

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

Mai Hassan, assistant professor of political science, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of political science, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2014	Harvard University
M.A.	2010	Harvard University
B.A.	2008	University of Virginia

Professional Record:

2016 – Present	Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan
2019 – 2020	Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University
2014 – 2016	President’s Post-doctoral Research Fellow, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Hassan has taught three different courses in her time here: “How to be an Autocrat,” “Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa after the end of the Cold War,” and “Authoritarian Politics.” Her courses provide excellent models of inclusive teaching. In her undergraduate courses, she designs creative, immersive experiences for students and asks them to work with real data sets; these courses have been well received by students. Professor Hassan is a clear, consistent, professional, practical, generous mentor to a broad range of students, undergraduate and graduate, as well as junior faculty; and she has already co-authored scholarship with a graduate student. She plans future courses on contentious politics in authoritarian regimes.

Research: Professor Hassan examines the construction and erosion of state capacity; the strategic management of bureaucrats by leaders for political gain; sub-national bureaucratic politics and public administration; and, most recently, political protest against authoritarian rule. Professor Hassan furthers our understanding regarding how autocrats and elected leaders govern strategically through the bureaucracy. Most research on the developing world has either overlooked how autocratic and elected leaders engage in the day-to-day business of managing the state or assumed that state capacity is monolithic and undifferentiated across time and space, such that state capacity seems to be either weak or strong, highly politicized or incompetent. Professor Hassan’s work is an important agenda-setter here.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“The Strategic Shuffle: Ethnic Geography, the Internal Security Apparatus, and Elections in Kenya.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 61(2) (2017): 382-395. Reprinted in second virtual issue of AJPS.

Hassan, Mai and Thomas O’Mealia. “Uneven Accountability in the Wake of Political Violence: Evidence from Kenya’s Ashes and Archives.” *Journal of Peace Research*. 55(2) (2018): 161-174. Best Article Award, African Politics Conference Group.

Regime Threats and State Solutions: Bureaucratic Loyalty and Embeddedness in Kenya.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics, 2020.

Carter, Brett L. and Mai Hassan. “Regional Governance in Divided Societies: Evidence from the Republic of Congo and Kenya.” *Journal of Politics*. Forthcoming.

Hassan, Mai and Thomas O’Mealia. “Representative Bureaucracy, Role Congruence, and Kenya’s Gender Quota.” *Governance*. Forthcoming.

Service: At Michigan, Professor Hassan has served on the diversity ally and admissions committees, as well as serving for a year as the climate liaison. She has also helped form or served as a key participant in several workshops (PEW, CPW, African Politics Reading Group). Beyond Ann Arbor, Professor Hassan helped found a new workshop for early-career faculty and advanced graduate students in the Midwest doing cutting-edge empirical research. She has also been active in boosting the profile of African politics and the careers of Africanists within the MPSA, APSA, and NCOPBS, as well as through her work on the Working Group in African Political Economy. Professor Hassan is already on the editorial board of two academic journals.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “[Professor Hassan] is not only engaging core debates on how autocratic leaders deploy institutions to minimize threats to their rule; she is also advancing our fundamental understanding of political order in countries where democratization remains an incomplete and violent process. And the theoretical and empirical implications of this work transcend the geographic boundaries that often silo research in comparative politics. Dr. Hassan provides insights on the way autocratic leaders around the world strategically manipulate the bureaucracy to control their citizens.”

Reviewer (B): “The data are new (on provincial administration posting and shuffling over many decades). Hassan's work to match these ‘underlying’ patterns of district and sub-district ethnic alignment and political party affiliation over many decades has entailed substantial conceptual innovation, including some important moves to tame a massive amount of empirical detail and to establish analytic categories that travel beyond the Kenya context. Collecting the data on provincial appointments required much field work, ingenuity, perseverance in dealing with the Kenyan administration across many levels of the state apparatus, and (apparently) training and management of research assistants both as field researchers and coders. The archival research is also impressive and adds important contextual information to the analysis. Hassan brings this together masterfully in a clean, clear, and streamlined analysis that is extremely effective in driving home the main lines of her argument regarding strategic use of the territorial administration in support of regimes’ political objectives.”

Reviewer (C): “I am impressed by the scholarly output in terms of quality, consistency, amount, and the range of empirical problems that Hassan has tackled. She demonstrates a very strong capacity to frame and test arguments, and to leverage a range of empirical methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to do so.”


Reviewer (D): “By carefully studying the incentives of politicians and bureaucrats, she is ‘disaggregating’ the state in ways that move beyond unitary actor models that are common in Comparative Politics. By relying on an agency framework, Hassan is able to generate and test theoretical propositions that go beyond a descriptive approach common in the study of public administration.”

Reviewer (E): “[Professor Hassan’s]...analysis of regime management of bureaucrats questions various assumptions about regime strategy and reveals how governments seek to incorporate different groups within the bureaucracy to ward off threats, but then strategically place bureaucrats to ensure loyalty in potentially problematic areas.”

Reviewer (F): “Her research is theoretically innovative, pushing the boundaries of knowledge on areas such as authoritarian politics, state strength, and decentralization by exploring less-trodden paths (e.g., the placement of bureaucrats, land-titling gaps). It is also notable in its empirical grounding. Most of...[Professor Hassan’s] work centers on Kenya, where she has spent years conducting interviews and gathering archival data. The result is that a rich understanding of Kenyan politics informs and bolsters her theoretical arguments, and carefully gathered, relevant data are used to interrogate their observable implications.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Hassan brings tremendous credit to the University of Michigan with her cutting-edge and careful scholarship on comparative politics with a specific focus on Kenya, her dedicated and effective mentoring and teaching, and her investments in leadership, governance, and service. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Mai Hassan be promoted to the rank of associate professor of political science, 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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