

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

Erin L. Brightwell, assistant professor of Asian languages and cultures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2014	Princeton University
M.A.	2007	University of Washington-Seattle
B.A.	2004	University of Washington-Seattle
B.A.	1995	Smith College

Professional Record:

2015 – present	Assistant Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan
2014 – 2015	Associate Professor (fixed term, special appointment) of Comparative Studies of Japanese Culture, Department of Integrated Humanities, Hiroshima University

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Brightwell is a thoughtful and exceptionally dedicated instructor. Since arriving at UM, she has developed and restructured eight undergraduate courses on a wide array of topics, from small seminars on medieval Japan to introductory courses on Japanese civilization over a large sweep of time. Her course offerings have furthered the department's mission to encourage students to conceive of Asia in terms of border-crossings. She demonstrates a strong commitment to connecting undergraduate students' own experiences to sometimes unfamiliar material. Professor Brightwell currently serves on three doctoral committees, has served on two master's thesis committees (one as chair), and advised one undergraduate honors thesis.

Research: Professor Brightwell's scholarship spans multiple literary genres, historical periods, and linguistic contexts. Her work explores classical Chinese and Japanese texts alongside modern Chinese, Japanese, and German sources, an uncommonly broad linguistic reach for her field. Her monograph, Reflecting the Past: Place, Language, and Principle in Japan's Medieval Mirror Genre, was published by the Harvard University Asia Center, one of the most prestigious presses in the field. The book analyzes a genre of premodern Japanese historical texts that were previously unstudied and, in many cases, untranslated, and was praised as an exemplary blend of philology and hermeneutics. Professor Brightwell has also been the recipient of two prestigious fellowships: the Japan Foundation Research Fellowship, 2018-2019, and the Hakuho Foundation Research Fellowship, 2018-2019.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Reflecting the Past: Place, Language, and Principle in Japan's Medieval Mirror Genre.
Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2020.

“Making Meaning: Lexical Glosses as Interpretive Interventions in the *Kakaishō*.” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 47(1) (in press: Winter 2021): 91-122.

“Constructing the China Behind Chinese in Medieval Japan: *The China Mirror*.” In *Nihon bungaku no tenbō o hiraku 日本文学の展望を拓く*, edited by Komine Kazuaki, 412-430. Tokyo: Kasama shoin, 2017.

“Refracted axis: Kitayama Jun'yū and writing a German Japan.” *Japan Forum* 27(4) (2015): 431-453.

Service: Professor Brightwell has been an exceptionally active member of the department. She has served on major committees within the unit (Curriculum Committee, 2016-2018, and Graduate Program Committee, 2018-present), as well as the Ad Hoc Faculty Governance committee in Winter 2017. She has also performed multiple lecturer reviews for the Japanese language program. Outside of the department, she is currently a member of the Center for Japanese Studies' Executive Committee, and has served on the Center's Faculty Research Grant Committee. She serves on the editorial board of the online journal *Studies on Asia*.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “The articles reflect a strong linguistic foundation as Brightwell has dealt with texts in classical Chinese, both classical (including kanbun and its variants) and modern Japanese, as well as German...It is clear that Brightwell's strengths lie above all in her courage to take on a number of diverse and rather unknown texts.”

Reviewer (B): “Brightwell has produced an impressive and original body of research...Her work on medieval literature is certain to have an impact and attract readers across several fields, including literature, history, religious studies, and may even attract notice outside East Asian studies among those interested in questions of historical interpretation and hermeneutics.”

Reviewer (C): “*Reflecting the Past* takes its place among a select group of first-rate monographs published in the last fifteen years that take literary approaches to historical writing in medieval Japan...The book will certainly have a scholarly impact on the field, and I will be assigning it in my graduate seminars as a model of what my Ph.D. students should aspire to.”

Reviewer (D): “*Reflecting the Past* represents a huge scholarly leap, the various elements of which are worth enumerating, in order to make the sheer volume of work more visible to reviewers of the case for tenure. *Reflecting the Past* locates manuscript texts, cross-references them and accounts for variation, transliterates and translates important passages, provides extensive glosses and annotation for these passages, assembles the scant secondary scholarship, fully contextualizes the primary text, and then essays a set of original theses concerning those texts. As such, Dr. Brightwell's monograph makes a crucial medieval genre broadly accessible to Anglophone audiences for the first time.”

Reviewer (E): “[Brightwell’s] ready ability to cross linguistic and disciplinary boundaries is just the kind of thing we need in the study of premodern Japan... With her strong linguistic and research skills and her talent for close, thoughtful reading of texts, she is poised to be a leader in a changing field during the decades to come.”

Reviewer (F): “Rarely do scholars span both premodern and modern eras in Japanese studies, much less traverse East Asia and Europe with ease, but [Brightwell] is the exceptional scholar who is able to do all of the above.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Brightwell is a rising star in the field of premodern Japanese literary studies, a dedicated teacher, and an all-around good citizen of her unit and the university. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Erin L. Brightwell be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, 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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