

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

Julian A. Levinson, associate professor of English language and literature, with tenure, and associate professor Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of English language and literature and Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2000	Columbia University
M.A.	1992	Columbia University
B.A.	1990	Swarthmore College

Professional Record:

2007–present	Associate Professor of English and Judaic Studies, Samuel Shetzer Chair in American Jewish Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
2000–2007	Assistant Professor of English and Judaic Studies, Samuel Shetzer Chair in American Jewish Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
2000	Adjunct Professor, Department of English, Fordham University, New York

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Levinson is an effective teacher, whose students praise his infectious enthusiasm. He teaches a wide variety of courses for both Judaic Studies and English, including many core courses, such as “What is Judaism?,” the required core course for majors in Judaic Studies; “Introduction to Methods and Topics in Judaic Studies,” the required core course for graduate students in Judaic Studies; the large enrollment “Bible as Literature” course for the English Department; and the required pedagogy course for English and Women’s and Gender Studies graduate students. As the graduate advisor for Judaic Studies for ten years, he was instrumental in developing the Graduate Certificate. He has served as an advisor for three dissertations and as a member of six additional dissertation committees.

Research: Professor Levinson is a scholar of modern Jewish and Yiddish literatures in America and Europe. His scholarship explores the fundamental question of how to define and identify Jews over a wide-ranging three-thousand-year corpus from the bible to modern texts. His forthcoming book, A Prophet Among Us: Jews and the American Religious Imaginary, examines how the prophetic tradition and the image of the ancient Israelites have served as the bases for the manufacturing of both Jewish and Protestant identities in America. He is also a translator of Yiddish modernist texts, having translated, edited, and published a scholarly introduction of Isaiah Spiegel’s Flames from the Earth, a forgotten ethnographically-informed Holocaust novel. Professor Levinson’s published articles on topics not covered in his books, such as the construction of Jewish modernity and the historical bases of Philip Roth’s novels, suggest several new avenues of research and portend a productive scholarly future.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Spiegel, Isaiah. Flames from the Earth: A Novel from the Lodz Ghetto. Translated and with introduction and afterword by Julian Levinson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming.

“Using Film to Teach Philip Roth’s “Goodbye, Columbus.” In Teaching Options in Jewish American Literature, edited by Rachel Rubinstein and Roberta Rosenberg, 324-326. MLA Publications Committee, 2020.

“Subjects in Question: Jewish Storytelling as Counter-ethnography.” *Prooftexts* 36, no. 3 (2018): 286-306.

“Roth in the Archives: ‘Eli, the Fanatic’ and the Nitra Yeshiva Controversy of 1948.” *American Jewish History* 10, no. 1 (January, 2017): 57-79.

Service: Professor Levinson has been an active member of the campus and professional community. He has served on the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies’ Executive Committee for eight years and currently serves on the center’s Curriculum Committee. He served as a head fellow of the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, organizing and overseeing a year-long fellowship for a multidisciplinary group of junior and senior scholars from around the world. He served on the English Department’s graduate admissions committee four times. In the larger profession, he has served as a divisional chair for the Association for Jewish Studies and on editorial boards of two journals. Professor Levinson is a generous colleague and mentor.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: “For all the many volumes written about American Jews, their literature, and their entrance into the broader society, far too few have focused on the way in which that process was perceived from the other side ... With erudition, sensitivity, and range, Levinson attempts to give us the equipment to think through this question, in a work that sweeps from the antebellum period to the present day—and, in doing so, giving those of us in the field a new foundation with which to think about what Jewish writers of a certain sensibility were doing. Many of these authors have been discussed before, and not infrequently (as in the case, for example, of Henry Roth), in these terms. But Levinson offers us something close to a grand unified theory. It is an accomplishment.”

Reviewer B: “His translation of the Yiddish novel by Isaiah Spiegel, *Flames from the Earth: A Novel from the Lodz Ghetto*, brings an all-but-forgotten masterpiece of Holocaust fiction, never before translated, into a gripping and readable English prose ... These two new manuscripts, the translation of Spiegel’s Yiddish Holocaust novel and the scholarly study of Jewish American literature in the Christian American context, communicate how much outstanding work Julian Levinson has accomplished and how he promises to continue, with unflagging intellectual energy and interest.”

Reviewer C: “Levinson is a scholar who writes clearly and evocatively in multiple fields—including, even, an article on jazz!, and including autobiographical creative non-fiction in *AJS Perspectives*. His work bridges Yiddish literature and Jewish-American literature and his scholarship is consistently enriched and informed by detailed archival searches.”

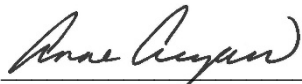
Reviewer D: “I am also enamored of one of his articles, on Philip Roth’s ‘Eli the Fanatic’ in its archival context, which not only demonstrates what might be learned from understanding the historical events behind the famous short story, but also what reading an archive might mean as part of literary scholarship. It juggles many historical, literary, and meta-literary balls with brilliance and grace. In short, I find Julian Levinson an extremely impressive and energetic scholar, with no intellectual blind spots or weaknesses at all.”

Reviewer E: “The writing is lively and engaging, moving smoothly among close readings, historical contextualization, and theoretical insights. Even in its unfinished form, *A Prophet Among Us* promises to be an intellectually probing and adventurous work that presents fresh insights into Jewish/Christian relations in the United States from the early nineteenth century to the turn of the millennium, redounding to works of literature, journalism, film, and performance. When complete, *A Prophet Among Us* should make an important contribution to the fields of comparative literature, comparative religion, American studies, and Jewish studies.”

Reviewer F: “In his work as a translator, Levinson has provided the field of Yiddish studies an extremely valuable service, having produced English versions of several key writers from the 20th century ... These are challenging texts, both with respect to their language and with respect to their content. Levinson’s translations honor the tonalities of the original by finding an English idiom that does not draw attention to itself, working instead to serve as a window into a world lost to terror and violence mourned in a language that was very nearly destroyed along with it.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Levinson’s scholarship on the prophetic tradition in American Protestant and Jewish literature situates religion at the forefront of American Jewish cultural identity. His translations of Yiddish modernist literature have raised awareness of the depths of early Holocaust writing and the ethnographic nature of Yiddish novels. His teaching has been interdisciplinary, wide-ranging, and effective. He has a record of leadership in Judaic Studies, English, the wider scholarly profession, and the university. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Julian A. Levinson be promoted to the rank of professor of English language and literature, with tenure, and professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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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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