

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

Elizabeth F.S. Roberts, associate professor of anthropology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of anthropology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2006	University of California, Berkeley
M.A.	1997	University of California, Berkeley
B.A.	1993	University of California, Berkeley

Professional Record:

2017–present	Faculty Associate, Research Center for Group Dynamics, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
2013–present	Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan
2008–2013	Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan
2008–2011	Assistant Professor, Residential College, University of Michigan
2006–2008	Assistant Research Scientist, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Roberts offers courses in sociocultural and medical anthropology, science and technology, and Latin American studies, many of which are crucial components of our medical anthropology program that only she can teach. Her courses attract anthropology majors and pre-meds, students from International Studies, History, School of Information, Comparative Literature, Social Work, Public Health, Engineering, and the Residential College. Her lab gives undergraduates valuable hands-on experience with fieldwork data. A student in her large lecture said it “has completely changed and advanced my understanding of medicine. As an aspiring healthcare professional, I am indebted to this course for arming me with a new set of perspectives!” While acknowledging the course was difficult, another wrote “I have never taken a class so engaging.” Professor Roberts has supervised seven undergraduate honors theses and advised fifteen Ph.D. students.

Research: Professor Roberts is an interdisciplinary scholar of the bio-medical, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions of health, suffering, and care. Her research concerns the interconnections among cultural norms and beliefs, political and economic forces, environmental conditions, and physical health, based on fieldwork in Ecuador and Mexico. She is currently the project PI on a \$1 million NSF grant, prior to which she held a \$313,500 NSF Senior Researcher Award. Unusual for a socio-cultural anthropologist, she collaborates with a team of scientists from bio-statistics, epidemiology, ecology, sociology, epigenetics, environmental engineering, and biological anthropology. This experience has led her to write important methodological essays about the challenges and benefits of cooperation between large scale, quantitative, and bio-medical and close-up, qualitative, socio-culturally oriented research. Her methodological reflections have also informed her theoretical writing, which proposes a highly original rethinking of our familiar understanding of the nature/culture distinction and the disciplinary differences that it reinforces. She is equally strong as an ethnographic fieldworker, methodological innovator, and anthropological

theorist. Since tenure, she has published six peer-reviewed articles in the leading anthropological journals (one winning an award from the Society for Medical Anthropology) as well as *The New England Journal of Medicine*, three peer-reviewed reports co-authored with her team, and six book chapters, with much else in press or under review. The manuscript of her second book is well developed and will be completed during her current fellowship year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Jansen, E., Marcovitch, H., Wolfson, J., Leighton, M., Peterson, K., Téllez-Rojo, M., Cantoral, A., & Roberts, E. F. S. (2019) An Analysis of Dietary Patterns in a Mexican Adolescent Population: A Mixed-Methods Approach. *Appetite*, 147. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2019.104542.

Roberts, E. F. S. (2017) What Gets Inside: Violent Entanglements and Toxic Boundaries in Mexico City. *Cultural Anthropology*, 32(4), 592–619.

Roberts, E. F. S. (2016) Gods, Germs, and Petri Dishes: Toward a Nonsecular Medical Anthropology. *Medical Anthropology*, 35(3), 209–219.

Roberts, E. F. S. (2016) When Nature/Culture Implodes: Feminist Anthropology and Biotechnology. In E. Lewin & L. Silverstein (Eds.), Mapping Feminist Anthropology in the Twenty-First Century (pp. 105–25). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Service: Professor Roberts has served as the chair of recruitment committees in Global Health, Race, and Ethnicity, and on an NCID Collegiate Post-doctoral Committee, as well as serving on three tenure committees. She has served on Anthropology's sociocultural admissions committee three times, as well as those for the Medical Science Training Program and the Joint Program in Anthropology and Social Work. In the Anthropology, she has been sociocultural subfield head, spent two years on the Executive Committee and two years on the Fellowships Committee, and co-taught Responsible Conduct of Research for three years. Beyond the department, Professor Roberts has been on the steering committees of the University Sustainability and Development Conference and the committee on Remaking Science and Technology Policy for a Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive World, and served as a reviewer for the Dow Sustainability Fellows Program of the Graham Institute. She has been on the Feminist Science Studies Advisory Committee and the steering committees of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender and the Science Technology and Society. In addition to university service, she has been a frequent reviewer of grants and manuscripts. In Latin America, Professor Roberts continues to actively mentor and collaborate with local researchers, and to train citizen-scientists to monitor water access and equity in their communities.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “This intervention [on secularity of medical anthropology] ... has, simply put, transformed the field, its analytic infrastructures, and the ranges of objects and logics it tackles ... Her intervention into the implicit secularity of medical anthropology has been profound.”

Reviewer (B): “[H]er current long-term research project on epidemiology, addiction, biology and culture promises to be even more outstanding. I don't use the term outstanding lightly. In terms of grants and interdisciplinary publications, she is among the top anthropologists in the country.”

Reviewer (C): “I know Prof. Roberts’ work is admired in the international networks I participate in (those of STS, Medical Anthropology, etc.), and she is a much-coveted speaker on panel presentations ... I would single out ‘What gets inside’ (published in *Cultural Anthropology*, 2017)—an article that captivated me not only because of the brilliant ethnographic style, but also because of the original, counter-intuitive conclusions the author draws from her material.”

Reviewer (D): “Roberts’ vernacular conception of addition [sic], like her earlier work, fully situates bodies in their (social, emotional, political, economic and biological) environmental contexts, with powerful theoretical and practical implications.”

Reviewer (E): “*God’s Laboratory*, a book I greatly admire and have taught with great success to graduate students, is a landmark ethnographic monograph on reproductive technology in Latin America, but it is more than that, too ... For me what constitutes the real innovation of this book is the careful attention to race and racialization that Roberts is able to pay to her materials.”

Reviewer (F): “Roberts is one of the most creative social scientists at work in the crossover of medical and environmental anthropology today. She is an energetic thinker who regularly takes the lead on organizing agenda-setting conferences and special issues. The University of Michigan Department of Anthropology is lucky to have such a colleague.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Roberts is one of the leading medical anthropologists of her generation who has done influential fieldwork in Latin America, studying assisted reproduction, toxicants, and addiction. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Elizabeth F.S. Roberts be promoted to the rank of professor of anthropology, 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

May 2021