenure, professor of comparative literature, with tenure, and professor of Judaic studies, without 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

May 2020