

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

Michael Witgen, associate professor of American culture, with tenure, and associate professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of American culture, with tenure, and professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

2003	Ph.D.	University of Washington
1988	B.A.	Texas Christian University

Professional Record:

2011– present	Associate Professor, Department of American Culture and Department of History, University of Michigan
2004 – 2011	Assistant Professor, Department of American Culture and Department of History, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Witgen is and has been an early advocate for such teaching innovations as the flipped classroom. Examples of his creative pedagogy have been featured by CRLT. His close mentoring of undergraduate writers has resulted in several undergraduate writing awards, and he is a fine advisor to graduate students. Professor Witgen is a deeply committed teacher. His intellectual passion, innovative scholarship, and commitment to diversity and equity infuse his classroom work. He reads and thinks about pedagogy, and undertakes experiments in the classroom

Research – Professor Witgen examines the history of the Anishinaabeg people of the Upper Great Lakes in relation to the colonial powers of France, Britain, and the United States. His recent work challenges prevailing theories regarding American expansion and the policy of Indian removal. A recent article derived from his new book project has won an important award, and his work is widely assigned in graduate courses, as his external letter writers attest. His research has propelled him to the forefront of what is known as the “continental” approach to early American history, but he attends to and utilizes the insights of other leading approaches, such as that which emphasizes the Atlantic, or that which examines settler colonization. His direct style and his deep archival work mark him as a leader and shaper of his field.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“A Nation of Settlers: The Northwest Territory and the early American Republic,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 76(3), 2019, pp. 383-90.
Seeing Red: Indigenous Land, Black Lives and the Political Economy of Plunder in North America, under contract with the Omohundro Institute for the Study of Early American History and Culture.

“Seeing Red: Race, citizenship, and indigeneity in the Old Northwest,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 38(4), 2018, pp. 581-612. Awarded the Ralph D. Gray Prize by the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic for the best original article published in the *Journal of the Early Republic*.

“American Indians in World History,” *Oxford Handbook of American Indian History*, F. Hoxie, ed., Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2016, 591-614.

Service – Professor Witgen has served for many years on the American Culture Executive Committee and as the director of Native American Studies. He has also served as a member of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Committee for the Office of Research, and on several search committees, including the university-wide national search for the new director of the William L. Clements Library. He serves on the board of the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, the leading organization for Colonial American History, and he chairs the editorial board of its journal, the *William and Mary Quarterly*.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“...Professor Witgen is a remarkably productive and important historian of early America and Native America with an outstanding trajectory that forecasts a stature that will continue to rise. I suspect his work is taught in nearly every graduate course in either field; certainly I teach it every year in mine and, indeed, have trouble deciding which of his many influential works to assign. ...He is already one of the most prominent scholars in early American and Native American history, and with the publication of this new book he will be one of its permanent stars.”

Reviewer (B)

“Professor Witgen’s new book project, *Seeing Red*...examines the intersection of ideas of race, national identities, and state building in the Northwest Territory, but with an important interpretative shift... the book’s most significant contribution will be methodological. *Seeing Red* is a broadly conceived work that makes a forceful contribution to the current debates about ingenuity, settler colonialism, and Indigenous identity formation in racially-charged contexts.”

Reviewer (C)

“...this is a strong promotion file that illustrates Professor Witgen’s emergence as a leading scholar in Native American history, early American history, and the history of the early United States. His work is appearing in the best journals in these fields and is making an impact on the way they are taught and on the way scholars are thinking about key interpretive issues. His new book manuscript is under contract with the most selective and influential publisher in the field, and I am confident that it, too, will advance Professor Witgen’s reputation and influence as it moves the field forward in important ways. ... Professor Witgen’s work would meet the requirements for someone being considered for promotion to full professor with tenure at [my institution].”

Reviewer (D)

“In my mind, there is no doubt about Professor Witgen’s standing in the numerous fields he currently straddles... He has been at the forefront of a small group of scholars who are helping to

transform our views of the settler colonial past of the new nations in North America, while continuing to illuminate the complex contours of Native American culture and history. He is, in short, an assiduous researcher and a brilliant scholar with an encyclopedic knowledge of early America. His work has already had a powerful impact on the fields of early American history, early Republic history, and Native studies. My own work has been immeasurably influenced by Professor Witgen's insights, along with a new generation of scholars who are following-up on this work to explore the many layers and contours of Native history in that region and further afield. ...he will continue to shape and lead these diverse and critical fields."

Reviewer (E)

"...[in *Seeing Red*] there is brilliant material here, and the product will be well worth waiting for. ...[Professor Witgen's] first book has made a major mark on the field; an article that is part of his ongoing book project has won a major award; and he has become widely recognized as a major voice in Native American History. Through all this he has revealed himself to be a complicated thinker, a marvelous excavator of stories, and an historian who does not write in linear drafts that develop in seamless stages or issue forth on the publication time clock."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Witgen is an internationally known scholar and teacher recognized for his expertise in early American and Indigenous and Native American history, and as a mentor for graduate students. He has an extraordinary record of productive administrative work. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Michael Witgen be promoted to the rank of professor of American culture, with tenure, and professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Anne Curzan, Dean
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